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**The Impact of an Online English Language
Newspapers-Based Program on Enhancing EFL
Critical Reading of Secondary Stage Students**

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The Impact of an Online English Language Newspapers-Based Program on Enhancing EFL Critical Reading of Secondary Stage Students

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Abstract

This research investigated the effectiveness of using an online newspapers-based program to develop first year secondary stage students' EFL critical reading. The participants of the research were (60) first year Al-Azhar secondary stage students at Bahwash Secondary Institutes for Girls, Menofia, Egypt. To collect data, the researcher used two instruments; a critical reading skills checklist and an EFL critical reading skills test. The researcher taught both groups: the experimental group was taught through the online newspapers program, while the control group was taught through the regular method of teaching. Research results revealed that there were statistically significant differences between the mean score of the experimental group and the control group students in the EFL critical reading skills test. Moreover, the effect size of the online newspapers program was found to be high. Therefore, this research recommended using online newspapers in teaching the four skills of the English language at different educational stages.

Key words: Online newspapers- EFL Critical Reading Skills.

((الخلاصة))

لقد أجريت هذه الدراسة بهدف تحديد مدى فاعلية استخدام الصحف الإلكترونية الإنجليزية لتطوير مهارة القراءة لناقدة لدي طلاب المرحلة الثانوية. اعتمدت هذه الدراسة علي التصميم التجريبي لتحقيق هذا الهدف، تم استخدام أداتين : (١) قائمة مهارات القراءة الناقدة (٢) اختبار مهارات القراءة الناقدة . وقد كانت عينة الدراسة تتكون من ٦٠ طالبة من الصف الأول الثانوي بمعهد فتيات بهواش الثانوي والاتي تم تقسيمها إلي مجموعتين احدهما هما المجموعة التجريبية (٣٠) طالبة يتم تدريبهم من خلال أنشطة الصحف الإلكترونية عبر الانترنت والمجموعه الأخرى المجموعة الضابطة (٣٠) طالبة يتم تدريسهم بالطريقة التقليدية (تدريس وجهها لوجه) . أشارت النتائج إلي وجود فروق ذو دلالة إحصائية بين متوسط درجات الاختبار البعدين المجموعتين لصالح لمجموعة التجريبية. بالإضافة إلي وجود فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية بين متوسط الدرجات الاختبار القبلي والبعدي للمجموعة التجريبية لصالح الاختبار البعدي. قدمت الدراسة الحالية دليلا واضحا علي أن استخدام الصحف الإلكترونية كاستراتيجية نشطة وفعالة في تعزيز مهارة القراءة الناقدة لدي طلاب لصف الأول الثانوي.

Introduction

In today's global world, the importance of learning English cannot be ignored since find various teaching strategies, techniques, and approaches to English have become the international language of education, science, information, technology, and communication. The ability to read and write critically is considered necessary in the 21st century since students are now living in a world that is overloaded with digital materials. This makes accessing to variety of knowledge and information sources easier than it has ever been before. In order to empower students to be better learners to assess what they read, analyze and evaluate information, students should be taught how to approach any text critically. Consequently, there is always a need to support students engage in reading and writing critically. For language learners to participate in an increasingly digital world, they will need to use technology via the English learning process to meet their social, personal and educational needs. Teaching students to use materials from the internet has great potential for improving learners' motivation as they are "visually attractive, easy to use, and easy to understand" (Dudeney, 2007). Among these mass digital communication tools, online newspapers have an essential status as regional and global sources of information and an essential role in the process of learning the language. Today, the use of newspapers as additional resource material in teaching and learning English has increased (Pandey, 2019) and newspapers have the power to develop English language skills (Wolswinkel, 2008). Thus, it could be said that newspapers are a wonderful resource for understanding language (Ali & Devi, 2013). Newspapers, in either a print or an online version, play a crucial role in our everyday lives as they publish the columns about news, editorials, historical events, games, reviews, education, entertainment, literature and poetry, science and technology, business, sports, weather, ads, comics, and so on. A primary role of newspapers is to encourage the reading habit among students and increase the awareness of citizenship responsibilities (Radhika & Rajeswari, 2012).

