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Department of English**

**Developing Critical Thinking within Reading Skill: Case
of Master One Students at Aboubekr Balkaid University**

Dissertation submitted to the Department of English as a partial fulfilment of the requirements for Master's degree in Didactics of Foreign Languages

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Dedications

To my cherished family, I dedicate this effort.

To my parents, Ahmed and Bourahla Fatima Zohra. To my husband, Abdellatif, my parents in law, Berrabah Mohamed and Rebhi Djamila.

To my beloved brothers, Nassim, Rida, Adel, and Nabil, and to my best sister ever, Meriem, without forgetting my brother and sisters-in-law.

Many thanks to all of you.

Mrs. Ouissam Tourkia Sakhri

Dedications

I dedicate our modest work to all the members of my family, especially my respectful mother Sallah Aziza.

To my beloved husband, children , siblings . Also I want to express my deepest gratitude to my eldest daughter for her constant encouragement to fulfill my dream and achieve my goals, as well as to my husband, my children and my beloved brother Zoheir for his support. and also to all my relatives everywhere.

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Mrs Touati Fatima Zohra

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Abstract

In the field of education, foreign language teachers are facing several kinds of challenges in developing students' critical thinking within the four language skills framework (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) that are positively interrelated. Nevertheless, implementing critical thinking through reading skill is a very important element to foster students' ability to understand and enhance their reading comprehension and engage with the text. The aim of this study is to examine the integration of critical thinking into reading comprehension for Master 1 EFL students at the University of Aboubekr Belkaid, investigating both teacher perspectives and student application. Through a mixed-methods approach involving 45 students and 14 teachers, the research explores three key dimensions: (1) teachers' instructional practices for developing critical reading skills, (2) students' engagement with and barriers to applying analytical strategies, and (3) the perceived impact on comprehension and higher-order thinking. Findings reveal a disconnect between teachers' recognition of critical reading's importance and students' inconsistent strategy use, with significant challenges including limited vocabulary, insufficient explicit instruction, and low reading frequency. While teachers incorporate activities targeting analytical abilities, both groups highlight systemic obstacles to effective implementation. The study concludes by emphasizing the need for structured curricular integration of critical reading strategies, enhanced teacher training in cognitive skill development, and targeted interventions to address identified linguistic and pedagogical barriers. These recommendations aim to bridge the gap between theoretical awareness and practical application of critical thinking in EFL reading contexts. The study concludes that reading, when supported by structured pedagogical interventions, serves as a vital tool for developing critical thinking. It recommends the integration of critical reading into EFL curricula, increased strategy-based instruction, and teacher training focused on cognitive skill development.

Keywords: critical thinking, reading skill, EFL students, reading strategies, higher-order thinking, intensive reading.

Key to Abbreviations and Acronyms

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

LMD : Licence / Master / doctorate

ELT: English Language Teaching

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Chapter One: Background of The Research

Chapter One: Background of The Research

1.1 Background of the Study

Reading skill is considered one of the most important skills to learning any language. However, an effective reading skill requires good critical thinking. This latter has emerged as a fundamental skill, especially in the domain of higher education. One notable example is the literature module, which constitutes a significant part of the English curriculum for Master one students at Aboubekr Belkaid University of Tlemcen. In this module, EFL students are exposed to a wide range of literary works that require more than just basic comprehension. They are expected to explore themes, analyze characters, and interpret the cultural and philosophical implications of texts. Such tasks inherently demand a high level of critical thinking. Yet, many students approach literary texts with a focus solely on content recall or paraphrasing, rather than interpretation and analysis. This indicates a gap between the reading practices currently employed and the critical competencies that are expected in academic discourse. Therefore, the integration of critical thinking into reading activities becomes necessary. Enhancing students' ability to read critically can significantly improve their performance across various modules. This study explores how critical thinking can be developed effectively through reading practices among Master one students at Aboubekr Belkaid university.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, the development of thinking skills has become increasingly essential, particularly at university level where students are expected to engage critically with complex academic texts. Despite this expectation, many EFL learners continue to struggle with applying critical thinking skills during reading activities. Rather than engaging with texts analytically or evaluatively, students often focus primarily on decoding vocabulary and understanding basic meaning. As a result, their ability to interpret, question, and assess the information presented in texts may cause decreased deeper understanding and critical engagement.

This challenge is especially evident among Master one students at Aboubekr Belkaid , where reading is a key component of the academic curriculum. While students are frequently exposed to various academic and literary texts, their reading tends to remain passive, with little emphasis on critical engagement. Several factors may contribute to this issue, including a lack of explicit instruction in critical reading strategies,

insufficient practice in analytical thinking, and limited exposure to tasks that promote reflection and argumentation.

The inability to apply critical thinking in reading not only hampers students' academic success but also restricts their broader intellectual growth and communicative competence. Given the crucial role of reading in academic and professional settings, there is a pressing need to explore the nature of this problem and identify effective pedagogical approaches that can foster critical thinking through reading practices in EFL classrooms.

1.3 Aims of the Research

The present study aims to explore the extent to which reading contributes to the enhancement of critical thinking skills in EFL learners, identify the main difficulties students face when engaging with texts critically, and explore the instructional approaches used by teachers to foster critical thinking through reading. Therefore, the research aims to :

- 1/ Investigate how frequently and effectively EFL students employ critical thinking strategies during reading.
- 2/ Explore students' and teachers' perceptions of the relationship between reading and critical thinking.
- 3/ Identify challenges that students face in developing critical thinking skills through reading.
- 4/ Explore current teaching practices and materials used to support critical reading.

1.4 Research Questions and Hypotheses

To provide better understanding of the study, the following research questions have been formulated to explore the relationship between reading practices and the development of critical thinking skills among Master one EFL students at Aboubekr Belkaid University of Tlemcen, as well as to investigate students' and teachers' perceptions, challenges, and strategies related to critical reading:

- 1/ To what extent do Master one EFL students at Aboubekr Belkaid University of Tlemcen apply critical thinking strategies while reading?
- 2/ What are students' attitudes, habits, and challenges related to reading and critical thinking?
- 3/ How do teachers perceive the role of reading in developing students' critical thinking skills?

4/ What instructional practices do teachers use to promote critical thinking through reading?

1.5 Hypotheses

On the basis of the research questions, the following hypotheses have been formulated:

1/ EFL students at the Master one level exhibit limited use of critical thinking strategies during reading.

2/There is a positive relationship between students' engagement with reading and the development of their critical thinking abilities?

3/Teachers who actively integrate reading into their instruction are more likely to foster critical thinking among students.

4/A lack of explicit instruction and appropriate materials hinders the development of students' critical reading skills.

1.6 Methodology Design

This section includes the research design followed by the population and sample. It presents also the data collection tools and its analysis followed by structure of the dissertation.

1.6.1 Research design

To provide a comprehensive understanding of developing critical thinking within reading skill, this study will use exploratory sequential mixed-method as an approach to combining qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis. Two questionnaires will be used in this study; one for teachers and one for students to gather insights about the impact of critical thinking in developing the reading skill.

1.6.2 Population and Sample

In this study, the population consists of 45 students of first year master students from Aboubekr Belkaid university in Tlemcen. The classes were chosen randomly. Moreover, 16 teachers are chosen for the questionnaire from the same university.

1.6.3 Data Collection Tools

1.6.3.1 Teachers' Questionnaire: The questionnaire is in two forms open-ended and closed-ended. Close-ended questions are mainly used to produce quantitative data, while open-ended questions are used for producing qualitative data to explore teachers' experiences, practices, and perspectives regarding the integration of critical thinking through reading instruction in order to develop students' analytical and evaluative skills.

1.6.3.2 Students Questionnaire: The questionnaire is in two forms open-ended and closed-ended to obtain measurable and explanatory data. It is used to gather data on reading habits, critical thinking behaviors, and perceived challenges.

1.6.4 Data Analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative methods are used to analyze data. The researchers present the collected data by quantitative approach by arranging teachers' and students' answers in graphs and tables. Also, the researchers present the data by using qualitative approach by presenting the collected data from both questionnaires in a description form.

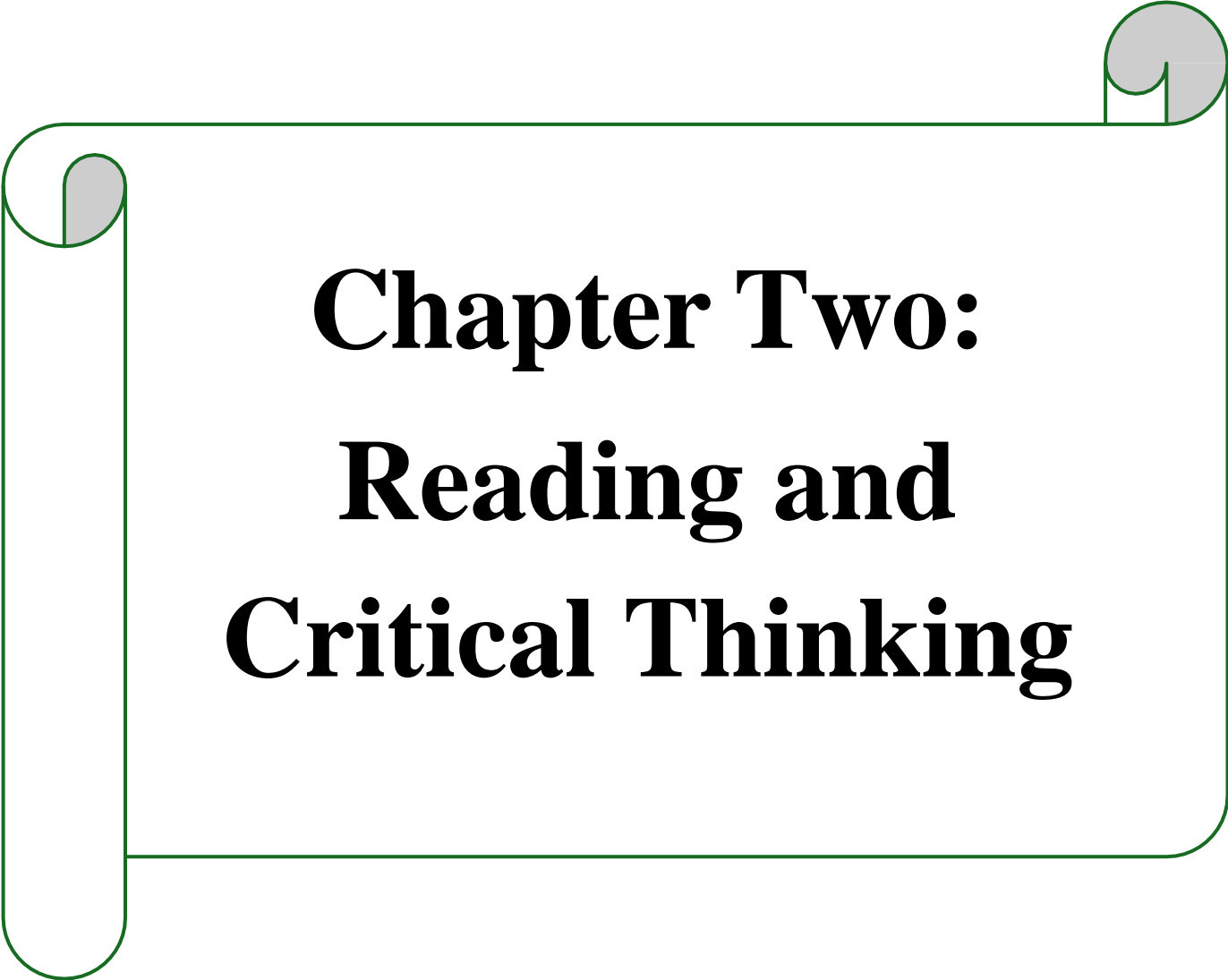
1.7 Structure of the Dissertation

The conducted study contains both theoretical and practical parts. It consists of three chapters with a general conclusion. The first chapter presents the general introduction of the dissertation. It includes background of the study, statement of the problem, aims, questions, hypotheses, research methodology, and the structure of the dissertation.

The second chapter is devoted to provide an overview of reading skill and critical thinking. It tackled an overview of the reading skill in the context of EFL learning. It begins by defining reading and presenting its main types, namely extensive and intensive reading, highlighting their distinct purposes in language development. The chapter then outlines key reading strategies, such as scanning, skimming, and questioning, which are essential for effective comprehension. Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of reading in language acquisition and academic success. Finally, the chapter addresses common reading comprehension difficulties encountered by EFL learners, setting the stage for understanding the need to integrate critical thinking into reading practices.

Moreover, this chapter delves into the concept of critical thinking, offering various scholarly definitions to clarify its nature as a purposeful, reflective, and evaluative cognitive process. It highlights the importance of critical thinking in multiple domains, including academic success, professional development, digital literacy, scientific innovation, and democratic engagement. The chapter also explores the barriers to critical thinking, such as cognitive biases, traditional educational practices, and information overload in the digital age, sociocultural constraints, emotional influences, and epistemological misconceptions. These discussions establish the theoretical foundation for understanding how critical thinking can be developed and integrated, particularly through reading in EFL contexts.

The third and the last chapter is a practical chapter. It begins with a general overview of the ELT situation in Algeria and describes the educational context, highlighting the structure of the Algerian education system. It represents population, sample, data collection and analysis in addition to the analysis and interpretation of the findings obtained from both questionnaires. To conclude, this part offers limitations and recommendations for future research followed by a general conclusion.

A decorative graphic of a scroll with a green outline and grey shading at the top and bottom edges, framing the chapter title.

Chapter Two: Reading and Critical Thinking

2.1 Introduction

Reading is one of the most fundamental skills that humans acquire, serving as a gateway to knowledge, imagination, and personal growth. It is not merely the decoding of written symbols into sounds and words, but a complex process of understanding, interpreting, and engaging with ideas. From ancient scrolls to digital screens, reading has evolved across centuries, yet its importance remains constant in all societies. This chapter is devoted to review of literature to the concept reading, defining its types, strategies, importance, and reading comprehension difficulties. In addition it sheds light on defining critical thinking, its importance in EFL learning, and barriers to critical thinking. Moreover, it delves into the concept of critical thinking, its importance, and barriers.

2.2 Defining Reading

Reading is a complex cognitive process that involves decoding written symbols (letters and words) to construct meaning. It is not merely recognizing words, but an interactive activity between the reader and the text, where understanding is built using both the information provided in the text and the reader's background knowledge, experiences, and language skills.

Alderson (2000) defines reading as “an interactive process between the reader and the text, in which the reader's background knowledge and the information encoded in the text interact to build meaning.” (p. 3). This highlights the interactive nature of reading, positioning it as a dynamic exchange between the reader's prior knowledge and the textual content. This view reflects a constructivist approach to reading comprehension, where meaning is not simply extracted from the text but actively constructed by the reader. It underscores the importance of schema theory, suggesting that readers bring their own experiences, knowledge, and expectations to the text, which influence how they interpret and understand information. This perspective is particularly valuable in applied linguistics and reading research, as it acknowledges the variability in readers' interpretations and the contextual factors that shape comprehension. It also reinforces the need to consider both reader variables and text complexity when assessing reading proficiency.

Grabe and Stoller (2002) state that reading is “the ability to draw meaning from the printed page and interpret this information appropriately.” (p. 9). They emphasize reading as both a cognitive and strategic process. This perspective provides a balanced understanding of reading proficiency by acknowledging both the measurable aspects of reading through standardized assessments and the cognitive, strategic dimensions emphasized in reading theory. It underscores the importance of not relying

solely on test performance to define reading skill, as doing so may overlook the deeper processes involved in constructing meaning. Recognizing reading as both a quantifiable outcome and a complex mental activity allows for a more nuanced evaluation of readers' abilities, particularly in diverse educational contexts.

Reading skill is typically defined by an individual's performance on a standardized reading assessment. Those who score above a predetermined threshold on such assessments are generally classified as skilled readers (Perfetti, 1985). This definition conceptualizes reading skill as a measurable construct, operationalized through performance on standardized reading assessments. Such an approach aligns with psychometric perspectives, which prioritize observable and quantifiable indicators of cognitive ability. By setting a threshold score, researchers and educators can categorize readers as "skilled" or "unskilled," facilitating comparisons across populations and educational contexts. However, this method also assumes that reading proficiency can be fully captured through standardized instruments, which may overlook the complexity of reading as a multidimensional process involving decoding, comprehension, vocabulary knowledge, and critical thinking. Thus, while practical for large-scale assessments, this definition may benefit from a more nuanced consideration of the diverse components that constitute skilled reading.

Similarly, Sultana (2014) stated that Reading is widely regarded as a fundamental skill essential for academic collaboration and lifelong learning. It plays a crucial role in accessing information, acquiring knowledge, and engaging with written materials. In many contexts, particularly in higher education, English serves as the primary language of instruction, making proficiency in reading English vital for academic success and participation. This view underscores the central role that reading plays not only in academic success but also in lifelong learning and collaboration. As English is often the dominant language of instruction in higher education, proficiency in reading English becomes a critical factor for accessing knowledge and participating in global academic and professional communities. This reflects the increasing importance of literacy skills in a globalized world, where English serves as a bridge to a wide range of disciplines, research, and information. Consequently, the ability to read and comprehend texts in English is not only a key academic skill but also an essential tool for individuals seeking to engage with an international body of knowledge and contribute to global discourse.

On the other hand, Davies (1968) claimed that reading skills encompass a range of abilities, including understanding word meanings, making inferences, analyzing the author's techniques, recognizing the tone or mood of a passage, and locating specific

information to answer questions. This effectively highlights the complexity of reading skills by pointing out that reading is not limited to recognizing words but involves a range of cognitive and interpretive abilities. These include understanding vocabulary in context, drawing conclusions beyond the literal meaning, evaluating the writer's techniques, and identifying key details all of which contribute to a more comprehensive and meaningful engagement with a text.

2.3 Types of Reading

Reading is a fundamental skill in language learning and communication, encompassing various approaches tailored to learners' goals, proficiency levels, and contexts. Two primary types of reading extensive reading and intensive reading play crucial roles in language acquisition. While both contribute to linguistic development, they differ significantly in methodology, objectives, and learner engagement. Extensive reading focuses on fluency and enjoyment through exposure to large amounts of text, whereas intensive reading emphasizes deep comprehension and detailed language analysis. Understanding these types allows teachers and students to apply them strategically for optimal language growth.

2.3.1 Extensive Reading

Extensive reading is a pedagogical approach that emphasizes high-volume, pleasurable reading to develop fluency, vocabulary, and overall language proficiency. Unlike intensive reading, which focuses on detailed analysis of short texts, extensive reading encourages learners to engage with large quantities of material at or slightly below their comprehension level. According to Day (2015), extensive reading involves students reading large amounts of text at a rapid pace. In this approach, books are read not only to support language learning but also for enjoyment and to gain information relevant to real-life contexts. This statement emphasizes the key principles of extensive reading, which focuses on quantity and fluency rather than intensive analysis of texts. By engaging with a large volume of material at a faster pace, learners are exposed to natural language use in varied contexts. This supports the development of reading fluency, vocabulary acquisition, and overall language proficiency. Moreover, incorporating texts that serve both educational and personal interests helps to enhance motivation, making reading a more meaningful and enjoyable experience.

According to Bamford and Day (1997), extensive reading typically involves engaging with a substantial volume of text with the primary goal of grasping the general meaning. In this approach, readers focus more on comprehending the overall message rather than concentrating on the specific meanings of individual words or

sentences. Therefore, this underscores a fundamental aspect of extensive reading, which prioritizes global comprehension over detailed linguistic analysis. By focusing on the overall meaning rather than individual lexical or grammatical elements, readers develop the ability to read more fluently and efficiently. This approach encourages a more natural and uninterrupted reading experience, which can enhance both reading confidence and general language competence over time.

2.3.1.1 Components of Extensive Reading

The components of extensive reading are key factors that make this approach effective in language learning. These include the volume and variety of texts, learner autonomy, minimal interruptions for fluency, and its integration with other language skills. Together, these elements create an engaging and motivating environment that helps learners improve their reading fluency and overall language proficiency.

2.3.1.1.1 Volume and Variety of Texts

According to Nation (2015), extensive reading requires access to a wide range of engaging, level-appropriate materials to cater to diverse learner interests and proficiencies. Studies show that reading 1-2 books per week at 98% comprehension level significantly enhances vocabulary acquisition and reading fluency. Digital platforms and graded readers have expanded access to suitable texts, allowing learners to select content aligned with their personal interests, which increases motivation and consistency. Thus, Extensive reading is most effective when learners have access to a wide variety of interesting and appropriately challenging materials. Studies suggest that reading 1-2 books per week with a comprehension level of around 98% can greatly improve vocabulary and reading fluency. The rise of digital platforms and graded readers has made it easier for learners to find texts that match their interests and language level, which not only enhances their motivation but also helps them stay consistent in their reading practice. When learners can choose content that resonates with them personally, they are more likely to engage in reading regularly, leading to better language learning outcomes.

2.3.1.1.2 Learner Autonomy and Choice

A core principle of extensive reading is learner autonomy, where students select their own reading materials based on interest and ability. Research indicates that self-selected reading leads to higher engagement and long-term reading habits. Providing choice increases intrinsic motivation, as learners are more likely to read when they have control over content. Structured guidance, such as curated book lists or recommendation systems, can help learners make informed selections without undermining autonomy (Krashen, 2017). A key aspect of extensive reading is

allowing learners to choose their own reading materials based on their interests and language level. When students select what they read, they tend to be more engaged and are more likely to develop long-term reading habits. This element of choice supports intrinsic motivation, making reading a more enjoyable and consistent activity. At the same time, offering some structured support—like recommended book lists or reading suggestions—can guide learners in making appropriate choices while still maintaining their sense of autonomy.

2.3.1.1.3 Minimal Interruption for Fluency Development

Extensive reading prioritizes uninterrupted reading to build fluency rather than stopping for vocabulary lookup or grammar analysis. Studies using eye-tracking technology reveal that frequent interruptions disrupt comprehension and reduce reading speed. Encouraging learners to infer meaning from context fosters better long-term retention than dictionary dependency. Teachers play a key role in creating a low-pressure environment where mistakes are tolerated to maintain reading flow (Grabe, 2019). Extensive reading focuses on reading smoothly and continuously, without stopping to look up every unfamiliar word or analyze grammar in detail. Research shows that frequent interruptions while reading can break concentration and slow down reading speed. Instead, learners are encouraged to guess meanings from context, which helps improve their ability to understand and remember new words over time. It's also important for teachers to create a relaxed and supportive atmosphere where learners feel comfortable making mistakes, as this helps maintain the flow of reading and builds overall fluency.