Online newspapers give exposure to as much real language as possible and its use in their own communities. Online newspapers as authentic material are considered an attractive teaching tool that helps English language students be prepared for real life (Tamo, 2009). Additionally, online newspapers close the gap between classroom language use and real-life language use by providing familiar linguistic situations and materials right in the classroom.

Review of Literature and Related Studies

The 21st century has witnessed significant changes in all aspects of life, including education. The literature presents compelling evidence for the successful integration of critical thinking in EFL classroom instructions as well as for realizing language learners' criticality and language competence. Students need to be able to locate, analyze and evaluate new information while at the same time organizing and planning how to deal with that new information (Coughlin, 2010, p.50).

From this perspective, critical thinking has become an issue that requires attention in the field of education (Facion, 1990; Miller, 2003). Critical reading and critical thinking are closely related to one another. Students need to learn information gathering and decision-making based on facts, rather than propaganda (Harvey & Goudvis, 2017).

The nature of Critical Reading

Criticism is a concept that is derived from the Greek words "critic" or "critice", transferred to Latin as "criticus" (Şenşekerci & Bilgin, 2008). The philosophical roots of critical reading can be traced to the liberal-humanist approach to reading during the 1940s to 1970s. The liberal-humanist scholars clarified the difference between truth, also known as facts about the world and rhetoric, which comprises people's conclusions and judgments (Cervetti, et al., 2001). According to them, no text regardless of quality or authority, contains its own predetermined meaning. It is the reader's obligation to approach a text with skepticism and rational thinking in order to comprehend the author's intentions and determine the veracity of information.

Critical reading is the skill of "the reader's judgment and questioning of what s/he reads, in other words, making a judgment using his/her mind" (Özdemir, 2018, p.18). Critical reading is regarded as a high-level reading ability. It does not refer to careful and detailed reading (Yu, 2015). But it refers to the process of actively engaging with a text so that the reader communicates with the text in order to comprehend the flow of information and create a systematic schema of knowledge (Pateşan et al., (2014). As asserted by Paul and Elder (2019) critical reading is an art that assists readers in interpreting, evaluating the text and thinking with a point of view that enhances the nature of thought. Paul & Elder's view on critical reading is closed to Taşpınar and Çubukçu (2020) view, which define it as a dynamic thought approach that includes the identification and discovery of the author's meaning, the assessment of the author's meanings in light of

predetermined criteria, and the fusion of meaning with already-known concepts.

The Importance of Critical Reading

Nowadays, with the rise of smart machine systems and a globally connected world with a gradual shift from printed materials to digital materials, there is a demand for digital literacy which includes the need to read critically over massive amount of information (Silvhiany, 2019). The text represents specific ideas and does not contain a single meaning. The readers have their own perspectives to accept as the truth or not (Sultan et al., 2017). Therefore, critical reading has become even more essential for students who have to deal with plenty of electronic resources as their primary source of information.

Critical reading stimulates students to analyze, synthesis, and evaluate what they read so they are able to make judgments on information before making ultimate decisions (Alqatanani, 2017). Students will easily analyze the layers of meaning within the text, realize the ways of developing the way of thinking used by the author, and establish meaning integrity by determining the author's purpose for writing the text (Allen & McNamara, 2020). Critical reading enabled students to survive and perform well in the real world, in real life, and in their future territory. It encourages students to think more widely and become active learners who can challenge the author's views and come up with valid arguments by themselves instead of being merely passive learners (Abd-Kadir, et al., 2014).

Skills of Critical Reading

Critical reading skills play a crucial role in both academics and everyday life. These skills enable individuals to identify bias in any spoken or written discourse. These skills are considered an essential educational goal in many societies (Wilson, 2016 & Larsson, 2017). Thus, in order to be an eligible critical reader, it is necessary for the reader to master the skills of critical reading.

For Manarin et al., (2015) critical reading for academic success consists of the following key skills:

- Evaluating credibility
- Identifying patterns of textual elements
- Distinguishing between main and subordinate ideas
- Making relevant inferences about the text
- Making judgments about how the text argued (p.4).

Critical reading skills, according to Pateşan, et al., (2014), encompass a wide range of sub-skills, including the ability to distinguish

between opinion and truth, comprehend readable text, select and evaluate text, organize text, summarize text, identify relationships between text paragraphs, deduce the ideas contained in the text, and identify the author's bias (p. 64).

Critical Reading Strategies

Critical reading strategies refer to strategy that encourages students to use each of the cognitive processes in the three upper levels of Bloom's Taxonomy, which generally related with critical thinking skills (Narsollahi, et al., 2014). Further, critical reading strategies are the reading strategy used for activating students' critical thinking; meanwhile it can assess some information needed in reading text (Harida, 2016).

Critical reading skills are skills that enable students to analyze, synthesize and evaluate what is read not only literally but also for deeper meaning. The students can develop their critical thinking by reading critically (Kadir, et al., 2014, p. 209). It means that the critical reading strategies that can be employed by the reader are analyzing, synthesizing and evaluating the information from the text (Hudson, 2007).

There are plenty of critical reading strategies that are applicable to use in reading comprehension but as a whole, as outlined by the Salisbury University website (2013) as cited in Indah (2016), the critical reading strategies are: previewing, contextualizing, questioning, reflecting, outlining and summarizing, evaluating, and comparing and contrasting some related texts.

Teaching critical reading skills

Reading is challenging for students because teachers frequently assign them to study academic and scientific materials without providing them with what they are supposed to read or knowing how they have read the assigned materials (Manarin, 2022). Therefore, in order to overcome the comprehension failure, it is imperative for teachers need to teach students critical reading skills and reading strategies, in order for them to develop into better critical readers in schools.

There are three phases of teaching critical reading (Dietsch, 2009): pre-reading, rereading and prewriting. At the pre-reading stage, readers need to know the brief background of the author. In rereading, students should read the text in detail to examine ideas and relevant content. In prewriting; they should question and clarify ideas (p.291-293). In addition, Correia (2006) proposed three phases in conducting critical reading tasks: pre-reading discussion, while-reading, and post-reading.

Pre-reading stage, Pre-reading activities are essential for giving students the fundamental knowledge they need about texts, piquing their interest in reading texts, and keeping them in a reading environment throughout their formal learning stage (Osei et al. (2016).

While-reading stage, this phase focuses on the text but pre reading stage focuses on students' ideas before reading (An, 2011).

Post- reading stage, in this phase teachers can check students' comprehension and deeper analysis of text can be performed (An, 2011).

Studies Related to Using Online newspapers in Enhancing Critical Reading Skills.

Ahmed (2016) investigated how reading English newspapers improves the vocabulary and reading skills of students of Dhaka University. The study was conducted on thirty students by means of a questionnaire. The instruments of the study were a pre-posttest and a five-point Likert scale questionnaire. The results of the study indicated that students' vocabulary and reading skills are gradually improving.

Wang & Sucaromana (2020) investigated the effectiveness of utilizing online English-language newspapers in developing the reading comprehension and reading self-efficacy of Thai undergraduate students. The participants in the study were 91 undergraduate students. The instruments were pre- post-tested on their English reading comprehension and self-efficacy questionnaires. The results demonstrated that the use of online English-language newspapers enhanced the participants' reading comprehension for both high-proficiency and low-proficiency groups. The participants in both groups also rated themselves on the post-administered questionnaire with a significantly higher level than the pre-administered questionnaire of reading self-efficacy.