2.3.1.1.4 Integration with Language Skills

While extensive reading primarily targets reading fluency, it also indirectly enhances writing, speaking, and listening skills. Learners subconsciously absorb grammatical structures, collocations, and discourse patterns, which transfer to other language domains. Supplementary activities, such as book discussions or reflective journals, can reinforce these connections. Research shows that students in extensive reading programs demonstrate measurable gains in overall language proficiency compared to traditional instruction. (Renandya and Jacobs, 2016). Although extensive reading mainly aims to improve reading fluency, it also supports the development of other language skills like writing, speaking, and listening. Through regular exposure to language in context, learners naturally pick up grammar, vocabulary combinations, and ways of organizing ideas, which can be applied across different forms of communication. Activities such as group discussions or reflective writing about what they've read can help strengthen these connections. Learners who engage in extensive

reading often show noticeable improvement in overall language ability compared to those following more traditional learning methods.

2.3.1.1.5 Assessment and Motivation Strategies

According to Yamashita (2021), effective extensive reading programs use non-traditional assessment methods, such as reading logs, book reviews, or peer recommendations, to track progress without inducing anxiety. Gamification elements (e.g., badges for milestones) and social reading platforms can enhance motivation. Studies show that extrinsic rewards should be used sparingly to avoid undermining intrinsic motivation, with emphasis placed on personal satisfaction and growth. (p. 93). Effective extensive reading programs often use alternative assessment methods like reading logs, book reviews, or peer recommendations to monitor progress in a low-stress way. These approaches help learners reflect on their reading without the pressure of traditional testing. Adding features such as milestone badges or interactive reading platforms can further boost motivation. However, it is important that external rewards are used carefully so they do not reduce learners' internal motivation; the focus should remain on personal enjoyment and the sense of progress that comes from regular reading.

2.3.2 Intensive Reading

Intensive reading is a systematic, detail-oriented approach to reading instruction that focuses on deep comprehension, linguistic accuracy, and critical analysis of short, challenging texts. Unlike extensive reading, which prioritizes fluency through volume, intensive reading emphasizes close examination of vocabulary, grammar, discourse structure, and authorial intent. This method is particularly effective for academic, professional, and test-preparation contexts where precision and analytical skills are essential.

According to Tuğrul Mart (2015), intensive reading emphasizes precision over speed, concentrating on a thorough examination of vocabulary and grammar. Using guided reading strategies in the classroom supports student progress and enhances learning outcomes. By closely analyzing texts, learners gain a deeper understanding of the language, which contributes to more effective language mastery. This statement highlights the fundamental role of intensive reading in language learning by underscoring its focus on accuracy through detailed analysis of texts. Unlike extensive reading, which promotes fluency, intensive reading allows learners to engage closely with the linguistic features of a text such as grammar structures, vocabulary use, and syntax thereby strengthening their language awareness.

Intensive reading supports deeper language development with the help of the teacher. It helps learners understand complex grammar, expand their vocabulary and learn common expressions. This type of reading also strengthens their ability to use the language more accurately in both speaking and writing. The texts used in intensive reading serve as key classroom materials. They are not just read, but also closely examined, discussed in the target language, and sometimes used for writing practice (Prayuda, 2023). Therefore, intensive reading is an important tool for language learning, especially in a classroom setting. It helps students improve their grammar, vocabulary, and overall language use with the teacher's support.

2.3.2.1 Components of Intensive Reading

The components of intensive reading focus on helping learners understand texts deeply and accurately. These include textual analysis, vocabulary and grammar focus, teacher guidance, critical thinking, and detailed assessment. Together, they support the development of precise reading skills, making this approach ideal for academic and exam-focused learning.

2.3.2.1.1 Focus on Textual Analysis

Intensive reading requires learners to engage in meticulous examination of a text's linguistic and structural features, including syntax, cohesion, and rhetorical devices. Studies show that this approach significantly improves reading comprehension and critical thinking skills, particularly for advanced learners. By dissecting sentences and paragraphs, students develop a heightened awareness of how meaning is constructed, which aids in decoding complex materials. Annotating, paraphrasing, and summarizing are common intensive reading strategies that reinforce deep processing (Grabe and Stoller, 2019). This passage clearly explains how intensive reading helps learners understand texts in detail by focusing on language features like grammar, cohesion, and structure. It shows that this method is especially useful for advanced learners, as it improves both comprehension and critical thinking. The mention of strategies such as annotating, paraphrasing, and summarizing highlights how students can engage more deeply with the text.

2.3.2.1.2 Vocabulary and Grammar Mastery

According to (Nation) 2020, intensive reading places strong emphasis on explicit vocabulary and grammar instruction, as learners encounter and analyze low-frequency words and complex syntactic structures. Research indicates that contextualized grammar teaching within intensive reading leads to better retention and application than isolated drills. Techniques such as sentence diagramming, word-family analysis, and collocation exercises help learners internalize linguistic patterns. This method is

particularly beneficial for learners preparing for proficiency exams like TOEFL or IELTS. The emphasis on explicit vocabulary and grammar instruction in intensive reading highlights its role in developing advanced language skills. Focusing on low-frequency words and complex structures allows learners to expand their linguistic knowledge in meaningful contexts. Research supports the idea that contextualized grammar instruction leads to better retention and use compared to isolated practice. Techniques like sentence diagramming, word-family analysis, and collocation exercises further reinforce language patterns. Such an approach is particularly effective for learners preparing for high-stakes exams such as TOEFL or IELTS.

2.3.2.1.3 Teacher-Guided Instruction

Unlike extensive reading, intensive reading is highly teacher-centered, with instructors playing an active role in modeling strategies, asking probing questions, and providing immediate feedback. Scaffolded activities—such as think-aloud protocols, guided discussions, and comprehension checks—ensure learners grasp nuanced meanings. Studies show that teacher mediation in intensive reading significantly enhances comprehension, especially for struggling readers or those navigating discipline-specific texts (e.g., legal or scientific documents) (Hedge, 2018). Therefore, the teacher-centered nature of intensive reading highlights the importance of guided support in helping learners engage with complex texts. Through strategies like modeling, questioning, and immediate feedback, instructors play a key role in developing learners' comprehension skills. Scaffolded activities such as think-aloud and guided discussions help students understand deeper meanings, which is especially beneficial for those who struggle or work with specialized academic texts. Research confirms that teacher involvement greatly improves the effectiveness of intensive reading.

2.3.2.1.4 Critical Reading and Inference

Intensive reading trains learners to read between the lines, identifying implicit arguments, biases, and rhetorical strategies. This skill is crucial for academic success, where evaluating sources and synthesizing information are paramount. Activities like identifying authorial tone, comparing multiple perspectives, and debating textual claims foster higher-order thinking. Research demonstrates that intensive reading improves inferential reasoning, which is weakly developed in extensive reading alone (Wallace, 2018). The focus on inferential reading skills in intensive reading highlights its importance for developing critical thinking **and** academic literacy. By training learners to detect underlying messages, tone, and bias, this approach prepares them to evaluate sources and engage with complex ideas. Activities such as comparing

viewpoints and analyzing rhetorical strategies promote deeper understanding and support the development of higher-order reasoning skills, which are essential in academic settings. Research supports the idea that such skills are better developed through intensive reading than through extensive reading alone.

2.3.2.1.5 Assessment and Precision

Intensive reading employs rigorous, often formative, assessments to measure comprehension accuracy, such as short-answer questions, gap-fill exercises, and error-correction tasks. These methods ensure learners attend to minute details and avoid superficial understanding. Recent studies suggest that intensive reading assessments should balance accuracy with reflective tasks (e.g., self-evaluation journals) to promote metacognitive awareness. Such an approach is particularly effective in EAP (English for Academic Purposes) settings (Hirvela, 2016).

Intensive reading remains indispensable for developing precision, critical analysis, and linguistic mastery in second language learners. The use of detailed and formative assessments in intensive reading supports the development of accurate comprehension and attention to detail. Tasks like gap-fills and error correction help learners process language more precisely, while reflective activities such as self-evaluation promote metacognitive awareness. This balanced approach not only enhances understanding but also encourages learners to think about their own learning processes. Intensive reading is especially valuable in EAP contexts, where precision, critical thinking, and language mastery are essential for academic success.

2.4 Reading Strategies

Reading strategies are essential tools for learners at all levels, as they guide readers in making sense of complex materials, identifying main ideas, making inferences, and connecting new knowledge to prior understanding. Common strategies include skimming for the general idea, scanning for specific information, summarizing, predicting, questioning, and visualizing content. These methods not only enhance comprehension but also support critical thinking and retention.

2.4.1 Scanning

Scanning is a rapid reading strategy used to locate specific information within a text, such as names, dates, or keywords, without engaging in thorough comprehension. This technique is particularly valuable in academic, professional, and everyday contexts where efficiency is prioritized. Unlike skimming, which involves grasping the main ideas, scanning focuses on pinpointing precise details. According to Fauzi (2018), scanning enables readers to swiftly find a specific fact, date, name, or word within a text without needing to read or comprehend the entire content.

Therefore, scanning is a highly efficient strategy for locating specific information within a text, allowing readers to bypass irrelevant details and focus solely on the target data. This technique is particularly valuable in academic, professional, and research settings, where time constraints and the need for precision often demand quick retrieval of key information. By minimizing the cognitive load associated with detailed reading, scanning enhances the reader's ability to navigate large volumes of text with greater speed and accuracy. Furthermore, when combined with other strategies like skimming, it can significantly improve overall reading efficiency.

2.4.1.1 Purpose and Efficiency

Scanning is employed when readers need to extract particular information quickly, such as finding a phone number in a directory or a statistic in a report. Studies show that proficient scanners can locate target information 40-60% faster than those reading linearly. This strategy reduces cognitive load by allowing readers to bypass irrelevant content. Training in scanning improves both speed and accuracy, making it a critical skill for test-taking and research (Grabe, 2019).

Therefore, scanning is an effective strategy for quickly retrieving specific information, enhancing reading efficiency by reducing unnecessary cognitive processing. Researches indicate that proficient scanners can significantly outperform linear readers in terms of speed, making this technique invaluable in time-sensitive tasks such as research or test-taking. By focusing on target information and bypassing irrelevant content, scanning reduces cognitive load, allowing readers to process information more effectively. The development of scanning skills through targeted training not only improves reading speed but also enhances accuracy, making it a vital tool for academic and professional contexts where rapid information retrieval is essential.

2.4.1.2 Eye Movement and Visual Cues

Rayner et al. (2016) claim that effective scanning relies on controlled eye movements, such as vertical or zigzag patterns, to cover large text areas swiftly. Research using eye-tracking technology reveals that skilled scanners fixate on keywords, numbers, or formatting cues (e.g., bold or italicized text). Visual chunking grouping related information enhances scanning efficiency by up to 30%. This technique is especially useful in digital environments where hyperlinks and headings guide the search.

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making the process faster. Grouping related information together, known as visual chunking, can improve scanning efficiency by up to 30%. This technique is especially helpful in digital environments where elements like hyperlinks and headings guide the search, allowing for more efficient and accurate information retrieval.

2.4.1.3 Application in Digital Reading

With the rise of digital texts, scanning has become increasingly relevant. Online readers spend 80% of their time scanning rather than reading word-for-word. Tools like Ctrl+F (or Command+F) facilitate electronic scanning, but research shows that manual scanning skills remain essential for interpreting context. Digital literacy programs now incorporate scanning drills to help learners navigate websites, e-books, and databases efficiently (Leu, et al., 2017). As digital texts become more prevalent, scanning has gained even greater significance. Online readers often spend most of their time scanning content rather than reading it word-for-word, which highlights the efficiency of this strategy in modern reading habits. While tools like Ctrl+F (or Command+F) support electronic scanning, manual scanning skills are still essential for interpreting context and understanding the material beyond surface-level information. This suggests that digital literacy programs that incorporate scanning exercises are crucial for helping learners effectively navigate and extract relevant information from websites, e-books, and databases, ensuring they are equipped with skills necessary for the digital age.

2.4.1.4 Cognitive and Metacognitive Benefits

Scanning not only saves time but also enhances metacognitive awareness by training readers to prioritize information. Studies indicate that scanning practice improves working memory and selective attention, particularly in second-language learners. By consciously deciding what to ignore, readers develop sharper focus and better information-filtering skills. This strategy is particularly beneficial in high-stakes environments like legal or medical research (Anderson, 2018). Ultimately, scanning plays an important role in helping readers manage their attention and focus more effectively. It trains them to quickly identify relevant details while ignoring less important content, which strengthens their ability to filter and process information. This is especially helpful for second-language learners and those working in fields that demand accuracy under pressure, such as law or medicine.

2.4.1.5 Teaching and Assessment Strategies

According to Hedgcock and Ferris (2021), effective scanning instruction involves timed exercises, keyword hunts, and real-world tasks (e.g., finding flight details in an email). Assessments often measure speed and accuracy, such as locating answers

within a set time limit. Research suggests that scaffolded practice starting with simple texts and progressing to complex ones yields the best results. Gamification, like competitive scanning challenges, can also boost engagement and skill retention. Scanning is an indispensable reading strategy that balances speed and precision, particularly in information-rich environments.

Thus, Effective instruction in scanning plays a key role in developing learners' ability to quickly and accurately locate specific information. Using structured activities such as timed tasks and real-life scenarios enhances both performance and engagement. Gradual progression from simple to complex texts ensures skill development, while gamified elements can further motivate learners and improve retention.

2.4.2 Skimming

Skimming is a strategic reading technique that involves quickly reviewing a text to grasp its main ideas and overall structure without engaging in detailed reading. This approach is particularly valuable when time is limited or when readers need to determine a text's relevance before committing to deeper reading. According to Fatmawan et al., (2023), skimming enables readers to rapidly go through a text to grasp its overall meaning, helping them determine if it contains relevant information for their needs. Therefore, skimming serves as an essential strategy for quickly evaluating a text's relevance and content. By focusing on main ideas and key concepts, it allows readers to efficiently assess whether a text warrants further, more detailed reading. This technique is particularly valuable in academic and professional contexts, where time constraints often require rapid decision-making about the usefulness of large amounts of information. Additionally, skimming supports critical reading skills by helping readers prioritize important content while avoiding unnecessary details. However, it should be used judiciously, as it may not always provide sufficient depth for comprehensive understanding.

2.4.2.1 Purpose and Cognitive Benefits

Skimming serves as a preliminary reading strategy to identify central themes, key arguments, and organizational patterns in a text. Cognitive studies reveal that skimming activates global processing mechanisms in the brain, allowing readers to form a mental framework of the content before delving deeper. This technique is particularly useful for reviewing lengthy articles, reports, or books, as it reduces cognitive overload by filtering out less critical details. Skilled skimmers can retain up to 60% of a text's main ideas after a single pass (Grabe, 2019). Therefore, skimming is an effective initial reading strategy that helps readers quickly identify the main

ideas and structure of a text. It supports comprehension by creating a mental overview and reducing unnecessary cognitive load. This makes it especially useful for handling long or complex materials, allowing readers to decide whether deeper reading is needed.

2.4.2.2 Techniques for Effective Skimming

Effective skimming involves specific techniques, such as reading the first and last sentences of paragraphs, noting bold or italicized terms, and examining visual aids like charts and graphs. Research indicates that these methods enable readers to cover material 3-4 times faster than conventional reading. Training in skimming has been shown to improve comprehension scores by 20-30% in timed assessments, making it a critical skill for standardized tests and professional settings (Anderson, 2018). Thus, effective skimming techniques, such as focusing on key sentences, bold or italicized terms, and visual aids, allow readers to quickly grasp essential information. Research shows that these strategies significantly increase reading speed, making skimming an important skill for efficient comprehension, especially in high-pressure situations like exams or professional tasks.

2.4.2.3 Skimming in Digital Environments

The digital age has amplified the importance of skimming, as online readers typically spend less than 20 seconds on a webpage before deciding its relevance. Studies show that digital skimming involves scanning for hyperlinks, bullet points, and highlighted keywords, which serve as visual anchors. However, digital skimming can lead to superficial engagement, necessitating strategies to balance speed with retention, such as combining skimming with selective deep reading (Leu et al., 2017). For better understanding, in the digital age, skimming has become even more crucial, as readers quickly assess the relevance of online content, often spending less than 20 seconds on a webpage. Research highlights that digital skimming focuses on scanning for visual cues like hyperlinks and keywords. However, this rapid approach can lead to shallow understanding, emphasizing the need for strategies that combine skimming with deeper reading for better comprehension and retention.

2.4.2.4 Skimming for Academic and Professional Success

In academic settings, skimming is indispensable for reviewing literature, preparing for exams, or synthesizing multiple sources. Professionals use skimming to quickly assess reports, emails, and proposals, saving time while maintaining productivity. Research demonstrates that individuals trained in skimming techniques report higher efficiency and reduced stress in information-heavy environments. For second-language learners, skimming also aids in building confidence and fluency (Hedgcock

and Ferris, 2021). Consequently, skimming is an essential skill in academic and professional contexts, enabling individuals to quickly review literature, prepare for exams, and synthesize multiple sources. It helps professionals efficiently assess reports and proposals while maintaining productivity. Research shows that training in skimming enhances efficiency and reduces stress in information-heavy environments, making it particularly beneficial for second-language learners in building confidence and fluency.

2.4.2.5 Teaching and Assessing Skimming Skills

According to Nation (2020), effective instruction in skimming includes modeling the technique, providing structured practice with varied texts, and offering feedback on speed and accuracy. Assessments might involve tasks like summarizing a text after a timed skim or identifying main ideas from a rapid review. Research suggests that gamified activities, such as "speed skimming" challenges, can enhance motivation and skill retention. Scaffolded approaches, starting with simpler texts and progressing to complex materials, yield the best outcomes. Skimming is a vital reading strategy that balances efficiency with comprehension, making it indispensable in academic, professional, and everyday contexts. Accordingly, effective teaching of skimming skills involves structured practice, feedback, and progressive tasks that enhance speed and accuracy. Gamified activities can boost motivation and retention. Scaffolded learning, starting with simpler texts, helps learners build confidence. This approach is essential for balancing efficiency and comprehension in academic and professional settings.

2.4.3 Questioning

Questioning is an active reading strategy that enhances comprehension by encouraging readers to engage critically with texts before, during, and after reading. By generating and answering questions, learners deepen their understanding, monitor their comprehension, and connect new information to prior knowledge. According to Graesser and Person (1994), questioning plays a crucial role in challenging students' current thinking and enhancing their reasoning abilities. In the classroom, it typically involves questions posed by teachers. These questioning strategies are not only useful for content learning but also for encouraging critical and analytical thinking, fostering a deeper understanding of the material. Questioning is a powerful pedagogical tool that encourages critical thinking and deepens students' understanding. By challenging existing ideas, it prompts students to analyze information more carefully, which can lead to improved reasoning and problem-solving skills. For example, a teacher might ask, "What evidence supports this argument?" to encourage students to think critically

about a text, rather than just recalling facts. Research has shown that when used effectively, questioning strategies can lead to better engagement and higher levels of cognitive development in students.

2.4.3.1 Purpose and Cognitive Engagement

Questioning transforms passive reading into an interactive process, prompting readers to predict, clarify, and reflect on content. Studies show that self-generated questions improve comprehension by 25-40% compared to passive reading, as they require deeper cognitive processing. Effective questions target main ideas, authorial intent, and textual connections, helping readers construct meaning. This strategy is particularly valuable in academic settings, where critical analysis is essential (Duke and Cartwright, 2021). Questioning significantly enhances reading comprehension by promoting active engagement with the text. By encouraging students to generate their own questions, they are pushed to engage in deeper cognitive processing, which leads to a better understanding of the material. For instance, when students ask themselves, "What is the author trying to convey here?" or "How does this idea relate to previous information?", they are more likely to grasp the underlying meaning. This strategy is especially valuable in academic contexts, where critical thinking and the ability to analyze complex texts are key to academic success. Research supports that self-generated questioning can lead to a substantial improvement in comprehension, making it an essential tool for effective reading instruction.

2.4.3.2 Types of Questions for Comprehension

Questions can be categorized as literal (fact-based), inferential (requiring interpretation), or evaluative (critical analysis). Research indicates that a balance of these types maximizes comprehension, with inferential questions showing the strongest correlation with deep understanding ($r = .62$). Teachers can model question-asking techniques, such as "What evidence supports this claim?" or "How does this relate to previous chapters?" to scaffold student learning (Fisher et al., 2016). Questions can be divided into three types: literal (factual), inferential (requiring interpretation), and evaluative (critical analysis). Research shows that using a mix of these question types improves understanding, with inferential questions being the most helpful for deep comprehension. Teachers can guide students by asking questions like, "What evidence supports this?" or "How does this relate to what we learned before?" This helps students think more critically about the text and better understand the material.

2.4.3.3 Questioning Before, During, and After Reading

Pre-reading questions activate prior knowledge and set purpose (e.g., "What do I already know about this topic?"). During reading, clarifying questions monitor understanding (e.g., "What does this term mean?"). Post-reading evaluative questions promote synthesis (e.g., "How does this information challenge my assumptions?"). Studies using think-aloud protocols reveal this three-phase approach improves retention by 45% (Oakhill, et al., 2019).

This three-phase questioning strategy pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading helps guide learners through a text, enhancing both comprehension and retention. Pre-reading questions activate prior knowledge, setting a purpose for the reading, while during-reading questions ensure ongoing understanding, and post-reading questions encourage critical reflection and synthesis. Research indicates that this structured approach can significantly improve retention, suggesting its value in promoting deeper cognitive engagement with the material.

2.4.3.4 Digital Tools for Question Generation

Technology-enhanced questioning tools (e.g., annotation apps, discussion boards) amplify engagement, particularly for digital natives. Research shows that collaborative online questioning increases participation by 60% in heterogeneous classrooms. Adaptive platforms that prompt questions based on reading patterns (e.g., "You paused here - what's confusing?") improve self-monitoring skills. However, studies caution against over-reliance on pre-generated questions, which can reduce critical thinking (Coiro, 2020).

Consequently, Technology-enhanced questioning tools can significantly boost engagement and participation, especially among digital natives, by providing interactive platforms for collaborative questioning and real-time feedback. Research indicates that these tools foster greater participation, particularly in diverse classrooms. Adaptive platforms that prompt questions based on individual reading patterns help improve self-monitoring skills. However, it is important to avoid over-reliance on pre-generated questions, as this may hinder the development of critical thinking and independent inquiry.

2.4.3.5 Assessing Questioning Proficiency

According to McKeown and Beck (2018), effective assessment measures question quality (depth/relevance) and application (ability to answer). Rubrics evaluating question complexity (e.g., Bloom's Taxonomy levels) correlate strongly ($r = .71$) with reading proficiency. Practical assessments include "question journals," where students document and reflect on their inquiries. Research highlights that peer question-rating

activities build evaluative skills while reducing teacher grading loads by 40%. Questioning is a powerful, research-backed strategy that transforms reading from consumption to active dialogue with texts.