Nguyen & Vu (2021) explored the role of using online newspapers to enhance students' reading skills. The participants of the study were 42 second year students at the school of foreign languages, Thai Nguyen University. The instruments of the study were questionnaires and teacher's observation sheets. The results of the study revealed a significant improvement in students' reading skills.

Pilot Study

In order to provide evidence for the problem of the research, the researcher conducted a pilot study to identify the first-year secondary stage students' current level of EFL critical reading skills. The study was applied to thirty students at Fatiat Bahwash Institute in Menofia Governorate. The following tables show the results of this pilot study.

Table (1): Results of the EFL critical reading Skills Test

Critical reading Sub-skill	Total score	N	Mean	Std.Deviation	The percentage of skill competence
Identifying the main idea	5		1.515	0.495	30.3%
Drawing inferences	5		1.615	0.555	32.3%
Distinguishing between relevant from irrelevant information	5		1.6	0.495	32%
Distinguishing between facts and opinions	5		1.62	0.49	32.4%
Making predictions	5		1.365	0.49	27.3%
Total	25		7.715	2.525	30.86%

Results in table (1) show that the students' mean score in each critical reading sub-skill is considerably low, which indicate that the student's critical reading skill needs improvement.

Statement of the Problem

Based on the review of the literature, the results of the pilot study, and the researcher's experience, the problem of the study could be stated as follows: First-year secondary school students have difficulties with critical reading skills (such as identifying the main idea, distinguishing facts from opinions, drawing inference, distinguishing relevant from irrelevant information, and making predictions). Therefore, the researcher suggested the use of online newspapers program to improve the students' critical reading skills.

Research Questions

This research attempted to answer the following questions:

1. What are the features of an online English language newspapers-based program in enhancing critical reading skills of second year secondary stage students?
2. What is the effectiveness of an online newspapers-based program in enhancing critical reading skills of second year secondary stage students?

Hypotheses

The research attempted to verify the following hypotheses:

- 1- There is a statistically significant difference at the $\leq .05$ levels between the mean score of the experimental group and that of the control group on the post administration of the critical reading skills test in favor of the experimental group.

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- 2- There is a statistically significant difference at the $\leq .05$ level between the mean score of experimental group on the pre and post administration of the critical reading test in favor of the post administration.

Purpose

The present research aimed at:

- 1- Identifying the EFL critical reading skills necessary for first year secondary stage students.
- 2- Determining the effectiveness of using an online newspapers-based program in improving critical reading skills of first year secondary stage students.

Significance

The present research would contribute to:

- 1- Enriching literature with this study concerning using online newspapers in enhancing first year secondary stage students' critical reading.
- 2- Providing EFL teachers with a teacher guide on how to teach critical reading skills through using online newspapers.
- 3- Providing EFL curriculum designers with a new approach to teach critical reading skills.
- 4- Paving the way for other researchers to do more studies on the effectiveness of using online newspapers to improve the other English language skills.

Delimitations

This research was delimited to:

- 1- A sample of first year secondary stage Al-Azhar students.
- 3- Some critical reading skills that will be identified through the checklist of the critical reading skills questionnaire ((such as identifying the main idea, distinguishing facts from opinions, drawing inference, distinguishing relevant from irrelevant information, and making predictions).
- 4- Online newspapers articles to improve critical reading skills and suit to students' level.

Methodology

The research adopted the quasi experimental design to apply the online English newspaper based-program. The experimental group was taught through an online newspaper program to develop the critical reading. On the other hand, the control group continued to study through the regular methods specified in their text book and teacher's guide from the Ministry of

Education. The pre-post EFL critical reading test was administered to both groups before and after the program. The result of the pre-post EFL critical reading skills was analyzed by t-test for independent samples. This was to reveal whether there was any significant difference between the mean score of the two groups after the implementation of the online newspaper program.