Therefore, Effective assessment of questioning skills not only measures the depth and relevance of questions but also evaluates how well students can apply their inquiries. Using rubrics based on Bloom's Taxonomy helps to correlate question complexity with reading proficiency. Practical methods, such as "question journals," allow students to reflect on their questions and deepen their understanding. Peer question-rating activities further enhance evaluative skills while lightening teachers' grading burdens. Questioning, as a strategy, shifts reading from passive consumption to active engagement with the text, fostering deeper critical thinking.

2.5 The Importance of Reading

Reading is a foundational skill that serves as a gateway to knowledge, critical thinking, and personal growth. Beyond its academic benefits, reading enhances cognitive abilities, fosters empathy, and equips individuals with the tools to navigate an increasingly complex world. Regarding cognitive development and brain function, reading stimulates neural pathways, strengthening memory, concentration, and analytical skills. Neuroimaging studies reveal that regular readers exhibit increased gray matter density in brain regions associated with language and executive function. Longitudinal research shows that children who read consistently perform 20-30% higher on cognitive assessments than their peers. These benefits persist into adulthood, reducing the risk of age-related cognitive decline by up to 32% (Dehaene, 2018). This information highlights the strong connection between reading and brain development. It shows that regular reading not only improves memory and focus but also supports long-term cognitive health. These findings confirm the importance of encouraging consistent reading habits from an early age.

Academically, reading proficiency is one of the strongest predictors of overall academic achievement. According to Cunningham and Stanovich (2020), proficiency in reading is the strongest predictor of academic success across all disciplines. Studies indicate that students reading at grade level by third grade are four times more likely to graduate high school. The correlation between reading volume and vocabulary growth is particularly robust, with avid readers acquiring up to 12,000 more words annually than infrequent readers. This lexical advantage translates to superior performance in writing, math, and science. This emphasizes how strong reading skills are essential for academic achievement. It shows that students who read well early on

are more likely to succeed in school and graduate. It also highlights how frequent reading builds vocabulary, which supports learning across different subjects.

Social and emotional impacts of reading are also significant. Fiction reading enhances theory of mind the ability to understand others' perspectives—by 25-30% compared to non-readers. MRI scans reveal that literary fiction activates brain networks involved in social cognition. Regular readers demonstrate greater emotional intelligence, conflict resolution skills, and cultural awareness. These effects are particularly pronounced when reading diverse narratives that challenge personal worldviews (Kidd and Castano, 2019). Therefore, reading fiction improves social understanding and emotional intelligence. It helps readers relate to others' perspectives and feelings, which supports skills like empathy and conflict resolution. In academic terms, this highlights reading's role in developing social cognition and emotional growth, especially when engaging with diverse and thought-provoking stories.

Professionally, reading skills are linked to greater career success and adaptability. Adults with strong reading skills earn 42% more on average than those with limited literacy. In the digital economy, 85% of high-paying jobs require advanced reading comprehension for analyzing reports, emails, and technical documents. Reading also correlates with career adaptability, as habitual readers are 3.5 times more likely to pursue continuing education and skill development (Kirsch et al., 2021). This information emphasizes the strong connection between reading skills and career success. In academic terms, it highlights that advanced reading comprehension is not only essential for job performance but also supports lifelong learning and adaptability in today's fast-changing work environment. Mentally, reading has therapeutic benefits, such as reducing stress and improving mood. Just six minutes of reading reduces stress levels by 68% more than listening to music or walking. Bibliotherapy is increasingly used to treat anxiety and depression, with meta-analyses showing a 28% improvement in symptoms. The immersive nature of reading lowers cortisol production while increasing serotonin and dopamine activity, creating neurological benefits comparable to meditation (Mol and Bus, 2021). This highlights the significant mental health benefits of reading. Academically, it shows that even short periods of reading can greatly reduce stress and support emotional well-being. Reading works like a form of therapy by calming the brain and improving mood, similar to the effects of meditation.

2.6 Reading Comprehension Difficulties

Reading comprehension difficulties affect learners across age groups and educational levels, hindering their ability to extract meaning from texts despite

adequate decoding skills. These challenges stem from cognitive, linguistic, and environmental factors that disrupt the complex process of making sense of written language. Contemporary research highlights specific barriers to comprehension, including vocabulary deficits, weak inference-making skills, and limited metacognitive strategies.

One key difficulty is vocabulary deficits, according to Ouellette and Beers (2016), limited vocabulary knowledge is one of the most significant predictors of reading comprehension failure, accounting for up to 50% of variance in comprehension scores among elementary students. Learners who encounter more than 10% unknown words in a text typically lose the overall meaning. Academic vocabulary poses particular challenges, as these terms appear less frequently in oral language but are crucial for understanding content-area texts. Research shows that direct vocabulary instruction can improve comprehension outcomes by 20-35%, especially when combined with contextual reading practice. Therefore, limited vocabulary strongly affects comprehension, especially when too many unknown words appear in a text.

Another major issue involves weak inference-making skills. Many struggling readers fail to "read between the lines," lacking the ability to draw logical conclusions from implicit textual information. Inference difficulties affect approximately 30% of middle school students, particularly when processing figurative language or character motivations in narratives. Cognitive studies reveal that poor inferencers often have weaker working memory capacity, making it harder to connect ideas across sentences. Targeted instruction in question-generation and think-aloud strategies has been shown to improve inference skills by 40% over 12 weeks (Cain and Oakhill, 2019). Thus, students with weak inference skills often have lower working memory, making it harder to connect ideas.

Furthermore, many learners struggle with limited metacognitive awareness. Poor comprehenders frequently lack strategies to monitor their understanding, such as recognizing when meaning breaks down or knowing how to repair comprehension. Research indicates that only 15% of struggling readers spontaneously use strategies like re-reading or looking up unfamiliar words. Metacognitive training programs that teach self-questioning ("Does this make sense?") and text structure analysis have demonstrated effect sizes of 0.8 on standardized comprehension measures (Cartwright, 2020). Consequently, metacognitive training, such as self-questioning and text structure analysis, can significantly improve comprehension skills.

Challenges also arise when text structure knowledge gaps. Approximately 25% of students cannot identify basic text structures (e.g., compare/contrast, cause/effect) that

organize information in expository texts. This deficiency is particularly problematic in STEM subjects where understanding procedural sequences or hierarchical relationships is essential. Graphic organizer instruction improves structure awareness, with studies showing 30% better recall of key information when students learn to map text organization visually (Meyer and Ray, 2017). Therefore, a significant number of students struggle to identify basic text structures, especially in expository texts.

Finally, motivational barriers, Guthrie and Klauda (2018) claimed that negative reading experiences create vicious cycles where avoidance leads to skill gaps that further decrease motivation. Surveys reveal that 40% of struggling readers report high anxiety about reading tasks. Research-supported interventions include choice reading (improving engagement by 60%), culturally relevant texts (increasing time-on-task by 35%), and growth mindset approaches that reframe difficulty as part of the learning process. Consequently, high anxiety about reading is common among struggling readers, which impacts their motivation.

2.7 Defining Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is the ability to think clearly, rationally, and independently. It involves analyzing information, evaluating evidence, identifying logical connections, and making reasoned judgments. It is a self-directed and purposeful process used to solve problems, make decisions, and understand complex concepts in an objective and reflective way.

Paul and Elder (2006) define critical thinking as “the art of analyzing and evaluating thinking with a view to improving it.” (p. 4). This definition emphasizes the purposeful and self-regulatory nature of critical thinking, which involves the systematic evaluation of one's own thought processes. This aligns with the idea that critical thinking is a tool for continuous improvement in decision-making and problem-solving.

Ennis (1996) defines critical thinking as “reasonable reflective thinking focused on deciding what to believe or do.” (p. 6). His definition highlights both the cognitive and practical application aspects of critical thinking. In addition, this definition highlights how critical thinking connects cognitive evaluation with action.

Facione (1990), in a widely cited report for the American Philosophical Association, defines critical thinking as “purposeful, self-regulatory judgment which results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference.” (p. 3). Consequently, his definition focuses on the judgment aspect, suggesting that critical thinking is about making informed decisions through careful analysis and evaluation. It aligns with the view

that critical thinking is a structured, intentional process that helps individuals understand and solve complex issues effectively.

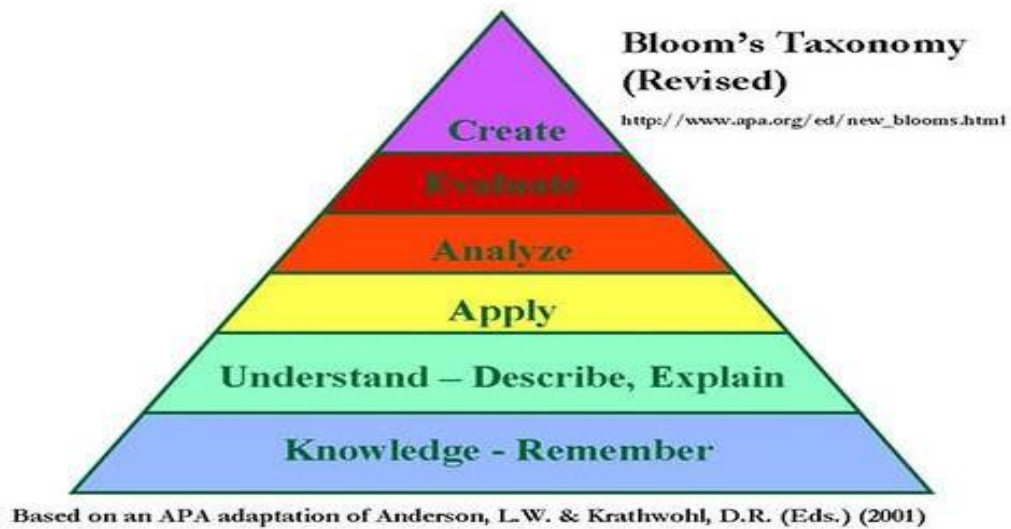
2.7.1 Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Domain

Benjamin Bloom's taxonomy, created in 1956, consists of six levels, often illustrated as a pyramid. Bloom's taxonomy classifies six levels of thinking: "(a) knowledge, (b) comprehension, and (c) application represent lower-order thinking skills; (d) analysis, (e) synthesis, and (f) evaluation signify higher-order thinking or critical thinking skills" (Bloom, 1984, p. 18). as shown in the following diagram.



Figure 1.1 Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom et al. 1956).

The taxonomy was revised in 2001 to better classify thinking skills. The first three levels (remember, understand, and apply) are Lower-Order Thinking Skills (LOTS), while the last three levels (analyse, evaluate, and create) are Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS).



By reaching the highest level of a skill, students become equipped to face more sophisticated and practical challenges in their future. Fastiggi (2014) suggests that teachers should challenge students to solve more difficult tasks for their cognitive thinking. Bloom's Taxonomy is a popular method for improving students' cognitive abilities by organizing cognitive proficiencies hierarchically. It helps teachers create lessons with clear objectives and differentiate between different levels of proficiency. Bloom's Taxonomy helps students understand, remember, apply, analyze, and evaluate concepts at various levels, enabling them to reach authentic comprehension and proficiency in their studies. It facilitates assessment of students' learning and lesson productivity, providing suitable activities, assessments, questions, learning objectives, and desired outcomes. As an educational framework, it can be applied to any cognitive content and is suitable for helping EFL students achieve reading proficiency in a foreign language. The highest level in Bloom's Taxonomy is evaluation it requires a higher intellectual level than all the previous stages. Students in this stage will critically assess the validity of a study and judge its results.

Bloom's Taxonomy is a useful tool for planning objectives, questions, and assessment items in critical reading lessons in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes. The taxonomy comprises cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, which are essential for learners' recall of knowledge, intellectual abilities, and skills development. In EFL classes, comprehension involves translation, interpretation, and extrapolation, which are not relevant for critical reading questions. Application involves applying language rules to problems or situations, encouraging students to anticipate possibilities and apply concepts in new contexts. Analysis involves

breaking down passages into their components, allowing learners to understand their structure. Synthesis encourages students to create something new and rely on original and creative thinking. Evaluation involves judging the value of material, problem solutions, or facts about particular cultures. While Bloom's Taxonomy is useful for developing learning objectives, questions, and assessment items, it is not without its critics. The taxonomy's strengths and limitations should be considered in a critical perspective to ensure its effectiveness in EFL classrooms.

2.8 The Importance of Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is a foundational cognitive skill that enables individuals to analyze information objectively, evaluate arguments logically, and make reasoned decisions. In an era of information overload and rapid technological change, critical thinking has become indispensable for academic success, professional competence, and informed citizenship.

Regarding academic achievement and learning, Abrami et al. (2015) addressed that critical thinking skills are strongly correlated with academic performance across disciplines, particularly in STEM and humanities fields. Studies show that students who receive explicit critical thinking instruction score 15-20% higher on standardized tests and demonstrate deeper conceptual understanding. Meta-analyses reveal that critical thinking-integrated curricula improve retention rates by 30%, as students learn to engage with material analytically rather than memorizing superficially. Higher-order questioning techniques (e.g., Socratic seminars) have proven especially effective in developing these skills. Therefore, using strategies like Socratic questioning helps students become more engaged and analytical in their studies.

One of the most valued skills in modern workplaces is critical thinking. Employers consistently rank critical thinking as the one desired skill across industries, with 93% of business leaders considering it more important than a candidate's undergraduate major. Workers with strong critical thinking skills adapt 40% faster to technological changes and demonstrate 25% better problem-solving in team settings. The World Economic Forum projects critical thinking will be the second most vital workplace skill by 2025, as automation replaces routine cognitive tasks but cannot replicate human judgment (Facione and Gittens, 2016). This evidence highlights the essential role of critical thinking in professional success. As workplace demands evolve, the ability to think analytically and adapt quickly becomes more valuable than formal qualifications alone.

In the digital age, critical thinking serves as a defense against misinformation, enabling individuals to discern credible sources from "fake news". Research indicates

that critical thinking training reduces susceptibility to online hoaxes by 65% compared to traditional media literacy approaches. The ability to identify logical fallacies, assess evidence quality, and recognize cognitive biases has become essential for navigating social media algorithms and AI-generated content (Wineburg and McGrew, 2019). Consequently, this evidence highlights the crucial role of critical thinking in promoting digital literacy. It helps individuals navigate online information more accurately and avoid being misled by false or biased content.

When it comes to scientific inquiry and innovation, critical thinking underpins the scientific method, driving hypothesis generation, experimental design, and data interpretation. Nobel laureates are 5 times more likely to have demonstrated exceptional critical thinking skills early in their careers compared to typical scientists. Organizations that cultivate critical thinking cultures produce 35% more patents and innovative solutions, as employees systematically challenge assumptions and explore alternatives (Halpern, 2020). This highlights the strong link between critical thinking and scientific innovation. It shows that fostering critical thinking can lead to greater creativity, problem-solving, and scientific advancement.

Regarding democratic participation and ethical decision-making, critical thinking enables citizens to evaluate policy claims, resist propaganda, and participate meaningfully in democratic processes. Populations with higher aggregate critical thinking scores show 40% greater voter turnout and 30% more engagement with civic issues. In healthcare, critical thinking improves medical decision-making, with patients demonstrating 50% better understanding of treatment risks/benefits when taught evaluative frameworks (Paul and Elder, 2018). Consequently, this shows that critical thinking plays a key role in promoting active citizenship and informed decision-making, both in political and healthcare contexts.

2.9 The relationship between reading comprehension and critical Thinking

The relationship between critical thinking and reading is well-established in the literature, with researchers like Norris and Phillips, Beck, and Ruggiero recognizing that reading involves reasoning. Beck (1989) states that reading requires thinking (p. 677). Schema theory, as proposed by Marzano et al., provides powerful rationales for linking students' individual backgrounds, specific subject area knowledge, and critical thinking. According to Anderson (1994), there are six ways in which schemata function in thinking and remembering text information. These functions include assimilating new information into existing structures, allocating attention, directing

inferential elaboration, ordering memory searches, facilitating summarizing and editing, and allowing inferential reconstruction when there are gaps in memory.

Previous knowledge plays a significant role in establishing connections between thinking critically and processing text information, leading to critical comprehension levels. The relationship between reading comprehension and critical thinking is an important aspect of understanding the text. To improve readers' comprehension skills and practice them as a critical thinking act, researchers have demonstrated that "the critical thinker uses his or her metacognitive knowledge and applies metacognitive strategies in a useful way throughout the critical thinking process." (Page 191, French and Rhoder, 1992). Reading comprehension and critical thinking are interrelated, and inference-making and critical thinking are based on previous knowledge. Schema theory highlights the close connection between these two elements and offers a collaborative framework for understanding the development of reading comprehension. This hypothesis is an effective tool for understanding how reading abilities develop since it has had an important effect on reading teaching and comprehension.

2.10 Barriers to Critical Thinking

Critical Thinking is essential for reasoned decision-making, yet numerous cognitive, educational, and sociocultural barriers hinder its development. One of the key challenges in critical thinking is the presence of cognitive biases that affect our judgment and decision-making. Human cognition is prone to systematic errors such as confirmation bias, anchoring, and the availability heuristic, which distort judgment and impede objective analysis. Studies show that even highly educated individuals succumb to biases 75% of the time when evaluating evidence. The Dunning-Kruger effect further compounds this issue, as low-skilled individuals overestimate their critical thinking abilities. These automatic thinking patterns are neurologically ingrained, making them resistant to change without deliberate training (Kahneman, 2011). Therefore, human cognition is often affected by biases like confirmation bias and the Dunning-Kruger effect, which hinder objective judgment. These biases are prevalent even among educated individuals and can distort decision-making. The fact that such cognitive patterns are ingrained emphasizes the need for targeted training to improve critical thinking skills.

In addition to cognitive biases, the traditional educational system also plays a role in limiting the development of critical thinking skills. Traditional education often prioritizes rote memorization over analytical skill development, with only 28% of

classroom time devoted to higher-order thinking activities. Standardized testing reinforces this trend by rewarding superficial recall rather than deep analysis. Teacher preparation programs frequently lack robust critical thinking pedagogy training, leaving educators ill-equipped to cultivate these skills. This systemic failure results in only 19% of college graduates demonstrating proficiency in critical thinking (Willingham, 2019). This highlights the need for educational reform that emphasizes critical thinking and problem-solving skills, ensuring both students and teachers are better equipped for deeper analytical engagement.

The digital age adds another layer of difficulty, as the constant influx of information can overwhelm our cognitive abilities and hinder deep thinking. The digital era has created unprecedented access to information while simultaneously overwhelming cognitive capacity. The average person processes 74GB of data daily - equivalent to reading 16 newspapers - leading to shallow, distracted engagement with content. Algorithmic personalization creates echo chambers that reinforce existing beliefs rather than challenge them. Research shows constant digital stimulation reduces sustained focus necessary for critical thinking by 40% (Carr, 2020). Consequently, this underscores the importance of developing strategies to manage information overload and enhance focus, allowing individuals to engage more meaningfully with content in the digital age.

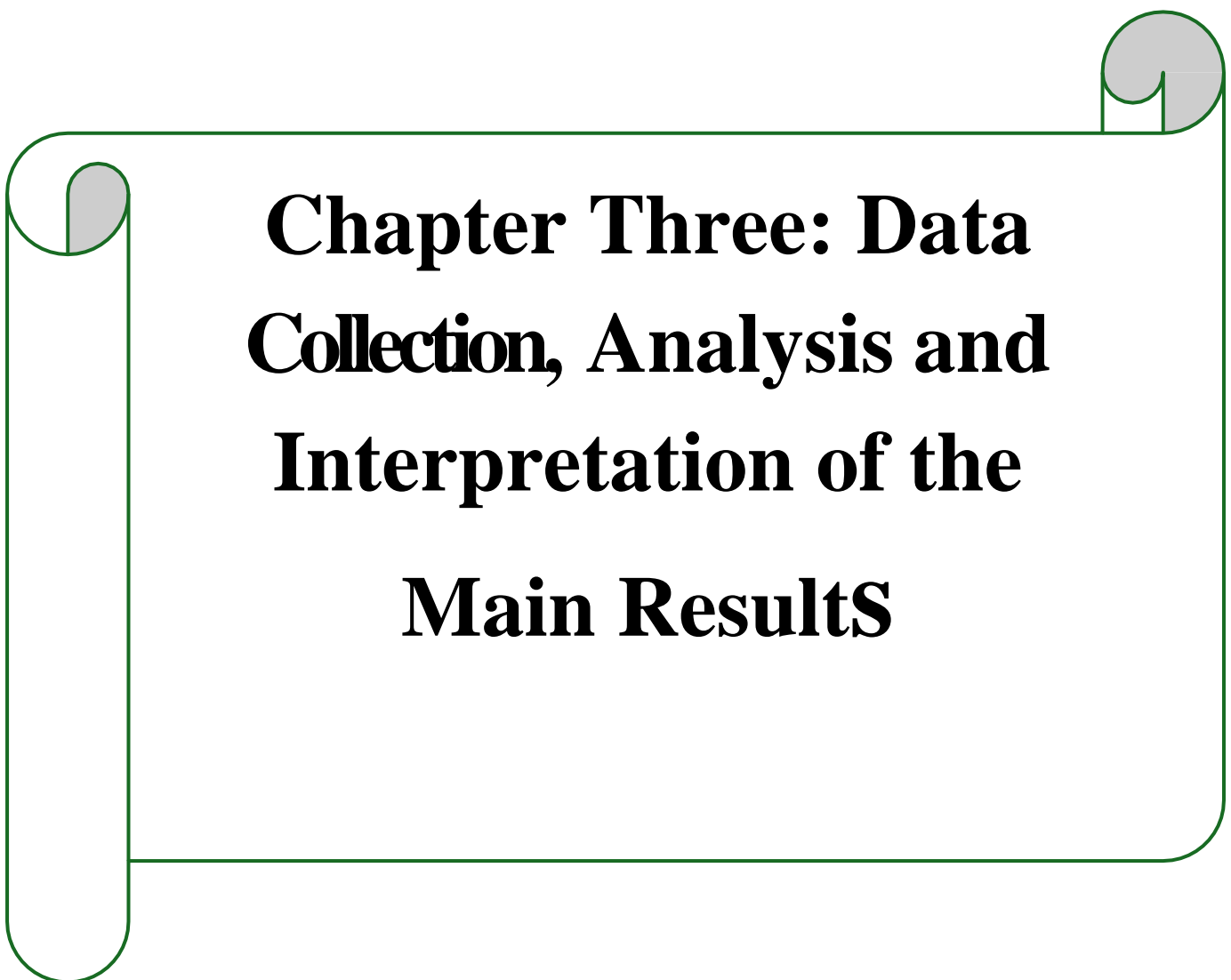
Beyond cognitive and educational barriers, sociocultural and emotional factors also influence the development of critical thinking. Cultural norms valuing conformity over inquiry inhibit critical thinking development, particularly in collectivist societies. Fear of challenging authority figures prevents 62% of employees from voicing dissenting opinions in workplace settings. Emotional reasoning - allowing feelings to override evidence contaminates decision-making processes. Identity-protective cognition causes individuals to reject facts threatening to their worldview, regardless of evidence (Haidt, 2012). Thus, these sociocultural and emotional barriers highlight the need for fostering environments that encourage open dialogue, critical inquiry, and the integration of evidence-based reasoning to improve decision-making and cognitive flexibility.