Results and Statistical Analysis:

Testing the First Hypothesis:

The first hypothesis stated that: "There is a statistically significant difference at $\leq (0.05)$ level between the mean scores of the control group and that of the experimental one on the post administration of the critical reading skills test favoring the experimental group." In order to test this hypothesis, the researcher used t-test (see table 1)

Comparing the Control and the Experimental Groups on the Post Administration of the EFL Critical Reading Skills Test

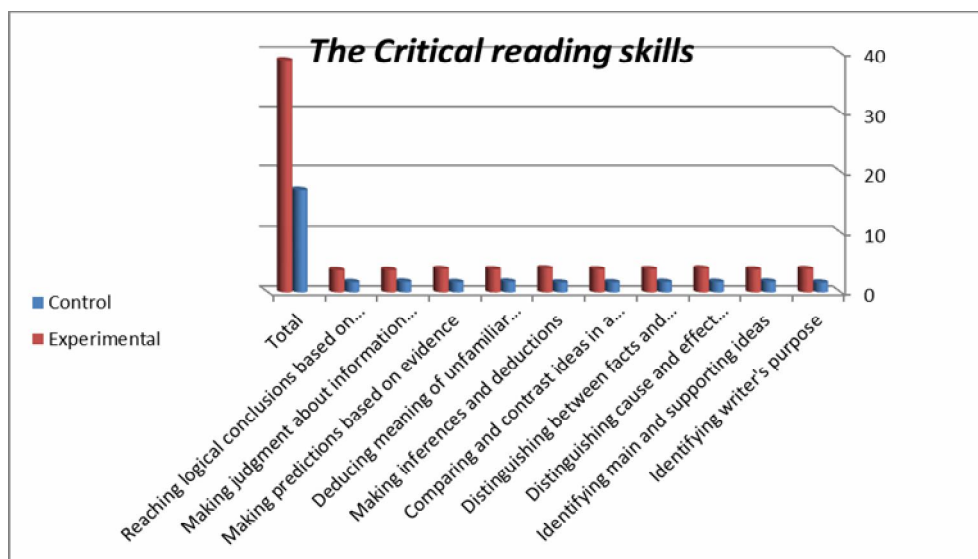
Skill	Groups	N.of cases	Means	S.D	t.Value	Df	Sig.
Identifying writer's purpose	Control	30	1.63	0.49	14.197	58	0.001
	Experimental	30	3.93	0.74			
Identifying main and supporting ideas	Control	30	1.77	0.43	13.136	58	0.001
	Experimental	30	3.83	0.75			
Distinguishing cause and effect relation ship	Control	30	1.73	0.45	19.408	58	0.001
	Experimental	30	4.00	0.45			
Distinguishing between facts and opinions	Control	30	1.73	0.45	16.744	58	0.001
	Experimental	30	3.90	0.55			
Comparing and contrast ideas in a passage	Control	30	1.67	0.48	13.793	58	0.001
	Experimental	30	3.87	0.73			
Making inferences and deductions	Control	30	1.63	0.49	16.716	58	0.001
	Experimental	30	4.03	0.61			
Deducing meaning of unfamiliar words from context	Control	30	1.77	0.43	16.083	58	0.001
	Experimental	30	3.87	0.57			
Making predictions based on evidence	Control	30	1.70	0.47	17.502	58	0.001
	Experimental	30	3.93	0.52			
Making	Control	30	1.77	0.43	15.946	58	0.001

Skill	Groups	N.of cases	Means	S.D	t.Value	Df	Sig.
judgment about information and giving opinions	Experimental	30	3.73	0.52			
	Control	30	1.70	0.47	11.031	58	0.001
Reaching logical conclusions based on information given	Experimental	30	3.70	0.88			
	Control	30	17.10	3.01	25.674	58	0.001
Total	Control	30	17.10	3.01			
	Experimental	30	38.80	3.52			

Table 1 reveals that the value of the critical reading skills mean score of the experimental group was (38.80) which is higher than that of the control group which was (17.10). It also indicated a higher homogeneity (=Std. Deviation /Mean) of the experimental group's grades than the grades of the control group due to the application of the online English language newspapers-based program.

Differences between the mean scores of experimental group and the control group in all sub skills of the post administration of the critical reading test can be clarified in the following figure.

Fig. (1): Bar Chart of the Mean Scores of the Control and the Experimental Groups in the Post Critical Reading Test Administration.



Results of the Second Hypothesis:

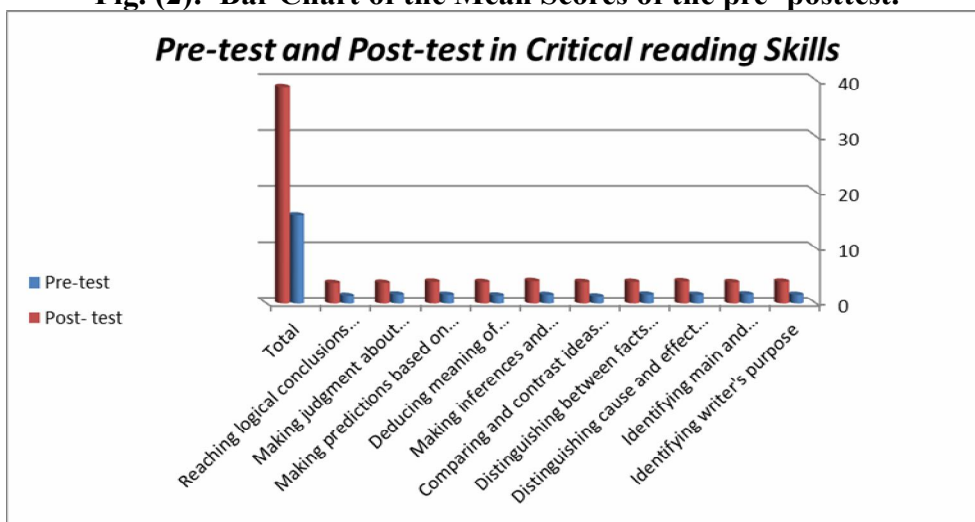
The second hypothesis stated that: "There is a statistically significant difference at $\leq (0.05)$ level between the mean scores of the experimental group on the pre- and post-administrations of the critical reading skills test favoring the post-administration". In order to test this hypothesis, the researcher used t-test (see table 2)

Results of Comparing the Pre and Post Administrations of the EFL Critical Reading Skills Test of the Experimental Group (n=30)

Skill	Application	N.of cases	Means	S.D	Df	t.Value	Sig.
Identifying writer's purpose	Pre-test	30	1.63	0.49	29	15.057	0.001
	Post- test	30	3.93	0.74			
Identifying main and supporting ideas	Pre-test	30	1.70	0.60	29	11.592	0.001
	Post- test	30	3.83	0.75			
Distinguishing cause and effect relation ship	Pre-test	30	1.63	0.49	29	21.079	0.001
	Post- test	30	4.00	0.45			
Distinguishing between facts and opinions	Pre-test	30	1.67	0.48	29	18.018	0.001
	Post- test	30	3.90	0.55			
Comparing and contrast ideas in a passage	Pre-test	30	1.33	0.48	29	14.258	0.001
	Post- test	30	3.87	0.73			
Making inferences and deductions	Pre-test	30	1.60	0.50	29	18.309	0.001
	Post- test	30	4.03	0.61			
Deducing meaning of unfamiliar words from context	Pre-test	30	1.50	0.51	29	19.386	0.001
	Post- test	30	3.87	0.57			
Making predictions based on evidence	Pre-test	30	1.63	0.49	29	19.343	0.001
	Post- test	30	3.93	0.52			
Making judgment about information and giving opinions	Pre-test	30	1.67	0.48	29	16.370	0.001
	Post- test	30	3.73	0.52			
Reaching logical conclusions based on information given	Pre-test	30	1.43	0.57	29	11.488	0.001
	Post- test	30	3.70	0.88			
Total	Pre-test	30	15.80	2.37	29	27.696	0.001
	Post- test	30	38.80	3.52			