Furthermore, many individuals hold misconceptions about knowledge itself, which can prevent them from engaging in more sophisticated critical thinking. Many individuals hold naive beliefs about knowledge, viewing it as absolute rather than constructed. This "dualist" epistemology prevents 45% of undergraduates from engaging in nuanced evaluation of arguments. Lack of metacognitive awareness means most people cannot accurately assess their own thinking processes.

Disciplinary insularity in academia creates silos where critical thinking standards vary dramatically across fields (Perry, 2017). Ultimately, addressing these epistemological misconceptions and fostering metacognitive awareness can help individuals develop more sophisticated thinking, enabling them to evaluate arguments critically and bridge disciplinary divides.

2.11 Conclusion

Reading is a fundamental skill that involves not just the ability to decode words, but also the capacity to understand, interpret, and critically engage with texts. Various approaches to teaching reading such as extensive reading, which focuses on reading for pleasure and general understanding, and intensive reading, which emphasizes close, detailed analysis help learners build strong reading habits. The use of effective reading strategies, including scanning for specific information, skimming for main ideas, and questioning to deepen understanding, plays a crucial role in enhancing comprehension. Despite its importance, many learners face reading comprehension difficulties that can hinder their academic and personal development. Moreover, the concept of critical thinking, which involves analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing information, is closely linked to effective reading. Critical thinking is essential for developing independent and reflective learners, though its development can be hindered by several barriers such as lack of motivation, limited reading experience, or inadequate teaching methods. Therefore, integrating strong reading instruction with a focus on critical thinking is vital for empowering learners to become thoughtful, informed, and capable individuals.



**Chapter Three: Data
Collection, Analysis and
Interpretation of the
Main Results**

Chapter Three: Data collection, Analysis and Interpretation

3.1 Introduction

The initial chapter focused on the basic literature of the research topic which is developing critical thinking within reading skill. This chapter is devoted to the practical framework of the overall study. It sheds light on the ELT situation in Algeria in addition to the educational context. Furthermore, it presents the population including teachers and EFL students. Moreover, it explains the research tools used in the study to confirm or disconfirm the stated research hypotheses and to answer the study questions regarding aims and procedures. The study used two questionnaires; one for teachers and the other for students. Beside, it presents the methods used for analyzing and interpreting the data that are collected from the field which are: quantitative and qualitative methods. Finally, this chapter encompasses the discussion of the findings and limitations ending with providing suggestions and recommendations.

3.2 ELT Situation in Algeria

Algeria goes through multiple languages across all educational stages, from primary school to university. Arabic is considered the first and official language of the country, which is taught from an early age in primary, middle, secondary, and even higher education. Alongside it, Tamazight is also taught in various provinces such as Tizi Ouzou, Béjaïa, Batna, and others. French is regarded as the first foreign language in Algeria and is taught in primary schools starting from the third year. It is also used in some core university subjects such as computer science and mathematics. With the wave of globalization and ongoing development, English has become the second foreign language in Algeria. It was taught at middle schools starting from first year however, since the 2023/2024 academic year, it has been taught starting from the third year of primary school. This indicates that English language is significant nowadays in Arabic countries such as Algeria since it is taught in governmental and private schools. In addition to French and English Algeria adopted different languages in secondary school level such as Spanish, Germany and Italy. In Algeria it is studied five years of primary school, four years of middle school, and three years of secondary school make up the 5+4+3 model that forms the basis of the educational system's structure. The required basic education phase is made up of the 12 years for primary to secondary schooling. However, regarding university context it is related to LMD

system. Three years in license, two years in master, and three years in doctorate (PhD) degree.

3.3 Educational Context

This study takes place in the English Department of Aboubekr Belkaid Tlemcen University, which offers extensive undergraduate (Licence) and graduate (Master's/PhD) programs English language, literature, linguistics, and civilization. With a focus on academic rigor, it prepares students for jobs in teaching, translation, and international communication by giving them advanced language fluency, critical analysis, and research skills. With an emphasis on literary studies, applied linguistics, and cultural studies, the department creates a vibrant learning atmosphere that is bolstered by possible partnerships and research projects.

3.4 Sample Population

The sample chosen for the research concerns 45 master one EFL students and 14 teachers at Aboubekr Belkaid University of Tlemcen, more precisely English department .

3.4.1 Teacher's Profile

The teachers involved in this research are from diverse specializations. Their areas of expertise encompass core linguistic disciplines such as grammar and linguistics including branches like neurolinguistics as well as pedagogical domains such as didactics and educational psychology. In addition, several teachers specialize in practical language skills, including written expression, comprehension, and general English instruction across various educational levels. Others are involved in modules focused on research and study skills, oral expression, and civilization at Aboubekr Belkaid University of Tlemcen. They have completed masters' and PhDs' degrees. The sample consists of 16 teachers but only 14 teachers answered the questionnaire.

3.4.2 Learner's Profile

The learners involved in this research are Master One students majoring in English specialized in linguistics, literature, civilization, and didactics at Aboubekr Belkaid University of Tlemcen. They have completed at least three years of university-level English instruction. Most of them have studied reading courses as part of their undergraduate curriculum. The sample consists of 45 students who voluntarily participated in the study by responding to a structured questionnaire.

3.5 Research Tools

In this study the researchers worked on questionnaire which is a type of research instrument that consists of a prearranged list of printed or electronic questions intended to collect data from participants. It is frequently used to effectively analyze

beliefs, actions, or facts in surveys, evaluations, and data collection. Both closed-ended (multiple-choice, Likert scale) and open-ended (free-response) questions can be included in questionnaires.

3.5.1 Aims

To explore teachers' and students' views on the role of reading in developing critical thinking skills, two questionnaires were used. The teacher's questionnaire aimed to gather professional insights into teaching practices and the integration of critical thinking in reading sessions. The student's questionnaire aimed to investigate learners' perceptions and experiences with reading activities that promote analytical thinking.

3.5.2 Procedures

Regarding the procedures, the researcher first designed two questionnaires: one for teachers and another for students. The questionnaires were validated by the supervisor in the department before distribution. Afterward, the teacher's questionnaire was distributed via email and in person to 16 EFL teachers at Aboubekr Balkaid University of Tlemcen. The student questionnaire was handed out to 45 Master One EFL students during classroom sessions with the help of the module teacher. Participants were given one week to complete the forms. After collecting the responses, the data were organized, coded, and prepared for analysis using both quantitative and qualitative methods.

3.5.3 Teacher's Questionnaire

The questionnaire is in two forms open-ended and closed-ended. Open-ended questions are used to produce qualitative. However, closed-ended is mainly used to produce quantitative data. The purpose of the questionnaire is to allow participants clarify their opinions about the impact of reading on the development of critical thinking skill.

3.5.4 Learners 'Questionnaire

The survey is available in both closed-ended and open-ended formats. While closed-ended questions are mostly used to generate quantitative data, open-ended questions are used to generate qualitative data. The purpose of the survey is to find out how students feel about reading's influence on the growth of critical thinking abilities.

3.6 Data Analysis

In this study both qualitative and quantitative methods are used to present and analyse the data that are collected from the field. Quantitative data is numerical

information (such as height, age, and survey scores) that may be measured and statistically examined. Qualitative data is descriptive, non-numerical information derived from attributes, viewpoints, or experiences (e.g., observations, interview responses).

The researchers analyse data by quantitative approach using tables and graphs while qualitative approach presented in a description form. Moreover, the analysis process begins by examining a myriad amount of information and organising it into codes, themes, and categories.

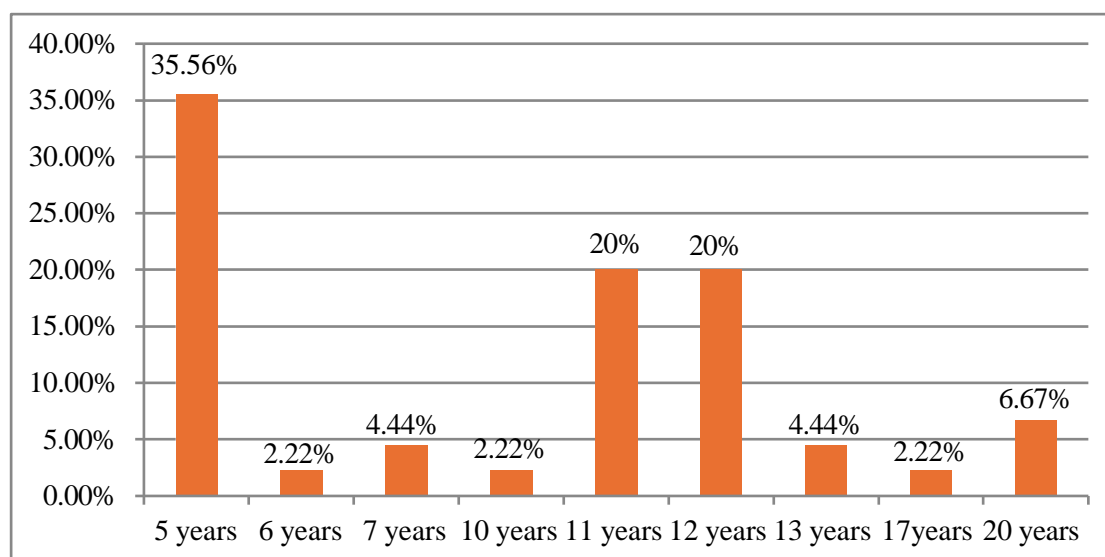
3.6.1 Students' Questionnaire

Section One: General Information

Q1: How many years have you been studying English?

This question is open-ended, students here wrote different answers about how many years they studied English. Their answers were between 5 years to 20 years. As shown in graph 1, sixteen participants (35.56%) reported studying English for five years at the university level. One student (2.22%) indicated six years, while two students (4.44%) reported seven years of study. One student (2.22%) stated ten years, nine participants (20%) reported eleven years, and another nine (20%) reported twelve years. Additionally, two students (4.44%) claimed thirteen years, one student (2.22%) reported seventeen years, and three participants (6.67%) stated that they have been studying English for twenty years or more. Therefore, there is a diverse range of experience among participants, which may influence their critical thinking and reading skills differently.

Graph 3.1. Years of English Study among Master One Students



Q2: How would you describe your proficiency in English?

The majority of students 31 out of 45 (68.89%) described their English proficiency as good, indicating a generally positive perception of their language competence. 10 students (22.22%) rated their proficiency as average, while 3 students (6.67%) considered it to be very good. Notably, no respondents chose bad or very bad, suggesting that all participants view their English ability as at least average or better. This indicates that most participants feel confident in their language abilities, which may positively affect their ability to engage with complex reading materials and apply critical thinking skills.

Table 3.1. Students' Self-Assessment of English Proficiency

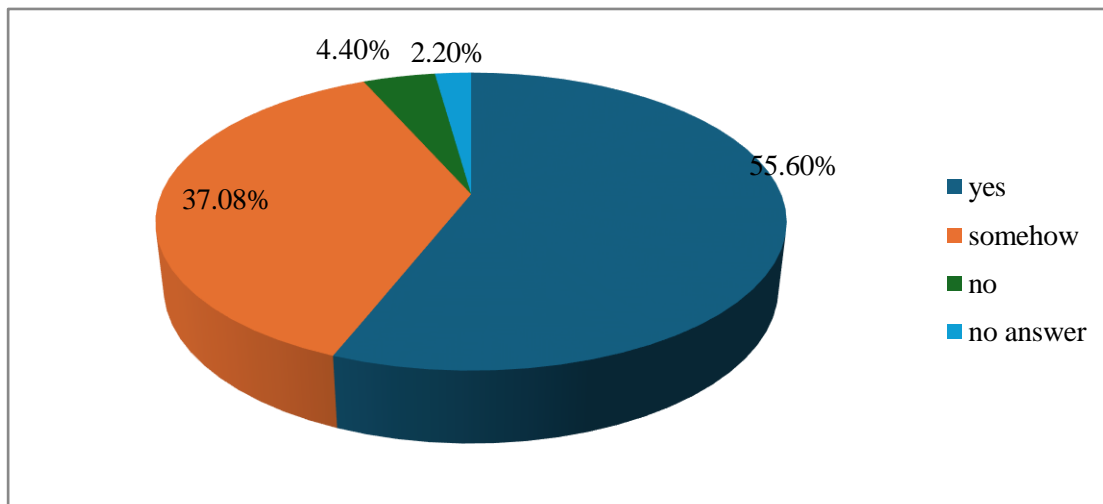
Proficiency level	Number of students	Percentage
Very good	3	6.6%
Good	31	68.8%
Average	10	22.2%
Bad	0	0%
Very bad	0	0%

Section Two: Reading

Q3: Do you like reading?

As shown in graph 2, the majority of students (25 out of 45 (55.6%) expressed a clear interest in reading. Additionally, 17 students (37.8%) indicated a moderate interest by choosing "somehow." Only 2 students (4.4%) responded negatively, stating that they do not like reading. One student (2.2%) did not answer the question. These results suggest that most Master One students have a positive or at least neutral attitude toward reading, which may contribute to the development of their critical thinking skills through reading activities.

Pie Chart 3.1. Students' Attitudes toward Reading



Q4: How often do you read?

The majority of students 31 out of 44 (70.5%) reported that they read "sometimes", indicating a moderate level of engagement with reading materials. 11 students (25%) stated they "rarely" read, which may demonstrate their limited interest or access to reading materials. Only 2 students (4.5%) reported reading "usually", which means that a very small portion of the sample are frequent readers. No student selected "never", though one student may have skipped the question, resulting in a total of 44 responses instead of 45.

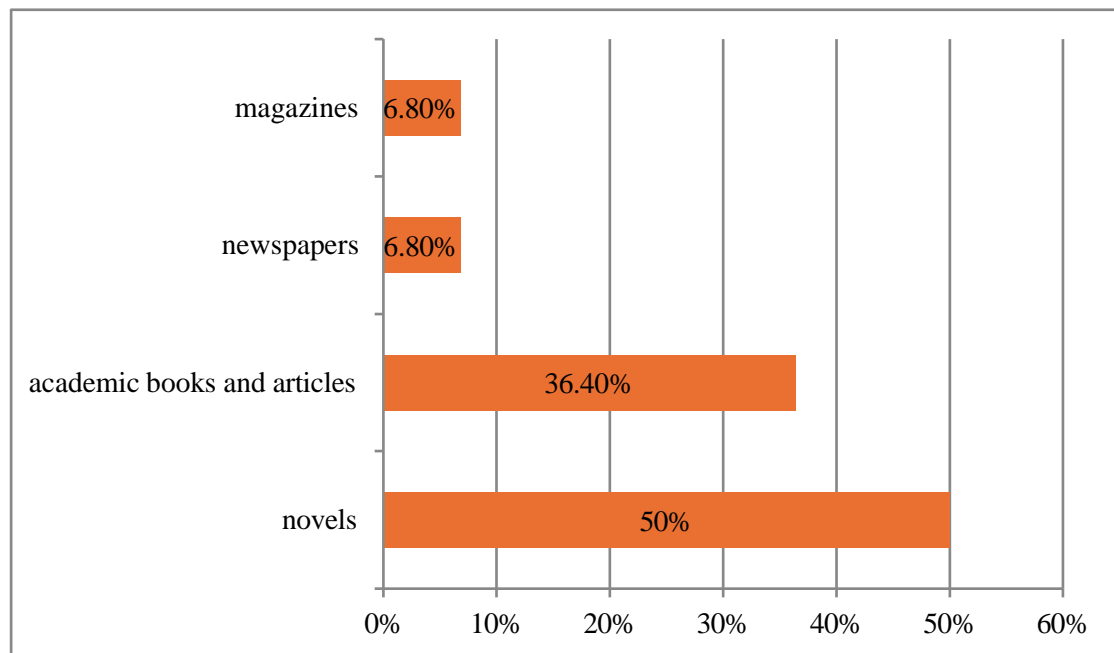
Table 3.2. Students' Frequency of Reading

Frequency	Number of students	Percentage
Usually	2	4.5%
Sometimes	31	70.5%
Rarely	11	25%
Never	0	0%

Q5: What types of Books do you prefer to read?

Out of 45 respondents, 22 students (50%) reported a preference for novels, making it the most popular choice. Academic books and articles followed with 16 students (36.4%), indicating a significant interest in scholarly reading. Newspapers and magazines were the least chosen, with only 3 students (6.8%) selecting each. This indicates that fictional and academic content are more appealing to students than current affairs or leisure reading materials.

Graph 3.2.Students' Preferred Types of Reading Materials



Q6: What do you often read for?

The majority of students (42.22%) read primarily to enrich their vocabulary and knowledge, reflecting a strong focus on language development. Reading for pleasure and to improve other skills both received equal preference, each accounting for 20% of responses. A smaller number of students read specifically to better understand difficult lesson content (8.89%) or to gain deeper comprehension of tough lessons (6.67%).

Table 3.3.Students' Purposes for Reading

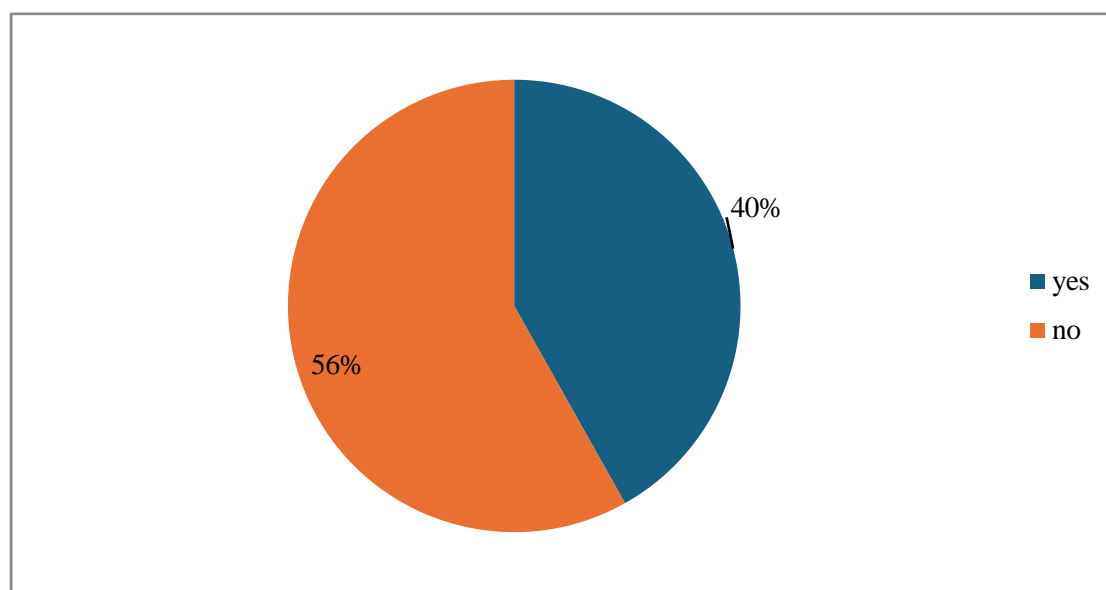
Purposes	Number of students	Percentage
To enrich vocabulary and knowledge	19	42.22%
For pleasure	9	20%
To improve other skills	9	20%
To better understand difficult lessons	4	8.89%
For deeper comprehension of tough lessons	3	6.67%

Q7: Do you have a propensity to discontinue perusing when you are unable to comprehend the content?

The majority of students (55.56%) stated that they do not tend to stop reading when they do not understand the content, indicating perseverance and a willingness to

continue despite challenges. Meanwhile, 40% of the respondents admitted that they do stop reading when comprehension becomes difficult. This reflects a potential area where strategies for tackling complex texts could be beneficial to help students overcome comprehension barriers rather than giving up.

3.2 Pie Chart. Students' Tendency to Stop Reading when Facing Comprehension Difficulties



Q8: If not, what method or methods do you often employ to get around obstacles in reading comprehension?

Among the 45 students surveyed, 32 provided answers to this question, while 13 left it unanswered. The most commonly employed strategy to overcome reading comprehension obstacles is rereading, selected by 21 students (65.63%) of respondents. This indicates that many learners tend to revisit the content to clarify meaning. Asking questions were used by 7 students (21.88%), reflecting an interactive problem-solving approach, while summarizing was used by 4 students (12.50%), showing a strategy to condense and internalize difficult content. The 13 students who did not respond may either not use a specific strategy or chose to skip the question.

Table 3.4. Strategies used to Overcome Reading Difficulties

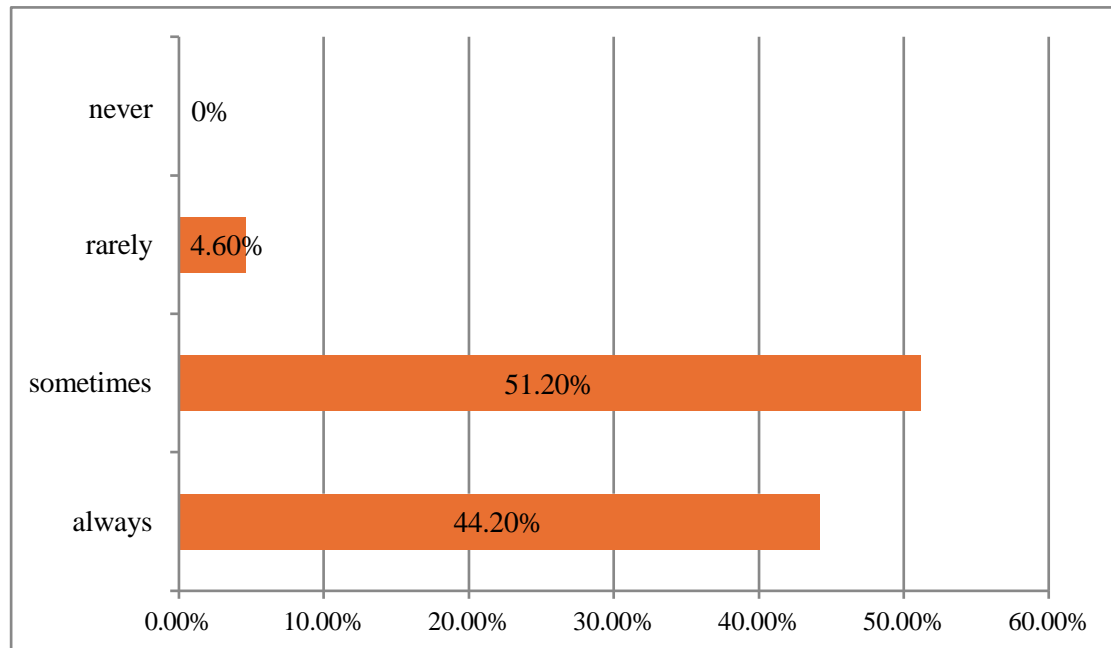
Methods	Number of students	Percentage
Rereading	21	65.63%
Asking questions	7	21.88%
summarizing	4	12.50%

Q9: Do your teachers encourage you to read?