Table (2) illustrates that the value of critical reading skills mean score of the post test was (38.80) which is higher than that of the pretest which was (15.80). As Table (2) shows the posttest's scores were higher than those of the pretest in Critical reading skills test It also indicated a higher homogeneity (=Std. Deviation /Mean) of the posttest's grades than the grades of the pretest due to the application of the online English newspapers-based program. This indicates that the online newspapers program was effective in enhancing the critical reading sub-skills of the students' in the experimental group. Differences between the experimental group scores in the pre- post administration of the critical reading test in all the sub skills of the test are clarified in figure (2).

Fig. (2): Bar Chart of the Mean Scores of the pre- posttest.



Determining the Effect Size:

To investigate the effect and educational importance of the online English language newspapers-based program concerning the difference between the experimental group's pre- and post- administrations of the critical reading test, the value of eta squared (η^2) and the effect size (d) were calculated.

Table (3) Values of (η^2) and the Effect Size of the Treatment on Improving the Critical reading Skills of the Experimental Group

Skill	t-value	d.f	Sig	η^2	d	Effect size
Identifying writer's purpose	15.057	29	Significant at (0.01)	0.89	2.80	Large
Identifying main and supporting ideas	11.592	29	Significant at (0.01)	0.82	2.15	Large
Distinguishing cause and effect relation ship	21.079	29	Significant at (0.01)	0.94	3.91	Large
Distinguishing between facts and opinions	18.018		Significant at (0.01)	0.92	3.35	Large
Comparing and contrast ideas in a passage	14.258		Significant at (0.01)	0.88	2.65	Large
Making inferences and deductions	18.309		Significant at (0.01)	0.92	3.40	Large
Deducing meaning of unfamiliar words from context	19.386		Significant at (0.01)	0.93	3.60	Large
Making predictions based on evidence	19.343		Significant at (0.01)	0.93	3.59	Large
Making judgment about information and giving opinions	16.370		Significant at (0.01)	0.90	3.04	Large
Reaching logical conclusions based on information given	11.488		Significant at (0.01)	0.82	2.13	Large
Total	27.696		Significant at (0.01)	0.96	5.14	Large

A closer look at Table (3) reveals that eta η^2 was 0.96 reflecting its practical significance. And in the light of this, it can be said that 96% of the variations between the scores of students in the critical reading skills could be due to the online English language newspapers-based Program, and the effect size (d) = 5.14 and that there was a high effect and educational importance for improving and developing Critical reading.

Discussion of the Results:

Based on the statistical analysis of the EFL critical reading skills hypotheses, it was clear that the experimental group students outperformed the control group students in all the EFL critical reading skills, and the t-values were highly significant at the 0.01 level. Besides, the experimental

group's posttest results were much better than the pretest results, and the effect size was great (96%). These findings indicate that the application of the online English language newspapers-based program proved to be more effective in developing the participants' ability to read critically and enhancing their EFL critical reading skills. The results of this research, concerning improving the EFL critical reading skills, were in line with the studies of (Lisitsina et al., (2020); Rosmaini (2020); Nguyen & Luyen (2021) and Zeng & Wang, 2022).

Recommendations of the research

Based on the research results, the researcher suggested the following pedagogical recommendations:

- Teachers can use news articles as supplementary English reading materials and should be included in lesson plans.
- Teachers should emphasize the higher-order thinking skills in the classroom, and students should be given the opportunity to analyze and critique textbook ideas.
- EFL teachers should encourage their students to read newspapers on daily basis to improve their language skills and general knowledge.
- Enriching and developing the teacher's guide with tasks, activities, and modern techniques like online newspapers that increase and activate prior knowledge.
- Using the online English newspapers based-program in teaching other EFL skills, such as listening and speaking.
- Designing a training program for EFL teachers to teach and assess higher-order thinking skills.

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