The majority of the students 22 out of 45 (51.2%) reported that their teachers sometimes encourage them to read. Meanwhile, 19 students (44.2%) stated that their

teachers always provide encouragement. Only 2 students (4.6%) mentioned that teachers rarely motivate them to read, and none reported a total lack of encouragement. This reflects a generally positive trend in teacher support toward fostering reading habits among students.

Graph 3.3. Students' Perceptions of Teachers' Encouragement to Read



Q10: Do you think that reading is a necessary skill for you to develop?

The majority of students 43 out of 44(97.7%) believe that reading is a necessary skill to develop, while only one student (2.3%) disagrees. This demonstrates that nearly all Master One students recognize reading as a fundamental component of their academic growth.

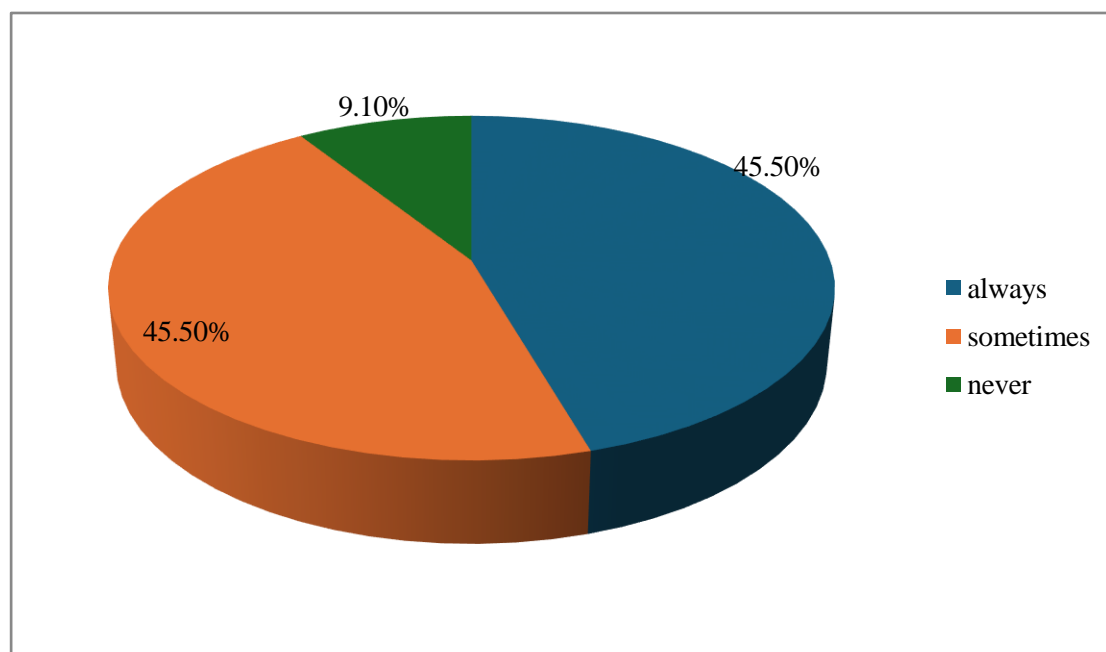
Table 3.5. Students' Views on the Necessity of Reading Skill

Responses	Number of students	Percentage
Yes	43	97.7%
No	1	2.3%

Q11: Do you attempt to predict what will happen next in the story as you read it?

An equal number of students 20 out of 44 (45.5%) report always attempting to predict plot developments and sometimes doing so, and a smaller group of 4 students (9.1%) never engages in this practice. These results indicate that many students actively anticipate narrative progress, though a notable minority does not.

Pie Chart 3.3 Students' Habits of Predicting while Reading



Q12: When you read something, do you question yourself (e.g., what was the character's motivation? Is this an opinion or a fact?)

The largest group 26 out of 44 (59.1%) sometimes engages in self-questioning during reading, while 14 students (31.8%) always reflect on such questions, and 4 students (9.1%) never do. This reflects a generally moderate level of metacognitive engagement, with room to encourage more consistent critical questioning.

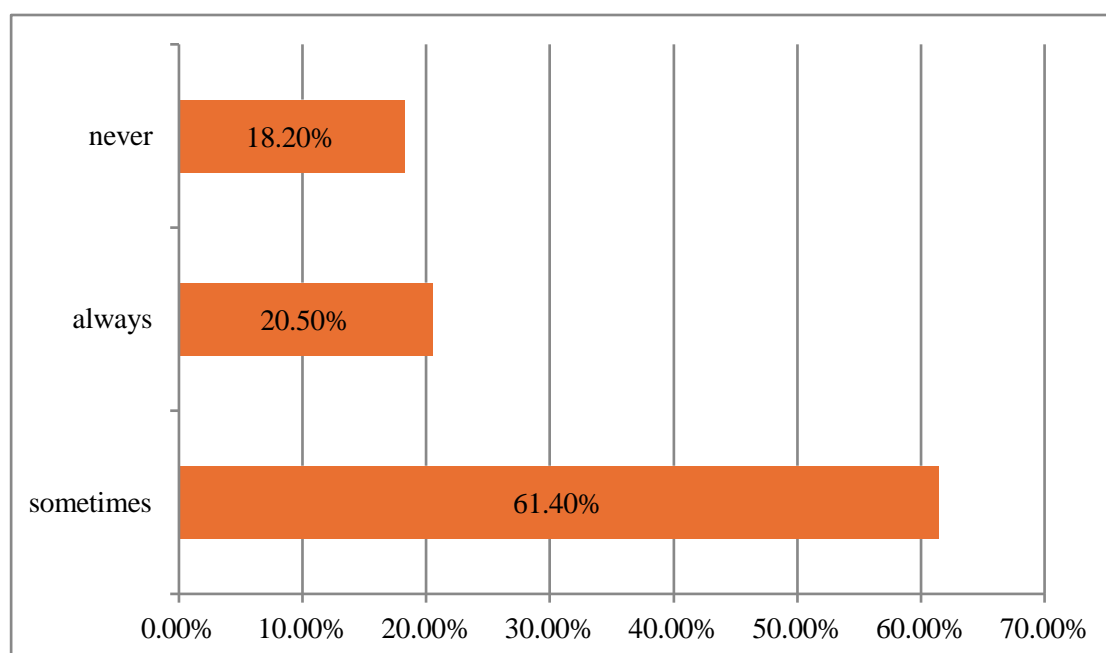
Table 3.6. Students' Use of Self-Questioning while Reading

Responses	Number of students	Percentage
Sometimes	26	59.1%
Always	14	31.8%
Never	4	9.1%

Q13: Do you compare what you read with your own life or experiences?

Most respondents 27 out of 45 (61.4%) sometimes relate text content to personal experiences, 9 students (20.5%) always make such comparisons, and 8 students (18.2%) never do. These figures reveal that a majority of students draw personal connections to reading, which can deepen comprehension.

Graph 3.4. Comparison of Reading Content with Personal Experiences



Q14: What do you do when you read something that you disagree with?

20 students out of the total number reported ignoring the disagreement and keep reading, however, only 11 students (27.5%) seek someone else's opinion, and 9 participants (22.5%) reflect on why they disagree. Therefore, this highlights a range of coping strategies, from passive skipping to active reflection and discussion.

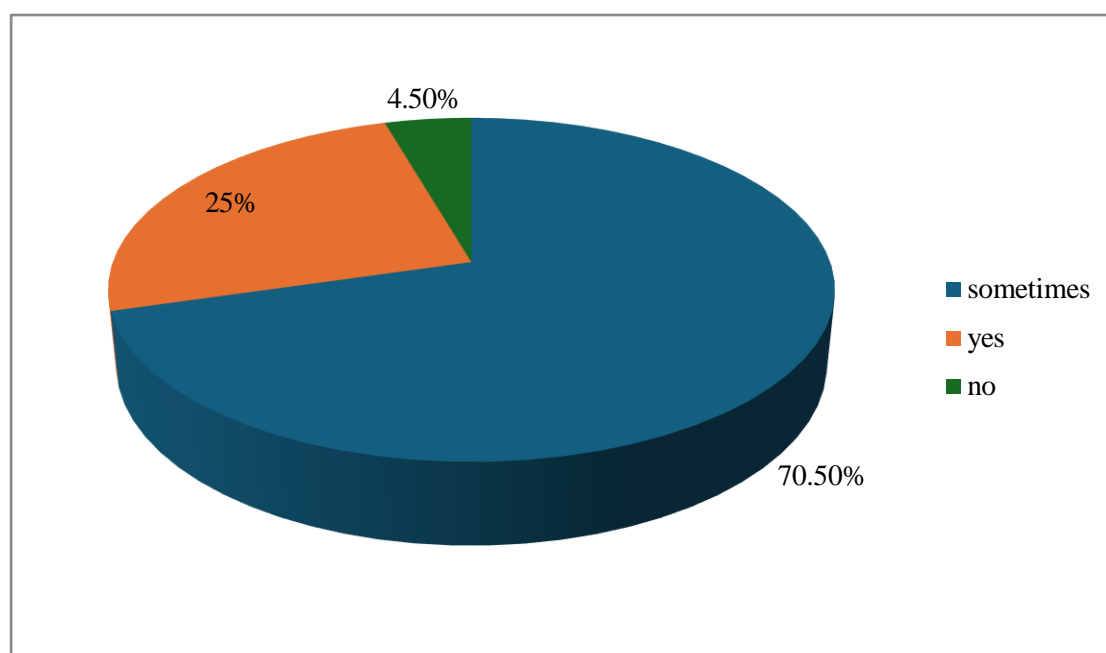
Table 3.7. Students' Reactions to Disagreeable Reading Content

Responses	Number of students	Percentage
Ignore it and keep reading	20	50%
Ask someone for their opinion	11	27.5%
Think about why I disagree	9	22.5%

Q15: Do you find it easy to understand the main idea of a text?

A majority 31 out of 45 (70.5%) sometimes find it easy to grasp the main idea, 11 students (25%) always do, and 2 students (4.5%) never do. These proportions indicate that while most learners can identify central concepts intermittently, consistent comprehension may need further support.

Pie Chart 3.4 Students' Perception of Understanding Main Ideas



Q16: Could you clarify the distinction between an opinion and a fact?

The table 8 shows that twenty-seven students (62.8%) say they can distinguish between fact and opinion, 15 (34.9%) are unsure, and 1 (2.3%) cannot. Thus, this suggests that although a majority understand this distinction, a substantial minority would benefit from targeted instruction on evaluative reading.

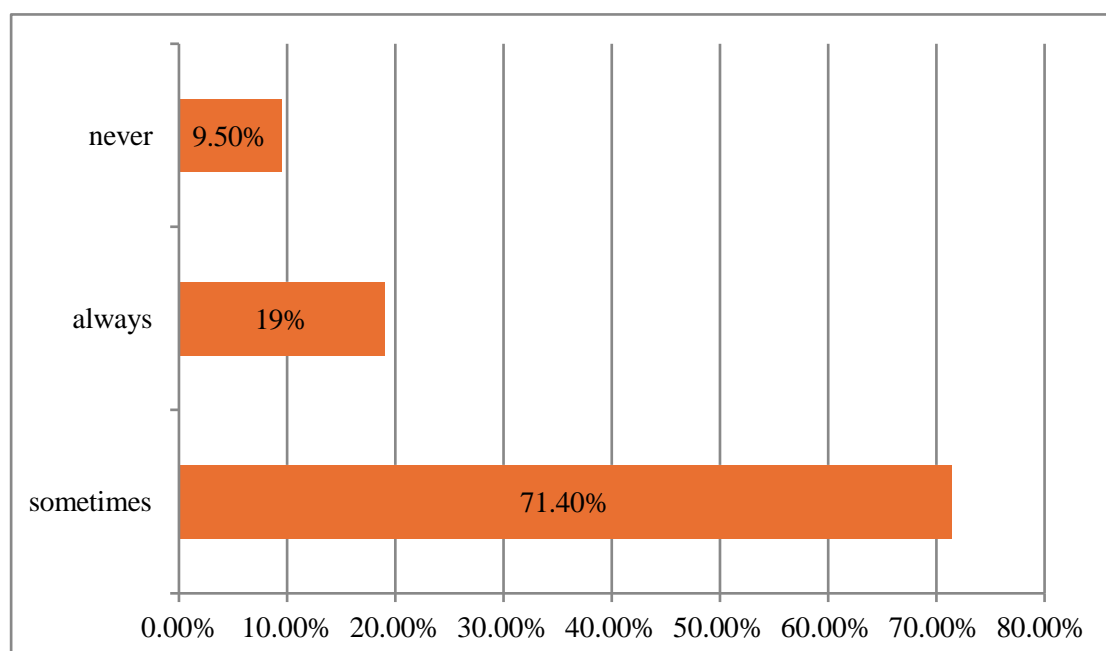
Table 3.8. Students' Ability to Distinguish Between Fact and Opinion

Responses	Number of students		Percentage
	AF	RF	
Yes	27		62.8%
I am not sure	15		34.9%
no	1		2.3%

Q17: When you read something, do you check if the information is true or reliable?

Answers to this question reveal that thirty students (71.4%) sometimes verify information, 8 (19%) always do, and 4 (9.5%) never do. Therefore, this indicates that most students engage in source evaluation at least occasionally, but reinforcing consistent fact checking could strengthen critical reading.

Graph 3.5. Students' Critical Evaluation of Reading Material



Q18: Do you consider why the author wrote the text (e.g., to educate, convince, or amuse)?

Twenty-nine students (65.9%) sometimes reflect on the author's purpose, 8 students (18.2%) always do, and 7 participants (15.9%) never do. These numbers reveal that while purpose analysis occurs for many learners, more structured guidance might increase its frequency.

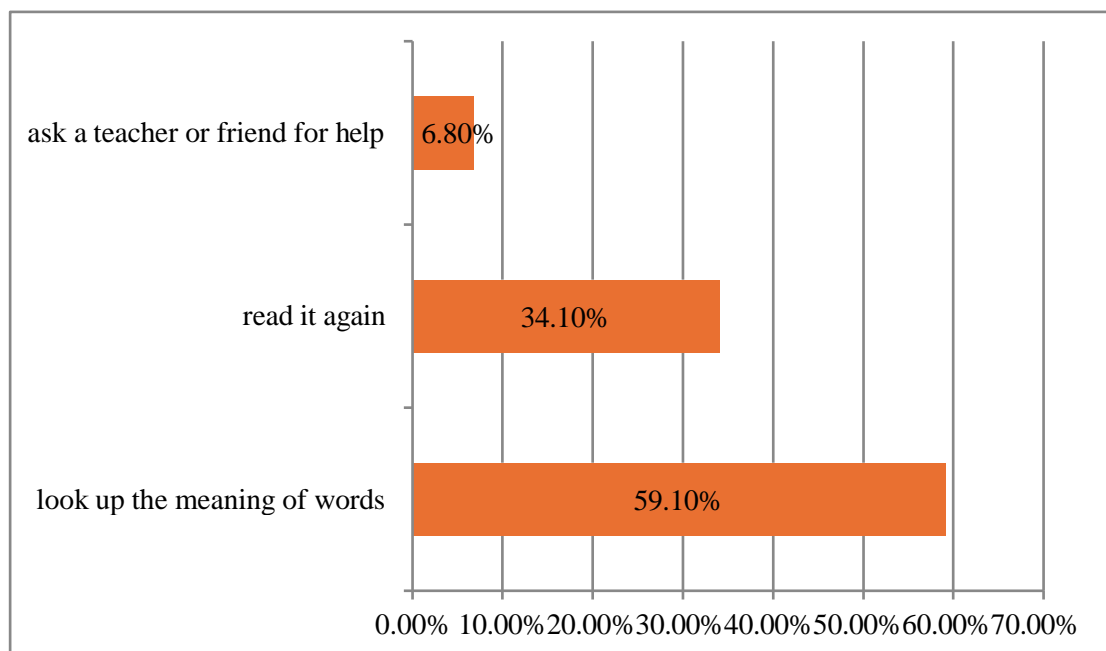
Table 3.9. Students' Awareness of Author's Purpose

Responses	Number of students AF	Percentage RF
Sometimes	29	65.9%
Always	8	18.2%
Never	7	15.9%

Q19: What do you do when you don't understand something you are reading?

The majority 26 out of 45 (59.1%) look up word meanings, 15 students (34.1%) reread the passage, and 3 of them (6.8%) ask someone for help. These findings highlight that students primarily rely on individual strategies to resolve comprehension issues, with few seeking peer or teacher support.

Graph 3.6 Students' Strategies for Dealing with Reading Difficulties



Q20: Are you interested in learning more about how to read and think critically? Thirty-two students (72.7%) expressed interest in developing critical reading skills, and 12 of them (27.3%) were uncertain. Therefore, this demonstrates a strong overall motivation to enhance critical thinking through reading instruction.

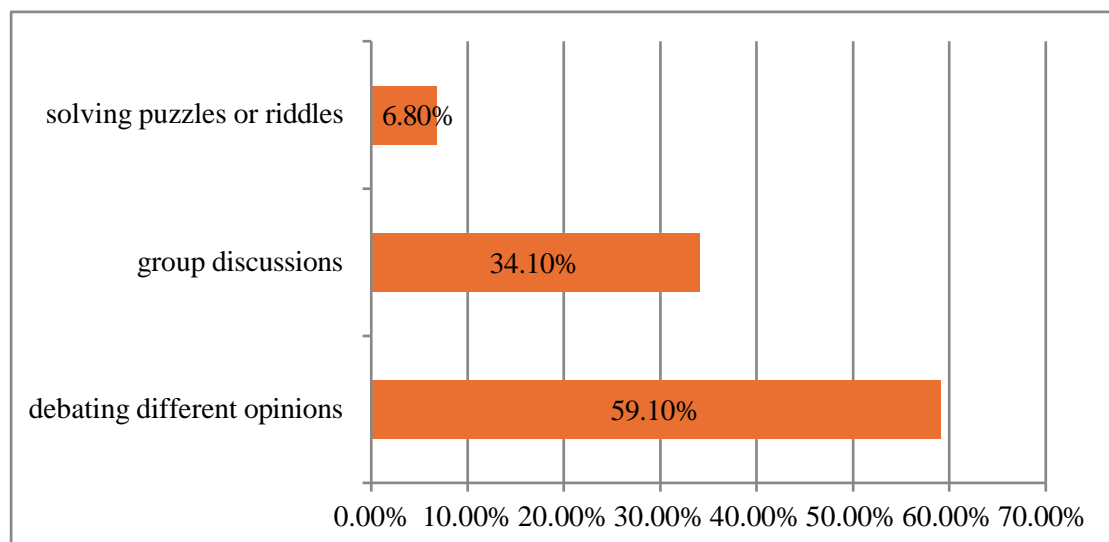
Table 3.10. Students' Interest in Developing Critical Reading Skills

Responses	Number of students AF	Percentage RF
Yes	32	72.7%
Maybe	12	27.3%

Q21: What activities do you believe could help you develop your critical thinking abilities?

Most students 26 out of 44 (59.1%) chose debating different opinions, 15 of them (34.1%) preferred group discussions, and 3 of them (6.8%) selected solving puzzles or riddles. These preferences indicate that interactive and dialogue-based activities are seen as the most effective for fostering critical thinking.

Graph 3.7 .Preferred Activities to Develop Critical Thinking



Q22: Do you think critical thinking is important for reading? Justify ? (Write your answer in a few sentences)

This question is open-ended one. The majority of students expressed strong support for the importance of critical thinking in reading. Most answers emphasized that critical thinking helps deepen understanding, distinguish between fact and opinion, analyze texts more effectively, and develop personal viewpoints. Some responses also highlighted benefits such as enriching vocabulary, promoting reflective thinking, and allowing for cultural awareness. A few students pointed out that critical thinking prevents passive reading and enables readers to evaluate ideas critically. Interestingly, only one student said that critical thinking is not important, suggesting a nearly unanimous recognition of its value. Additionally, one student viewed reading itself as a tool to develop critical thinking rather than the other way around, indicating a reciprocal relationship between the two. Overall, the responses reflect an awareness that critical thinking enhances not just reading skills, but broader cognitive and personal development.

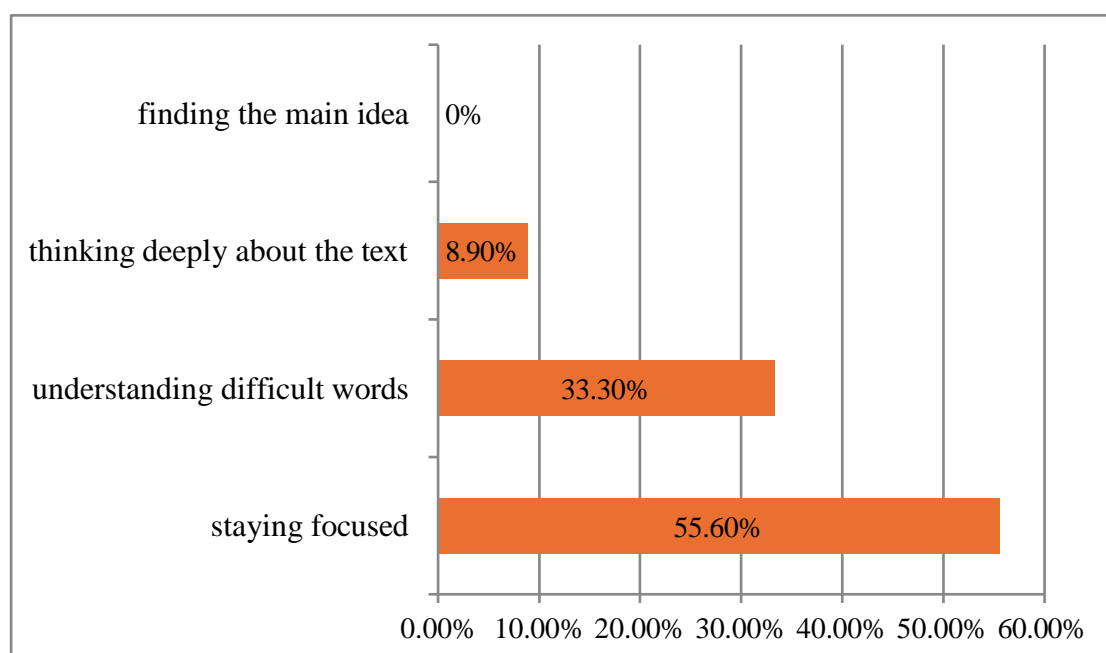
Table 3.11.Students’ Perceptions of the Importance of Critical Thinking in Reading

Students’ views	Frequency
Helps in understanding deeply / analyzing the text	17
Distinguishes facts from opinions / forms independent viewpoint	9
Encourages reflection and interpretation	6
Aids vocabulary and knowledge development	5
Important for personal and intellectual growth	4
Enhances reading and analytical skills	3
Encourages cultural awareness and questioning of ideas	2

Q23: What is the most challenging part of reading for you?

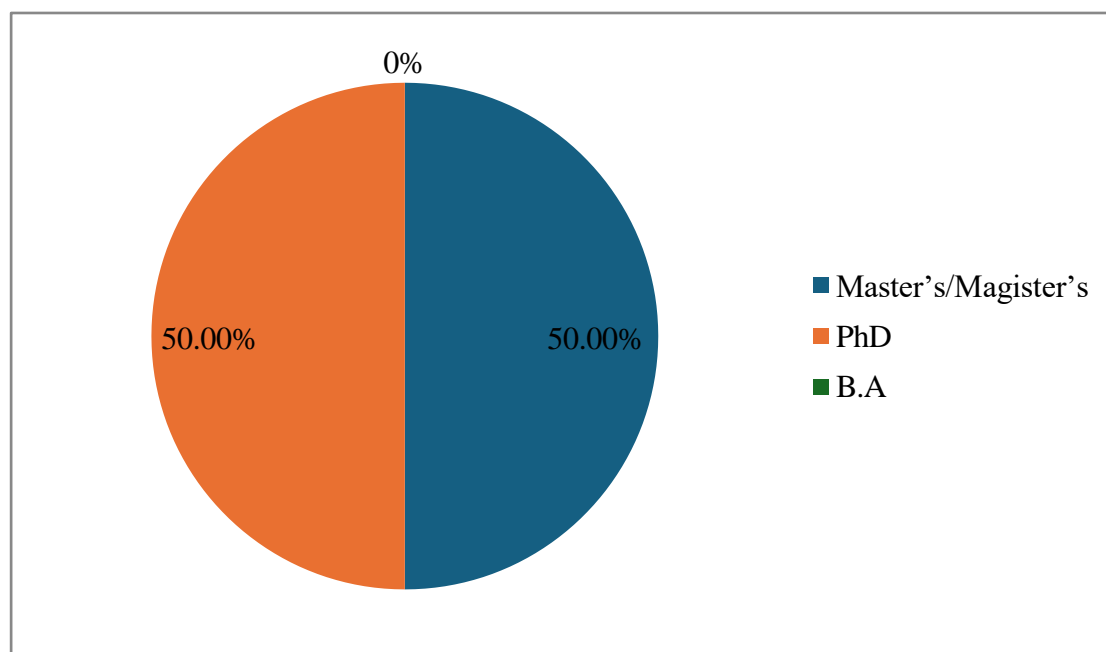
The majority of students 25 out of 45(55.6%) reported that staying focused is the most challenging aspect of reading. Additionally, 15 students (33.3%) identified understanding difficult words as a significant difficulty, while 4 students (8.9%) found thinking deeply about the text challenging. No students selected finding the main idea as a major difficulty. Therefore, these responses indicate that most students struggle primarily with maintaining attention and comprehending complex vocabulary during reading.

Graph 3.8. Students' Perceptions of the Most Challenging Aspects of Reading

**3.6.2 Teachers' Questionnaire****Section one: General information****Q1:** Educational qualification

The responses reveal that the participating teachers possess high academic qualifications. Half of the respondents (7 out of 14 teachers, or 50%) hold a Master's or Magister's degree, while the remaining half (7 out of 14, or 50%) possess a PhD. None of the teachers hold only a Bachelor's degree. These results indicate a well-qualified teaching staff, which enhances the reliability of the insights provided concerning EFL instruction and pedagogical practices.

Pie Chart 3.5. Distribution of Teachers According to their Educational Qualifications



Q2: How long have you been teaching English?

The teaching experience among the participants demonstrates considerable diversity, ranging from no teaching experience to over three decades in the field. The majority, 9 out of 14 teachers (64.29%), reported having between 1 and 9 years of teaching experience. Three teachers (21.43%) have been teaching for more than 10 years but less than 20, while one teacher (7.14%) has over 30 years of experience. One participant (7.14%) indicated they have not yet taught English. This variety suggests a balanced blend of novice and experienced perspectives, offering both fresh and seasoned insights into EFL instruction.

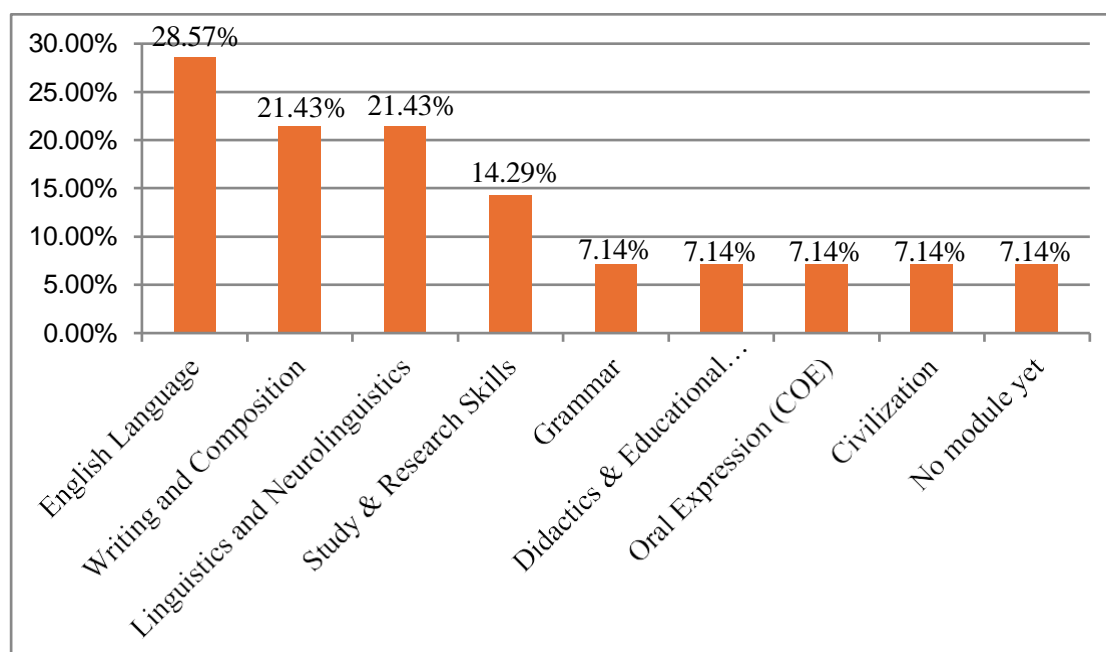
Table 3.12. Teaching Experience Years

Years of Teaching Experience	Number of Teachers AF	Percentage RF
0 year	1	7.14%
1–9 years	9	64.29%
10–19 years	3	21.43%
30+ years	1	7.14%

Q3: What are the modules you are currently teaching?

The responses show that the teachers are engaged in a variety of instructional modules, reflecting a balance between theoretical and practical domains. Writing and composition modules were mentioned by 3 teachers (21.43%), including courses such as CWE and comprehension and written production. English language instruction appeared in 4 cases (28.57%), covering general English as well as school-level teaching. Linguistics-related modules, including neurolinguistics, were reported by 3 teachers (21.43%). Study and research skills, such as study skills and techniques for personal research, were cited by 2 teachers (14.29%). Grammar, didactics, oral expression, and civilization were each reported by 1 teacher (7.14%). One participant indicated not currently teaching any module. It is worth noting that some teachers reported teaching more than one module, such as the case of a teacher who handles both linguistics and grammar. This overlap reflects the interdisciplinary teaching responsibilities common in EFL programs.

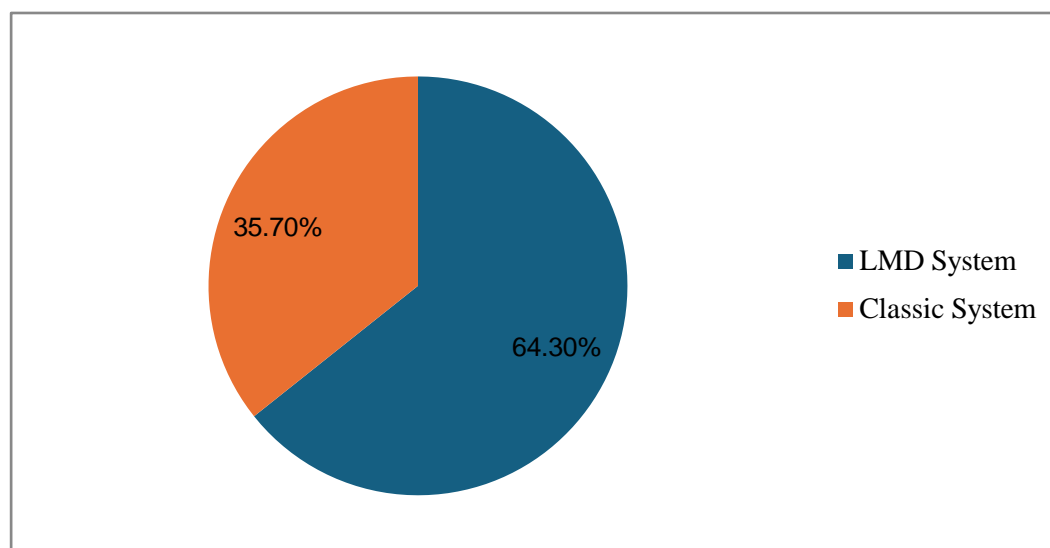
Graph 3.9. Modules Currently Taught by the Respondent Teachers



Q4: Which educational system do you prefer? Whatever your answer, please justify.

The responses indicate that a majority of the teachers prefer the LMD (Licence-Master-Doctorate) system, with 9 out of 14 participants (64.3%) expressing this preference. In contrast, 5 teachers (35.7%) favored the classic system. This preference for the LMD system may reflect a growing acceptance of its structure, flexibility, and alignment with modern educational reforms, although a significant portion still values the stability or perceived effectiveness of the older system.

Pie Chart 3.6. Teachers' Preference for Educational System



Among the 14 teachers who answered the question about their preferred educational system, only 8 provided justifications for their choice. The justifications for preferring the LMD system focused on its practical advantages and student-centered nature. Several teachers viewed it as more efficient, fostering autonomy, reducing material waste, and aligning better with modern pedagogical and administrative practices. Others emphasized its positive impact on students' personal and cognitive development. On the other hand, a few still recognized strengths in the classic system, such as its longer training period and more comprehensive content coverage. These insights reflect a nuanced view of both systems, with experience and familiarity influencing preferences.

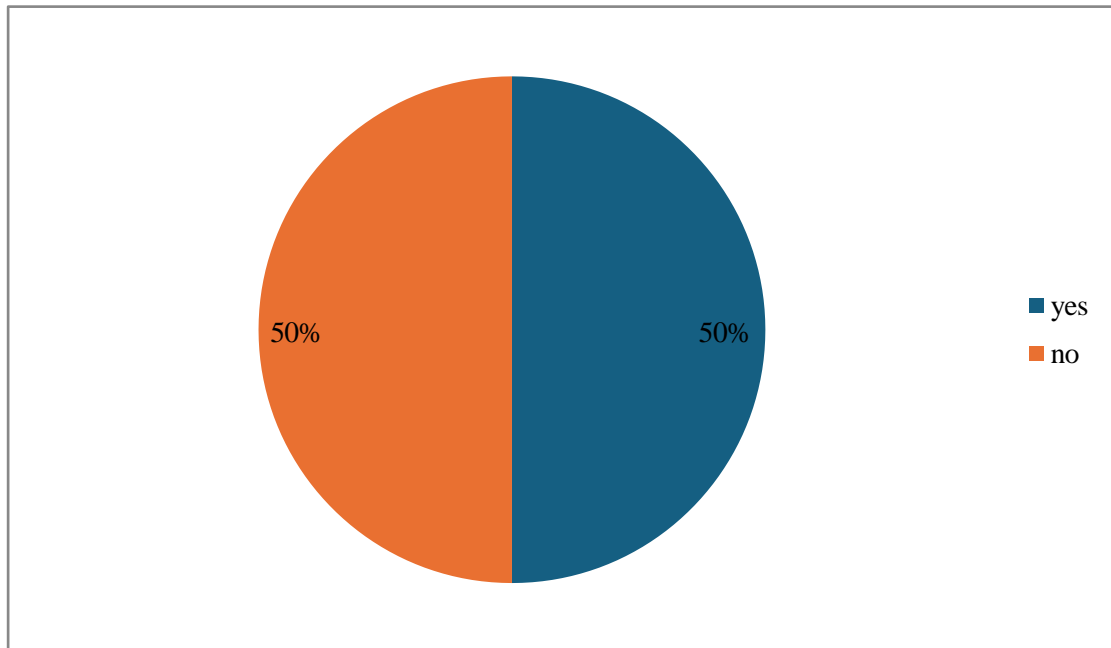
Table 3.13. Teachers' Justifications for Preferred Educational System

Justifications	Number of Teachers
Promotes student autonomy and responsibility	2
Practical, efficient, and reduces waste	2
Leads to personal and mental development	1
More qualified and pedagogically relevant	1
Classic is more informative but lengthy	1
Studied under LMD system (familiarity/preference)	1

Q5: Have you ever taught the module of Reading comprehension?

The responses were balanced between the two options. Seven out of 14 teachers (50%) reported having taught the module, while the other seven (50%) indicated they had not. This equal distribution indicates that reading comprehension is a moderately common teaching assignment among the respondents, possibly depending on departmental needs or teachers' specialization areas.

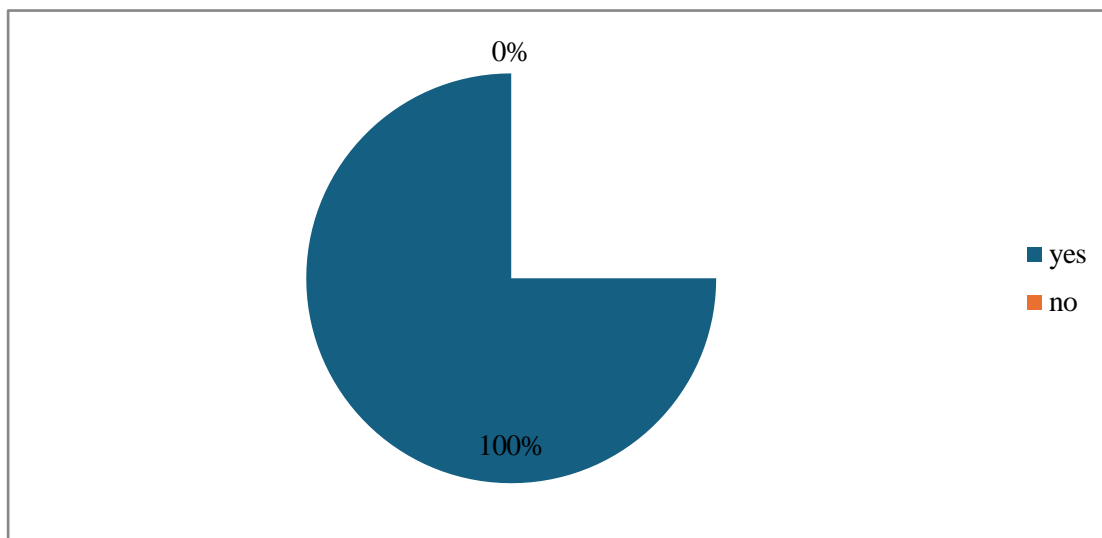
Pie Chart 3.7. Teachers' Experience in Teaching Reading Comprehension



Q6: Do you encourage your students to read? If yes, you encourage them in order to

All 14 teachers reported that they encourage their students to read. This complete agreement (100%) highlights a shared pedagogical perspective regarding the importance of reading in EFL instruction. The consistent responses indicate that reading is widely regarded by the participants as an essential component in developing students' language proficiency, particularly in areas such as vocabulary acquisition, comprehension, and critical thinking.

Pie Chart 3.8. Teachers' Attitudes toward Encouraging Student Reading



When asked why they encourage students to read, 9 teachers selected all the listed purposes, indicating a broad and comprehensive view of the benefits of reading. Additionally, 2 teachers specifically emphasized developing linguistic competence, 2 focused on enhancing writing skills, and 1 mentioned developing cognitive skills. Since some teachers selected more than one reason, the total number of responses exceeds the number of participants. These responses reflect a strong belief in the multifaceted value of reading in EFL learning, supporting both language development and higher-order thinking skills.

Table 3.14. Teachers' Reasons for Encouraging Students to Read

Reasons	Number of Teachers AF	Percentage RF
All of them	9	64.3%
Develop linguistic competence	2	14.3%
Enhance writing skill	2	14.3%
Develop cognitive skills	1	7.1%

In addition to selecting predefined options, four teachers provided written justifications for encouraging student reading. These responses emphasized the broader intellectual and personal benefits of reading. Specifically, teachers noted that reading supports personality development, critical thinking, creativity, and mental clarity. Such responses reflect an understanding of reading as not only a linguistic or academic activity but also a tool for fostering intellectual growth and personal enrichment in learners.

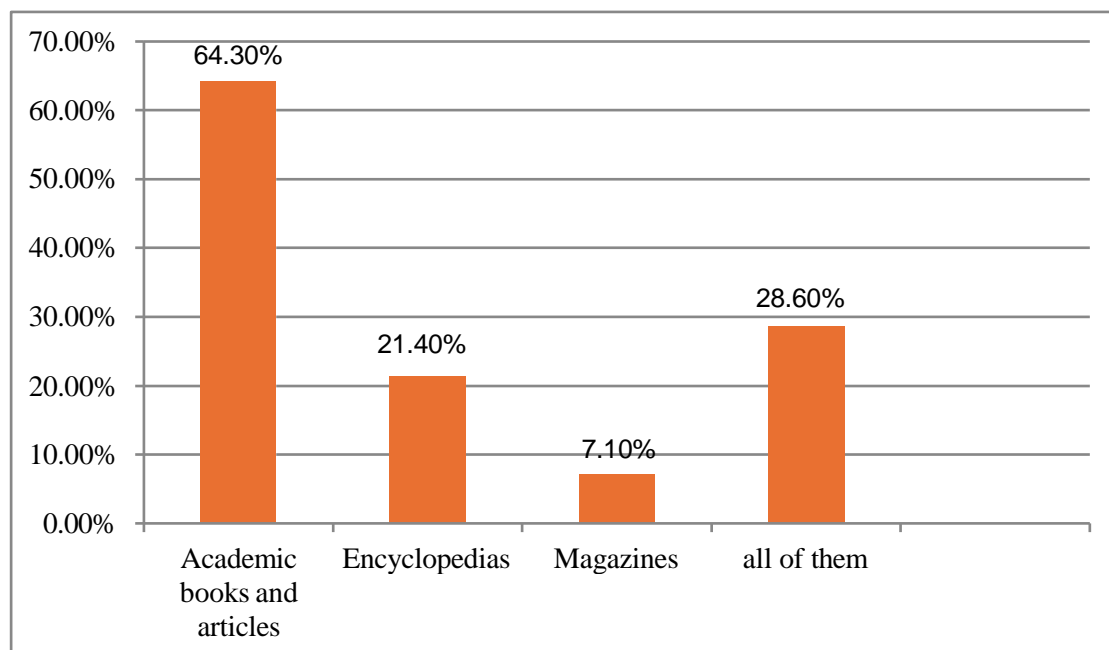
Table 3.15. Teachers' Justifications for Encouraging Reading

Justifications	Number of Teachers
Develops personality and analytical skills	1
Enhances thinking skills	1
Fosters critical thinking and creativity	1
Helps students think better	1

Q7: What kind of English reading materials do you advise your students to read? If others please justify.

When asked which English reading materials they recommend to students, the majority of teachers (9 out of 14) selected academic books and articles, suggesting a clear focus on materials that enhance academic language skills and content knowledge. Four teachers chose all types, which implicitly includes academic books, articles, encyclopedias, magazines, and newspapers. This indicates a broader view of reading as beneficial regardless of the format. Encyclopedias were advised by 3 teachers, and 1 teacher recommended magazines. While no teacher selected newspapers on their own, they are included within the responses marked as "all types." Some teachers selected more than one option.

Graph 3.10. Types of English Reading Materials Advised by Teachers



Justifications:

Six teachers provided additional suggestions beyond the predefined reading materials. Their responses reveal a strong encouragement for literary and interest-based reading. Novels were the most frequently mentioned (4 times), followed by short stories (2 times), indicating that many teachers value narrative texts for engaging students and supporting language development. Other materials included biographies, essays, non-fiction, fiction, and online academic resources such as theses. These responses suggest a pedagogical approach that values both academic and personally engaging texts to motivate learners and enhance comprehension skills.

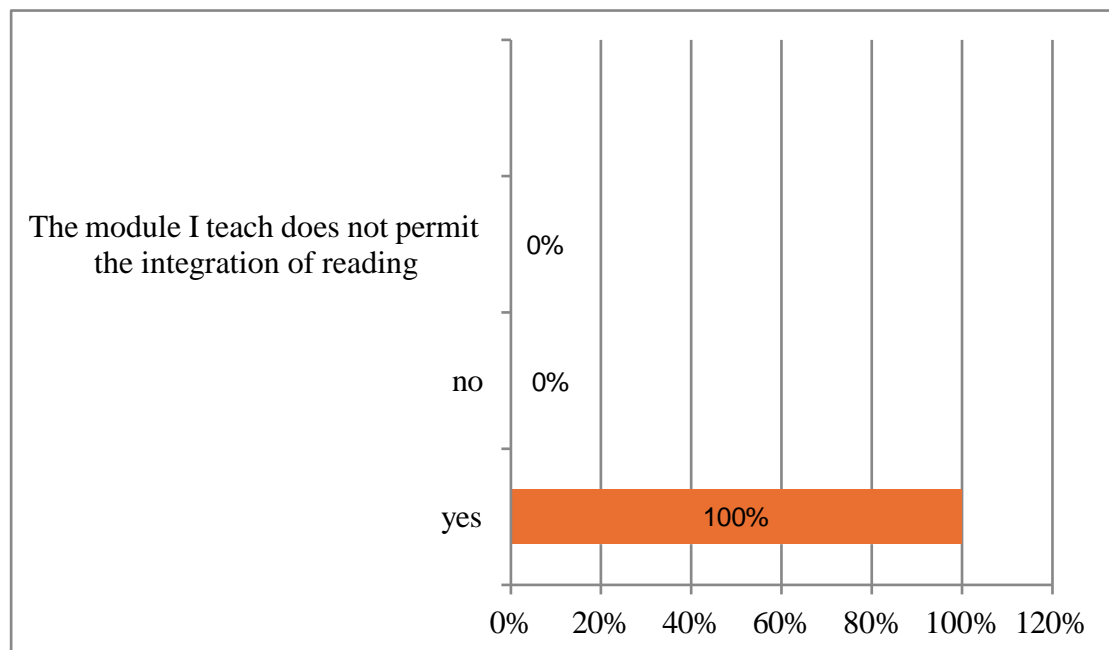
Table 3.16. Other English Reading Materials Recommended by Teachers

Suggested Material	Number of Mentions
Novels	4
Short stories	2
Biographies	1
Essays	1
Non-fiction and fiction	1
Free books and academic theses online	1

Q8: Do you integrate reading to help your students grasp the content of the module you are teaching?

All 14 teachers (100%) reported that they integrate reading into their teaching to help students better understand the content of the module. This complete agreement reflects a shared instructional practice that recognizes the value of reading as a tool for reinforcing comprehension, enhancing subject engagement, and supporting language acquisition across various modules. The consistent responses demonstrate a unified commitment to embedding reading as an essential element of English language instruction.

Graph 3.11. Teachers' Use of Reading to Support Module Content



Q9: To what extent do you agree that reading is important so that it should be taught as a separate module at an early stage of teaching EFL? Whatever your answer, please justify

When asked whether reading should be taught as a separate module at an early stage of EFL instruction, the vast majority of teachers (12 out of 14) expressed strong agreement. Two teachers agreed without expressing strong conviction, while none expressed uncertainty or disagreement. This overwhelming support indicates a clear consensus among teachers on the foundational role of reading in language learning. It suggests that educators recognize early reading instruction as critical to developing vocabulary, comprehension, and overall language proficiency in EFL learners.

Table 3.17. Teachers' Views on Teaching Reading as a Separate Early Module

Response	Number of Teachers	Percentage
Strongly agree	12	85.7%
Agree	2	14.3%
Not sure	0	0%
Disagree	0	0%
Strongly disagree	0	0%

Eight teachers offered written justifications supporting the inclusion of reading as a separate module at an early stage of EFL instruction. Their responses highlighted

reading as a foundational skill for language acquisition, cognitive development, and academic success. Several teachers emphasized its role in vocabulary enrichment, grammar development, and writing proficiency. Others viewed reading as essential for enabling learners to engage with productive skills such as speaking and writing, particularly as reading and listening are receptive skills. One teacher noted the importance of contextual and visual learning through reading. Collectively, these justifications reflect a strong pedagogical rationale for integrating reading early and systematically in EFL curricula.

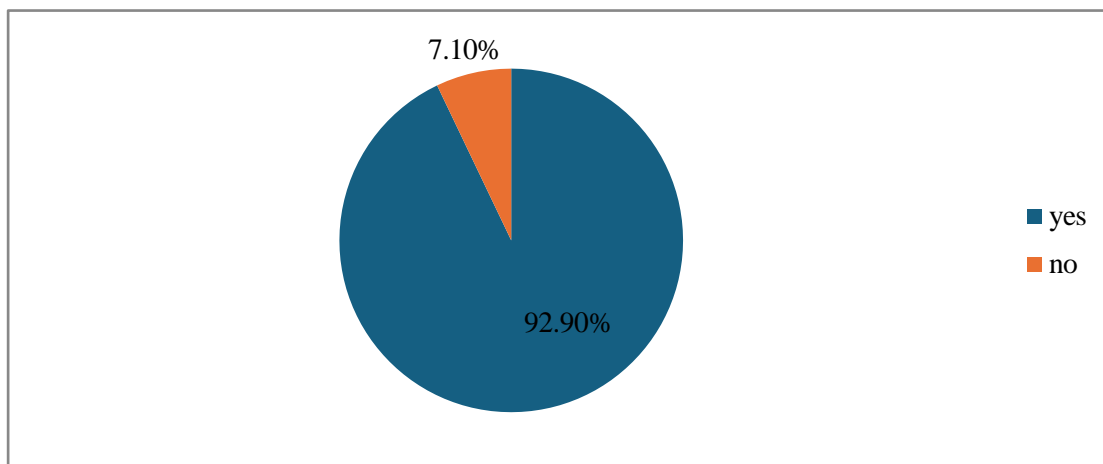
Table 3.18. Teachers' Justifications for Teaching Reading as a Separate Early Module

Justifications	Number of Mentions
Fundamental to thinking and intellectual development	1
Essential in today's fast-paced world	1
Enhances writing skills, vocabulary, grammar, and literary style	1
Reading and listening as prerequisites for productive language skills	1
Reading as a foundation for all other learning skills	1
Promotes communicative competence and deepens knowledge	1
Supports vocabulary memorization	1
Enables contextual and visual learning of language	1

Q10: Do you encourage your students to develop their critical thinking skill? If yes, please explain how?

Thirteen out of fourteen teachers stated that they encourage their students to develop critical thinking skills, while only one teacher responded negatively. This strong majority reflects a general recognition among educators of the importance of fostering analytical and independent thinking in EFL contexts. Encouraging critical thinking not only supports deeper comprehension but also equips learners with essential skills for academic success and effective communication. The single negative response may reflect contextual or curricular constraints.

Pie Chart 3.9. Teachers' Encouragement of Students' Critical Thinking Development



Nine teachers elaborated on how they encourage students to develop critical thinking skills. The strategies shared reflect a variety of instructional methods aimed at promoting analysis, questioning, and independent judgment. Several teachers highlighted the use of reading comprehension activities, questioning techniques, and media-based materials as effective tools. Others emphasized the importance of group discussions, logical reasoning, and exposure to diverse viewpoints to foster objectivity and avoid misinformation. The responses suggest that critical thinking is nurtured not only through specific tasks but also through the overall learning environment that encourages reflection and active engagement with content.

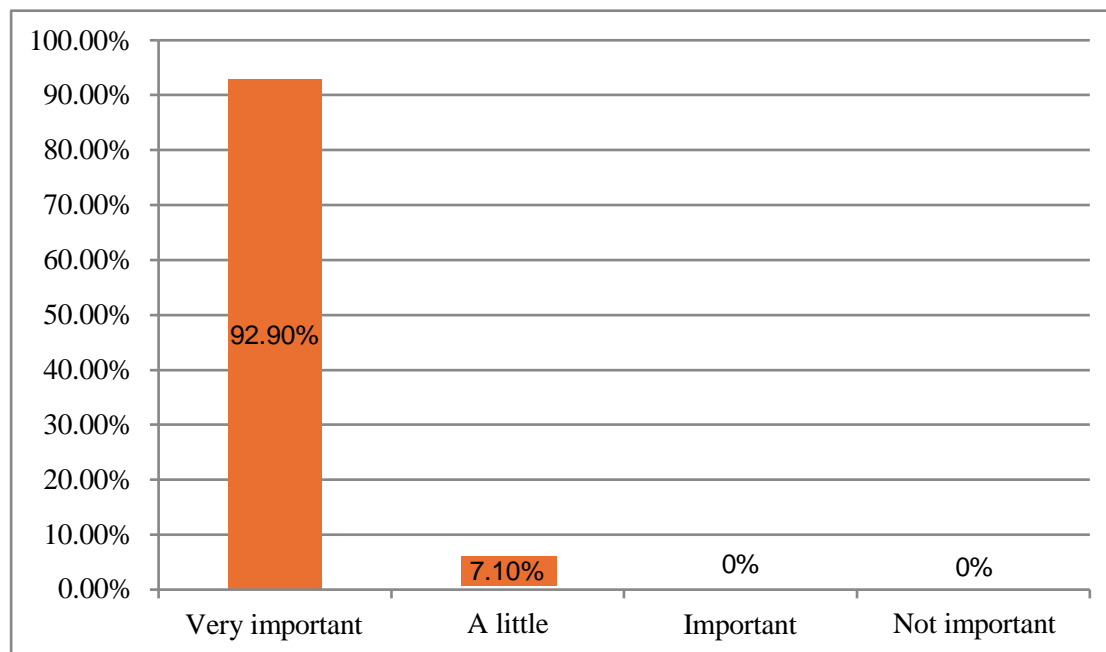
Table 3.19. Teachers' Strategies for Promoting Critical Thinking Skills

Strategies	Number of Mentions
Designing tasks that rely on students' critical thinking	1
Teaching to recognize and avoid misinformation and bias	1
Emphasizing problem-solving and decision-making	1
Encouraging group discussion and active questioning	1
Using reading comprehension activities	1
Providing materials that promote productivity and analytical engagement	1
Promoting objective reading, logic, evidence-based thinking, and neutrality	1
Encouraging questioning of information	1
Using classroom activities and media to support analytical	1

Q11: To what extent do you think that developing students’ critical thinking skill would help them enhance their academic achievements? Whatever your answer, please justify.

Thirteen out of fourteen teachers indicated that developing students’ critical thinking skills is very important for enhancing academic achievement. Only one teacher considered it to be of little importance, and none rated it as simply important or not important. This dominant viewpoint underscores a strong belief among educators that critical thinking plays a crucial role in students’ academic success. It reflects the understanding that critical thinking fosters deeper comprehension, supports problem-solving, and encourages independent learning all of which are key components of academic excellence in EFL contexts.

Graph 3.12. Teachers’ Perceptions of the Importance of Critical Thinking for Academic Achievement



Seven teachers provided written justifications elaborating on their views about the role of critical thinking in academic achievement. Their responses reveal a shared belief that developing critical thinking skills equips students with the ability to analyze information, consider diverse perspectives, and seek knowledge actively. Several teachers pointed out that critical thinking contributes to academic writing, research, and exam performance. Others emphasized its value in fostering intellectual autonomy, personal growth, and problem-solving abilities. These perspectives reflect a comprehensive understanding of critical thinking as a tool for academic and lifelong success.

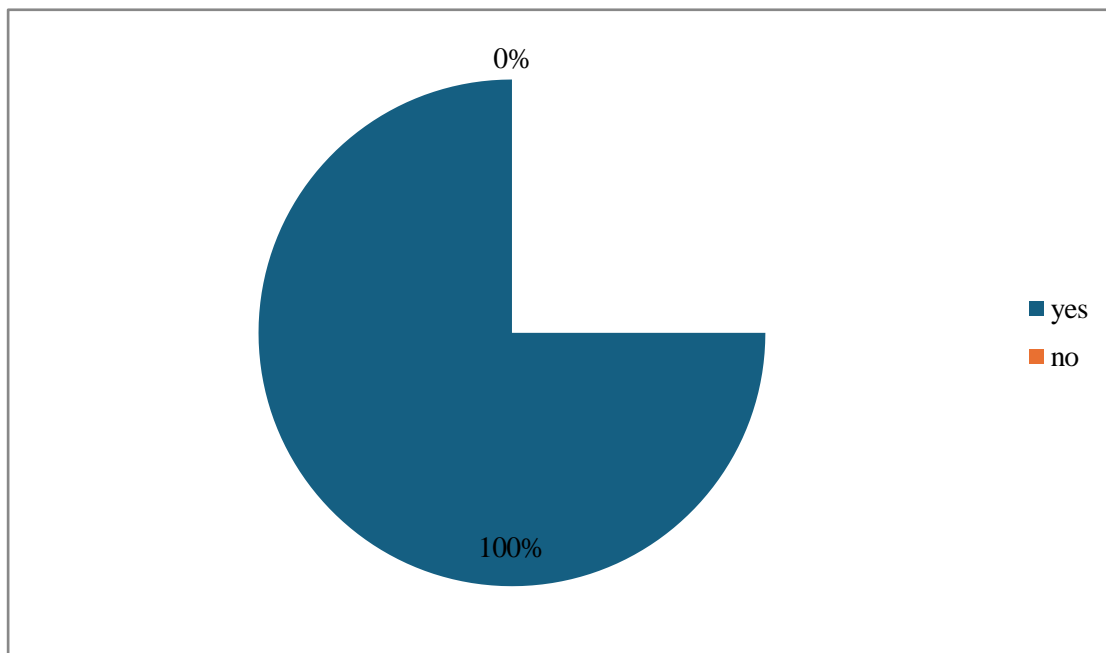
Table 3.20. Teachers' Justifications on the Role of Critical Thinking in Academic Achievement

Justifications	Number of Mentions
Encourages continuous inquiry, openness to others' views, and pursuit of truth	1
Helps students think more effectively	1
Enhances academic writing and research performance	1
Develops intellectual competencies	1
Supports life and learning skills, such as task analysis and solution generation	1
Contributes positively to both academic and personal growth	1
Emphasizes questioning as a foundation for learning	1

Q12: Are there any of your students who think critically?

All fourteen teachers (100%) confirmed that they have students who demonstrate critical thinking. This unanimous affirmation reflects a general awareness among educators of the presence of critical thinking skills within their classrooms. It suggests that at least some students are capable of evaluating information, questioning assumptions, and applying analytical reasoning. This also implies that instructional strategies promoting critical engagement are having an observable impact on learners' cognitive development in EFL settings.

Pie Chart 3.10. Teachers' Observations of Students who Think Critically



If yes, they are characterized by:

Teachers identified several key characteristics that reflect critical thinking in their students. The most frequently noted trait was understanding the logical connections between ideas, mentioned by 10 teachers, followed closely by the ability to justify beliefs and opinions and to analyze problems systematically, each cited by 9 teachers. Questioning others' assumptions was acknowledged by 5 respondents, while the skill of formulating ideas precisely was mentioned by 3. These findings suggest that critical thinkers in the classroom are recognized for their logical reasoning, evaluative judgment, and structured thinking processes. Since teachers were allowed to choose more than one characteristic, the results indicate a multidimensional view of critical thinking traits in EFL learners.

Table 3.21. Teachers' Perceptions of Characteristics of Students who Think Critically

Characteristics	Number of Teachers	Percentage
Understanding the logical connections between ideas	10	71.4%
Justifying their beliefs and opinions	9	64.3%
Analyzing problems systematically	9	64.3%
Questioning others' assumptions	5	35.7%

Formulating ideas precisely	3	21.4%
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Other:

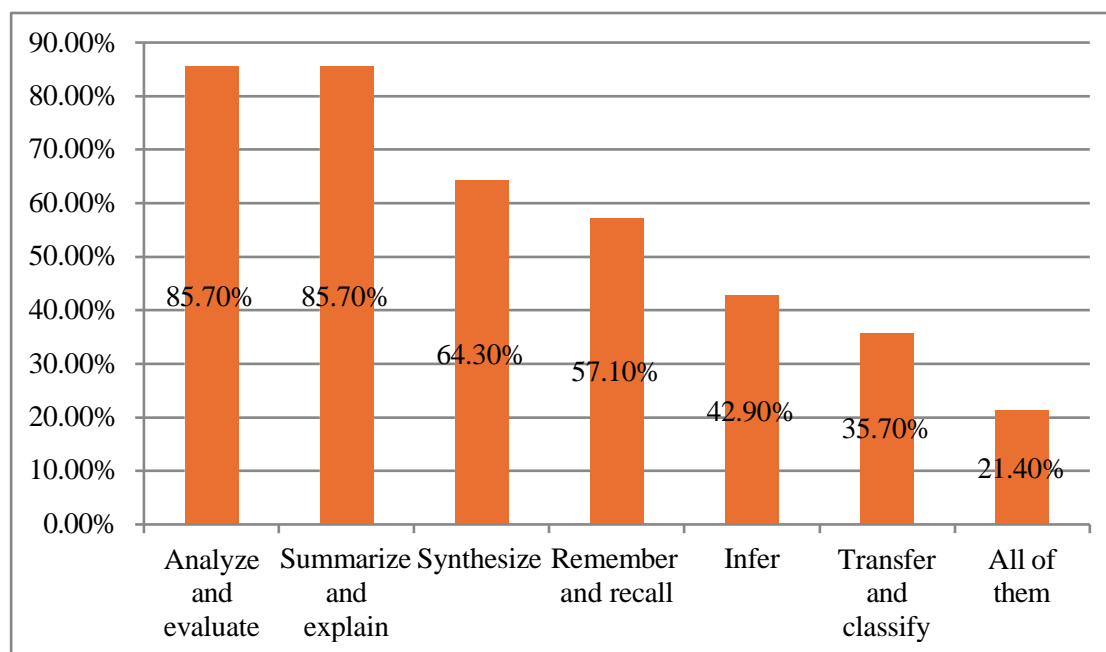
Two teachers provided additional characteristics beyond the predefined options. One emphasized the ability of students to formulate well-structured and precise hypotheses, highlighting analytical depth and clarity of thought. Another teacher pointed out that critical students tend to organize their thinking linearly, propose practical solutions, and integrate new information with existing knowledge. These responses further underscore the multidimensional nature of critical thinking, extending beyond logical reasoning to include synthesis, structured expression, and knowledge integration.

Q13: Do you provide your students with tasks that require them to? If other, please specify

Teachers reported assigning a variety of tasks aimed at fostering different levels of cognitive engagement. The most frequently cited were tasks that involve analyzing and evaluating, and summarizing and explaining, each mentioned by 12 teachers. These tasks suggest a focus on higher-order thinking skills. Synthesis was also well represented, selected by 9 teachers, followed by activities requiring students to remember and recall (8), infer (6), and transfer or classify knowledge (5). Additionally, 3 teachers indicated that they assign tasks that incorporate all of these cognitive processes. This variety demonstrates a balanced instructional approach that encourages both foundational and advanced thinking skills, thereby supporting critical and comprehensive learning in EFL contexts.

In addition to the listed cognitive tasks, one teacher mentioned other type which is assigning activities that involve spotting and correcting mistakes, developing ideas into coherent sentences, and linking clauses. These tasks emphasize practical language application and accuracy, integrating both error recognition and productive language use. Such tasks contribute to students' grammatical precision, coherence in writing, and awareness of language structure skills that are essential in the development of both academic and communicative competence.

Graph 3.13.Cognitive Tasks Assigned by Teachers to EFL Students



Q14: To what extent do you agree that critical thinking skill can be taught in a separate module as much like the other four skills?

Teachers expressed varied opinions regarding the integration of critical thinking as a standalone module. A majority of respondents showed support for the idea: 4 teachers strongly agreed and 6 agreed, together representing 71.4% of the sample. Three teachers (21.4%) were uncertain, indicating some hesitation or the need for further clarification on how such a module could be effectively implemented. Only one teacher (7.1%) expressed disagreement, and no teacher strongly disagreed. These results reflect a generally positive attitude toward the formal inclusion of critical thinking instruction in the EFL curriculum, with some reservations that may relate to practical or pedagogical concerns.

Table 3.22. Teachers' Attitudes toward Teaching Critical Thinking as a Separate Module

Responses	Number of Teachers AF	Percentage RF
Strongly agree	4	28.6%
Agree	6	42.8%
Not sure	3	21.4%
Disagree	1	7.1%

Strongly disagree	0	0%
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Q15: How can you use reading as a tool to engage your students to think critically?

Teachers provided insightful perspectives on how reading can be used as a tool to foster critical thinking among EFL students. Several educators emphasized reflective engagement with texts, such as having students write reviews or summaries to process and evaluate what they read. Others highlighted the use of problem-solving scenarios and collaborative techniques like think-pair-share activities, which encourage learners to explore different viewpoints and articulate their reasoning.

One respondent stressed the importance of using reading materials that challenge students' preconceptions and biases, thereby prompting deeper analytical engagement. Another teacher proposed encouraging students to critically evaluate the content they encounter rather than passively accepting it, which nurtures independent judgment.

A particularly detailed response underlined the role of inspiring examples from history illustrating how renowned thinkers made lasting impacts by questioning societal norms aiming to motivate students to adopt a similarly critical stance through reading. Additional strategies mentioned include presentations, analysis tasks, report writing, and even multimedia tools such as podcasts to further develop students' analytical and reflective abilities.

These approaches collectively reveal a commitment among teachers to use reading not only as a linguistic skill but as a medium to cultivate intellectual autonomy and critical inquiry in their learners.

3.7 Interpretation of the Data

The analysis of the students' questionnaire provides meaningful insights into how reading practices contribute to the development of critical thinking among EFL learners. The respondents, who vary in their years of English study, generally demonstrate a positive perception of their language proficiency and a moderate engagement with reading activities. A majority expressed a clear liking for reading, with novels and academic materials being the most preferred, which reflects a blend of personal interest and academic motivation.

Students reported reading mainly to enrich vocabulary and knowledge, which are foundational to higher-order thinking. Despite facing occasional comprehension difficulties, many employ constructive strategies such as rereading, summarizing, or asking questions behaviors that suggest early stages of critical engagement with texts. However, the overall reading frequency remains moderate, with most students reading

“sometimes” and only a small portion engaging in regular reading. This indicates a need to foster more consistent reading habits to support critical thinking development.

The responses also reveal that many students are already applying critical reading behaviors. For instance, a significant number attempt to predict outcomes, question content, and relate texts to personal experience. These actions represent important components of critical thinking such as inference, analysis, and reflection.

Furthermore, most students reported being aware of the importance of distinguishing between fact and opinion, understanding the author’s purpose, and evaluating the reliability of information core abilities for critical thinking through reading.

Encouragingly, a large majority expressed interest in learning how to read and think critically, and preferred interactive activities such as debates and group discussions to enhance those skills. Their open-ended responses confirm that they view critical thinking as essential not only for text comprehension but also for personal and academic development. Nonetheless, challenges such as difficulty staying focused or dealing with complex vocabulary remain, suggesting that while students recognize the value of reading in shaping critical thought, they still require structured guidance to fully develop these skills.

In summary, the data suggest that EFL students see reading as a meaningful tool for building critical thinking, and many exhibit the foundational habits needed for deeper analytical engagement. However, more explicit instruction and support are needed to help them move from basic engagement to sustained, critical interaction with texts.

The analysis of the teachers’ questionnaire reveals a clear recognition of the importance of reading in fostering critical thinking skills among EFL learners. The respondents, all of whom hold postgraduate qualifications and teach across a wide range of English-related modules such as linguistics, grammar, writing, and study skills bring diverse pedagogical perspectives to the topic. This professional diversity enriches the study by offering insights grounded in both theoretical and practical classroom experience.

A strong majority of the teachers reported having taught reading comprehension and expressed full support for encouraging students to read. Many of them view reading not only as a means for improving language proficiency but also as a foundational skill for cognitive and intellectual development. They cited multiple reasons for promoting reading, such as enhancing vocabulary, improving writing, developing cognitive awareness, and supporting critical engagement with texts. This highlights a widespread belief in the integral role of reading in shaping thoughtful, reflective learners.

Most teachers agreed or strongly agreed that reading should be introduced as a separate module early in EFL instruction, underscoring its perceived importance in the development of students' analytical and interpretive abilities. Furthermore, the majority confirmed that they integrate reading into their current modules to help students grasp content more effectively demonstrating that reading is not treated as an isolated skill but as an active component of content-based instruction that encourages deeper thinking.

Teachers also reported assigning tasks that engage students in higher-order thinking skills, such as analysis, evaluation, synthesis, and justification. They observed that students who exhibit critical thinking often demonstrate behaviors such as questioning assumptions, understanding logical connections, and justifying opinions skills that are closely linked to active reading and interpretation. Several teachers provided examples of how they promote critical thinking through reading, including the use of reflective reviews, problem-solving discussions, and evaluative tasks.

Although there is general consensus on the importance of critical thinking in EFL education, not all teachers fully supported the idea of teaching it as a standalone module. Some remained uncertain, possibly due to curriculum constraints or differing pedagogical beliefs. Nonetheless, the overwhelming majority agreed that reading plays a central role in promoting critical thought, and their teaching practices reflect efforts to support this integration.

In conclusion, the data from the teachers' responses reinforce the view that reading is a key driver of critical thinking among EFL learners. Their approaches reveal both an awareness of the cognitive demands of reading and a commitment to fostering analytical engagement through varied instructional strategies.

3.8 Discussion of the Findings

The findings of this study indicate a strong relationship between students' reading engagement and the development of their critical thinking skills, as perceived by both learners and teachers. These results are consistent with theoretical and empirical literature that positions reading particularly intensive reading as a foundational cognitive activity that fosters analysis, interpretation, and reasoning (Wallace, 2018; Prayuda, 2023).

Students' responses suggest that although many enjoy reading and recognize its importance, their reading frequency remains moderate. Nevertheless, a majority reported using strategies such as summarizing, questioning, and making predictions while reading strategies directly aligned with what Tuğrul Mart (2015) identifies as core components of intensive reading. These practices enable learners to engage

deeply with text structure, vocabulary, and authorial intent, thereby enhancing not only language acquisition but also inferential reasoning and evaluative judgment. Wallace (2018) supports this by stating that intensive reading helps readers detect bias, compare perspectives, and recognize rhetorical strategies all of which are indicators of critical thinking.

Teachers' responses further validate the role of reading in cognitive development. All participating teachers agreed on the value of reading as a tool for supporting content understanding and critical thinking. Many emphasized integrating reading into classroom activities that require analysis, synthesis, and evaluation key elements of critical thinking as outlined by Facione (1990) and Paul and Elder (2006). Teachers also noted that reading provides opportunities for students to develop skills such as formulating opinions, questioning assumptions, and identifying logical connections skills considered essential for academic literacy and decision-making.

The use of reading tasks that promote deeper engagement, such as evaluating sources, debating textual claims, and summarizing content, reflects the instructional strategies described in the literature on reading strategies (e.g., predicting, questioning, visualizing). These strategies support both comprehension and higher-order thinking, as highlighted in the literature review. The students' preference for debates and discussions also reflects the benefits of applying these strategies in interactive and reflective contexts, reinforcing the link between reading and critical engagement.

Moreover, findings from both teachers and students confirm the academic and cognitive benefits of reading, in alignment with Cunningham and Stanovich (2020), who found that reading proficiency is the strongest predictor of academic achievement. Many students indicated that reading helps them enrich vocabulary, improve writing, and understand complex ideas all of which are foundational to critical analysis and academic performance. This affirms Abrami et al.'s (2015) findings that critical thinking is significantly enhanced when embedded in reading-based curricula.

However, the data also point to persistent barriers. Some students struggle with maintaining focus, processing advanced vocabulary, and distinguishing between fact and opinion challenges that align with the barriers to critical thinking outlined by Kahneman (2011) and Willingham (2019). These difficulties may be due to cognitive overload, traditional education's emphasis on memorization, or limited training in metacognitive awareness. Similarly, sociocultural influences, as discussed by Haidt (2012), may inhibit students from questioning authority or engaging openly in critical dialogue, particularly in more collectivist or exam-driven educational environments.

While nearly all teachers encourage critical thinking, a few expressed uncertainty about teaching it as a standalone module. This hesitation could reflect systemic constraints, such as curriculum overload or lack of formal training in critical pedagogy issues also noted in the literature on educational barriers to critical thinking. In conclusion, the findings of this study reinforce the strong theoretical and practical relationship between reading and critical thinking. They affirm that reading, especially when approached through intensive and strategic methods, plays a vital role in shaping EFL learners' ability to analyze, evaluate, and reflect critically. At the same time, the data reveal the need for more structured and explicit instruction in reading comprehension and critical thinking strategies, both to overcome cognitive and educational barriers and to support learners in becoming more independent, analytical readers and thinkers.

Hypotheses are confirmed in this study. Hypothesis 1: This hypothesis is largely confirmed. While the majority of students reported using strategies such as predicting (62.2%), questioning (60%), and summarizing (66.6%) while reading, their use of deeper analytical skills remains inconsistent. For instance, only 48.8% reported that they always try to distinguish between fact and opinion, and just 35.5% said they often question the author's claims. Moreover, several open-ended responses indicated superficial engagement with texts and challenges in expressing nuanced interpretations. These findings suggest that although some elements of critical thinking are present, their application is still limited and not consistently practiced.

Hypothesis 2: This hypothesis is confirmed. Students who reported more frequent engagement with reading or exposure to a wider variety of texts—such as novels and academic articles—were also those who demonstrated behaviors associated with critical thinking, including justifying opinions (66.6%), drawing inferences, and linking readings to personal experiences. Additionally, 72.7% expressed interest in learning how to read and think critically, reinforcing the positive correlation between reading engagement and the development of higher-order thinking skills.

Hypothesis 3: This hypothesis is strongly confirmed. All 14 teachers (100%) reported integrating reading into their instruction to support comprehension and encourage analytical thinking. Furthermore, 92.9% indicated that they actively encourage students to develop their critical thinking skills. Teachers described using tasks that require analysis, evaluation, synthesis, and justification. They also observed that students who read critically tend to show behaviors such as understanding logical connections (71.4%) and justifying viewpoints (64.3%), both of which were fostered through intentional reading-based activities.

Hypothesis 4: This hypothesis is also confirmed. Both students and teachers identified several obstacles that hinder the development of critical reading skills. From the students' side, 53.3% reported struggling with vocabulary, and 60% indicated difficulties with focus and comprehension during reading. On the teachers' side, responses revealed a lack of explicit instruction and critical reading materials as key limitations. Some teachers acknowledged that critical reading is often embedded informally rather than taught systematically, which can impede students' ability to engage deeply with texts. These findings demonstrate that the absence of structured support limits students' capacity to develop critical thinking through reading.

3.9 Limitations of the Study

In this study, certain limitations should be acknowledged. Firstly, the research was constrained by time, which restricted the scope of data collection and analysis. The academic calendar and other institutional commitments limited opportunities for extended interaction with participants.

Secondly, the availability of participants posed a significant challenge. Many of the students and teachers involved in the study were also employed and had professional responsibilities, making it difficult to arrange in-depth interviews. Consequently, the study had to rely primarily on questionnaires, which, although useful, may not fully capture the richness and depth of participants' perspectives.

Finally, access to resources was limited. The researcher encountered difficulties in obtaining free and relevant books or materials that could have further enriched the theoretical framework and literature review. This limitation may have influenced the comprehensiveness of the academic support provided for the study's findings.

Despite these constraints, every effort was made to ensure the reliability and validity of the results. Future research may benefit from a longer timeframe, broader access to participants, and additional academic resources to deepen the investigation.

3.10 Suggestions and Recommendations

Based on the findings it is recommended that teachers should integrate direct instruction on critical reading strategies such as identifying bias, evaluating arguments, and making inferences into reading-based activities across modules.

Moreover, encourage students to engage in intensive reading tasks that focus on close textual analysis, interpretation, and vocabulary development. This should be scaffolded with guidance to help students engage meaningfully with academic and literary texts.

Teachers also are encouraged to select a wide range of reading materials, including fiction, non-fiction, opinion articles, and academic texts that challenge students to

analyze different perspectives and rhetorical techniques. Activities such as debates, Socratic questioning, reflective journaling, and group discussions should be incorporated to create a dialogic atmosphere that nurtures critical inquiry.

It is recommended for teachers also to address reading barriers and promote learner independence by involving students in selecting texts of interest, setting personal reading goals, and reflecting on how their understanding evolves through critical engagement.

3.11 Conclusion

This chapter has presented and interpreted the data gathered from both students and teachers regarding the role of reading in enhancing critical thinking among EFL learners. The findings reveal that while students generally have a positive attitude toward reading, their application of critical thinking strategies remains moderate. Teachers recognize reading as a key tool for developing analytical and reflective abilities and report incorporating tasks that foster higher-order thinking. However, both groups acknowledge challenges such as limited reading frequency, vocabulary difficulties, and insufficient instructional focus on critical reading. The interpretation of these results, supported by the literature, confirms that while the connection between reading and critical thinking is widely acknowledged, more structured and intentional pedagogical strategies are needed to fully realize their integration.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

This dissertation, titled “Developing Critical Thinking Within Reading Skill: Case of Master One Students at The University of Aboubekr Belkaid ”, aimed to explore how reading can be used as a tool to develop critical thinking skills in EFL contexts. It explored students’ engagement with critical reading strategies, the perceptions of both learners and teachers, and the challenges and instructional methods related to fostering critical thinking through reading.

The study was structured into three main chapters. Chapter one introduced the research topic, presenting the background, statement of the problem, objectives, hypotheses, and methodological design. It also outlined the mixed-methods approach used to collect and analyze data from 45 Master One students and 14 EFL teachers.

Chapter two provided a comprehensive literature review on the core concepts of reading and critical thinking. It detailed the types of reading especially intensive reading and their relevance to cognitive and academic development. It also addressed reading strategies, comprehension challenges, definitions of critical thinking, its importance, and the various barriers to its development in educational settings.

Chapter three presented the practical part of the research, analyzing data from questionnaires distributed to both students and teachers. The analysis revealed that while many students possess a positive attitude toward reading, their use of critical reading strategies remains limited and often superficial. Teachers, on the other hand, demonstrated awareness of the link between reading and critical thinking and reported using tasks designed to promote higher-order thinking. The findings also highlighted key obstacles, including vocabulary challenges, a lack of explicit instruction, and insufficient reading engagement.

The results confirmed the study’s hypotheses. First, it was found that EFL students at the Master one level make limited use of critical thinking strategies while reading. Second, there is a positive relationship between active engagement with reading and the development of critical thinking abilities. Third, teachers who integrate reading effectively into their teaching process are more likely to foster critical thinking. Finally, a lack of focused instruction and appropriate materials remains a major barrier to promoting critical reading skills.

In conclusion, the study emphasizes that reading, when approached with purpose and strategy, serves as a powerful medium for developing students’ critical thinking. To achieve this, there is a need for pedagogical reform that emphasizes intensive reading,

strategy-based instruction, and teacher training. These findings contribute to improving EFL teaching practices by underlining the importance of linking reading instruction with cognitive development in the Algerian university context.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Students' Questionnaire

Dear students,

For a research project, this questionnaire is used to collect data. It seeks to investigate how you feel about reading's influence on the growth of critical thinking abilities. Please check (Ö) the box that corresponds to your option (es) or provide your complete response if needed.

Thank you very much for your time and collaboration.

Section One: General Information

1. How many years have you been studying English?

.....

2. How would you describe your proficiency in English?

- a. Very good
- b. Good
- c. Average
- d. Bad
- e. Very bad

Section Two: Reading

3. Do you like reading?

- a. Yes
- b. Somehow
- c. No

4. How often do you read?

- a. Usually
- b. Sometimes
- c. Rarely
- d. Never

5. What types of Books do you prefer to read?

- a. Novels
- b. Newspapers
- c. Magazines

d. Academic books and articles

Other, please specify

.....
.....

6. What do you often read for??

a. pleasure

b. to better understand the content of the (difficult) lessons

c. to improve other skills

d. to enrich your vocabulary and knowledge

Other, please specify

.....
.....

7. Do you have a propensity to discontinue perusing when you are unable to comprehend the content?

a. Yes

b. No

If not, what method or methods do you often employ to get around obstacles in reading comprehension?

a. Rereading

b. Asking questions

c. Summarizing

Other, please specify

.....
.....

8. Do your teachers encourage you to read?

a. Always

b. Sometimes

c. Rarely

d. Never

9. Do you think that reading is a necessary skill for you to develop?

d. Yes

a. No

Whatever your answer, please justify

.....
.....

Section Three: Critical Thinking and Reading

10. Do you attempt to predict what will happen next in the story as you read it?
- a. Always
 - b. Sometimes
 - c. Never
11. When you read something, do you question yourself? (For instance: What was the character's motivation? Is this an opinion or a fact?)
- a. Yes, always
 - b. Sometimes
 - c. No, never
12. Do you compare what you read with your own life or experiences?
- a. Yes, always
 - b. Sometimes
 - c. No, never
13. What do you do when you read something that you disagree with?
- a. Think about why I disagree
 - b. Ignore it and keep reading
 - c. Ask someone for their opinion

Section four: Understanding and Analyzing

14. Do you find it easy to understand the main idea of a text?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Sometimes
15. Could you clarify the distinction between an opinion and a fact?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I'm not sure
16. When you read something, do you check if the information is true or reliable?
- a. Yes, always
 - b. Sometimes
 - c. No, never
17. Do you consider why the author wrote the text? (For instance: to educate, convince, or amuse.) ?
- a. Yes, always
 - b. Sometimes
 - c. No, never

Section five: Improving Critical Thinking

18. What do you do when you don't understand something you are reading? (You can choose more than one.)

- a. Look up the meaning of words
- b. Ask a teacher or friend for help
- c. Read it again
- d. Give up and stop reading

19. Are you interested in learning more about how to read and think critically?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Maybe

20. What activities do you think could help you improve your critical thinking skills? (You can choose more than one.)

- a. Group discussions about what we read
- b. Writing summaries or reviews of books
- c. Solving puzzles or riddles
- d. Debating different opinions
- e. Other: _____

Section six: Your Opinion

21. Do you think critical thinking is important for reading? Why or why not?

(Write your answer in a few sentences.).....
.....
.....
.....

22. What is the most challenging part of reading for you?

- a. Understanding difficult words
- b. Finding the main idea
- c. Staying focused
- d. Thinking deeply about the text
- e. Other: _____

.....
.....

Appendix B

Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear teachers,

The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect data for a study. It seeks to investigate your opinions regarding how reading affects the growth of critical thinking abilities. Please check (Ö) the box that corresponds to your selection (es) or provide your complete response if needed.

I sincerely appreciate your cooperation and time.

Section One: General Information

1.1-Educational qualification

- a. B.A
- b. Master's/Magister's
- c. PhD

1.2--years of teaching English

2-How long have you been teaching English?

.....years.

3. What are the modules you are currently teaching?

.....

4. Which educational system do you prefer?

- a. The LMD system
- b. The classic system
- c. None of the above

Whatever your answer, please justify

.....
.....
.....

Section Two: Reading

5. Have you ever taught the module of Reading comprehension?

- a. Yes
- b. No

6. Do you encourage your students to read?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If yes, you encourage them in order to:

- a. develop their linguistic competence
- b. enhance their writing skill
- c. develop their cognitive skills
- d. All the above

Other, please specify

.....
.....

7. What type of English reading materials do you encourage your students to read?

- a. Novels
- b. Academic books and articles
- c. News papers
- d. Magazines
- e. Encyclopedias
- f. All the above

Other, please specify

.....
.....

8. Do you integrate reading to help your students grasp the content of the module you are teaching?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. The module I teach does not permit the integration of reading.

If yes, what type of reading do you use?

- a. Extensive reading
- b. Intensive reading
- c. Both

9. To what extent do you agree that reading is important so that it should be taught as a separate module at an early stage of teaching EFL?

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Not sure
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree

Whatever your answer, please justify

.....
.....
.....

Section Three: Critical Thinking Skill and Reading

10. Do you encourage your students to develop their critical thinking skill?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If yes, please explain how

.....
.....
.....

11. To what extent do you think that developing students' critical thinking skill would help them enhance their academic achievements?

- a. Very important
- b. Important
- c. A little
- d. Not important

Whatever your answer, please justify

.....
.....
.....

12. Are there any of your students who think critically?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If yes, they are characterized by:

- a. Formulating ideas precisely
- b. Analyzing problems systematically
- c. Justifying their beliefs and opinions
- d. Understanding the logical connections between ideas
- e. Questioning others' assumptions

Other, please specify

.....
.....
.....

13. Do you provide your students with tasks that require them to:

- a. Analyze and evaluate
- b. Synthesize
- c. Infer
- d. Remember and recall
- e. Summarize and explain
- f. Transfer and classify
- g. All the above

Other, please specify

.....

14. To what extent do you agree that critical thinking skill can be taught in a separate module as much like the other four skills?

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Not sure
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree

15. How can you use reading as a tool to engage your students to think critically?

.....

Other, please specify

Résumé

Dans le domaine de l'éducation, les enseignants de langues étrangères sont confrontés à divers défis dans le développement de la pensée critique des apprenants au sein du cadre des quatre compétences linguistiques (compréhension orale, expression orale, lecture, et expression écrite), lesquelles sont positivement interconnectées. Néanmoins, l'intégration de la pensée critique à travers la compétence de lecture constitue un élément essentiel pour renforcer la capacité des étudiants à comprendre et à améliorer leur compréhension écrite ainsi qu'à interagir avec le texte. Cette étude vise à comprendre les perspectives des enseignants concernant l'intégration de la pensée critique dans la compréhension de l'écrit, à explorer leur relation, et à mettre en évidence l'importance de la lecture. En outre, l'objectif est d'évaluer les défis liés à la pensée critique auxquels sont confrontés les enseignants, et de voir comment celle-ci peut favoriser et améliorer la compréhension des étudiants. Par conséquent, le but fondamental de cette recherche est de sensibiliser enseignants et étudiants à l'importance d'intégrer la pensée critique dans les compétences de lecture, tout en explorant les défis qu'ils peuvent rencontrer. Cette étude s'intéresse au développement de la pensée critique à travers la compétence de lecture chez les étudiants de Master 1 en anglais langue étrangère à l'Université Belkaid de Tlemcen. En adoptant une approche méthodologique mixte, les données ont été recueillies auprès de 45 étudiants et 14 enseignants via des questionnaires structurés. L'étude visait à explorer l'engagement des étudiants dans les stratégies de lecture critique, à examiner leurs attitudes et difficultés, ainsi qu'à identifier les pratiques pédagogiques utilisées par les enseignants pour développer la pensée critique à travers la lecture. Les résultats révèlent que, bien que les étudiants manifestent une perception globalement positive de la lecture, l'application des stratégies de pensée critique demeure limitée et incohérente. Les enseignants reconnaissent l'importance de la lecture dans le renforcement des capacités de raisonnement et d'analyse des étudiants, et rapportent l'utilisation d'activités favorisant la pensée de haut niveau. Cependant, les deux groupes identifient plusieurs obstacles majeurs, notamment un vocabulaire limité, un manque d'enseignement explicite, et une fréquence de lecture insuffisante. L'étude conclut que la lecture, lorsqu'elle est soutenue par des interventions pédagogiques structurées, constitue un outil fondamental pour le développement de la pensée critique. Elle recommande l'intégration de la lecture critique dans les programmes d'anglais langue étrangère, un enseignement davantage axé sur les

stratégies, et une formation des enseignants centrée sur le développement des compétences cognitives.

Mots-clés : pensée critique, compétence de lecture, étudiants EFL, stratégies de lecture, pensée de haut niveau, lecture intensive.

في مجال التعليم، يواجه معلمو اللغات الأجنبية عدة تحديات في تطوير التفكير النقدي لدى الطلاب ضمن إطار المهارات اللغوية الأربع (الاستماع، التحدث، القراءة، الكتابة) التي ترتبط إيجابياً ببعضها البعض. ومع ذلك، فإن تنفيذ التفكير النقدي من خلال مهارة القراءة يُعدّ عنصراً بالغ الأهمية لتعزيز قدرة الطلاب على الفهم وتحسين استيعابهم للنصوص والانخراط معها. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى فهم وجهات نظر المعلمين حول دمج التفكير النقدي في فهم المقروء، والتحقق في العلاقة بينهما، بالإضافة إلى تحديد وتبسيط الضوء على أهمية القراءة. وعلاوة على ذلك، تسعى الدراسة إلى تقييم التحديات التي يواجهها المعلمون فيما يتعلق بالتفكير النقدي، وكيف يمكن لهذا الأخير أن يعزز ويدعم فهم الطلاب. وبناءً عليه، يتمثل الهدف الجوهري من هذه الدراسة في رفع وعي كل من المعلمين والطلاب بأهمية دمج التفكير النقدي ضمن مهارات القراءة، واستكشاف التحديات التي قد يواجهونها. تبحث هذه الدراسة في تنمية التفكير النقدي من خلال مهارة القراءة لدى طلبة الماستر السنة الأولى في اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية بجامعة بلقيد بتلمسان. وباستخدام منهج مختلط، جُمعت البيانات من 45 طالباً و14 أستاذاً من خلال استبيانات منظمة. هدفت الدراسة إلى استكشاف تفاعل الطلاب مع استراتيجيات القراءة النقدية، وفحص مواقفهم وصعوباتهم، وتحديد الممارسات التعليمية التي يعتمدها المعلمون لتعزيز التفكير النقدي من خلال القراءة. تكشف النتائج أن الطلاب على الرغم من امتلاكهم تصورات إيجابية عامة تجاه القراءة، إلا أن تطبيقهم لاستراتيجيات التفكير النقدي لا يزال محدوداً ومتفاوتاً. كما أقرّ المعلمون بأهمية القراءة في تعزيز قدرات الطلاب التحليلية والمنطقية، وأفادوا بأنهم يدرجون أنشطة تُعزز مهارات التفكير العليا. ومع ذلك، أشار كلا الطرفين إلى وجود معوقات رئيسية، من بينها محدودية المفردات، غياب التعليم الصريح، وانخفاض معدل القراءة. خلّصت الدراسة إلى أن القراءة، عندما تُدعم بتدخلات بيداغوجية منظمة، تُعد أداة جوهريّة لتنمية التفكير النقدي. وأوصت بدمج القراءة النقدية ضمن مناهج اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، وتعزيز التدريس القائم على الاستراتيجيات، وتدريب المعلمين على تنمية المهارات المعرفية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التفكير النقدي، مهارة القراءة، طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، استراتيجيات القراءة، التفكير من المستوى الأعلى، القراءة المكثفة.