The Effectiveness of Utilizing Critical Reading Strategies on Enhancing FL Freshmen' Reading Comprehension Skills

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Abstract

The present study discussed the effectiveness of utilizing critical reading strategies on developing FL freshmen' reading comprehension skills. Sixty participants took part in the present study. They are enrolled at the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Translation Language, Misr University for Science and Technology. They acted as one sampling group that responded to the pre/post-administrations of data collection instruments. Data were collected through a 20-item questionnaire of critical reading strategies and a FL reading comprehension test. The study adopted both methods of data analysis (the quantitative and qualitative). One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was employed to determine the statistical significant differences in the pre/post-administrations of the critical reading questionnaire and FL reading comprehension test. It also verifies the effectiveness of utilizing critical reading strategies on the enhancement of the participants' performance in FL reading comprehension. The study introduced implications on the necessity of incorporating critical thinking strategies in the teaching of EFL reading skill.

Keywords: critical reading strategies, critical reading instruction, Freshmen students, reading comprehension skills

فاعلية إستخدام إستراتجيات القراءة النقدية على تحسين مهارات طلاب الفرقة الأولى لفهم القراءة باللغة الأجنبية

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الملخص

ناقشت الدراسة الحالية فاعلية استخدام استراتيجيات القراءة النقدية على تطوير أداء الطلاب المصريين لفهم القراءة باللغة الأجنبية حيث شارك فى الدراسة الحالية ٦٠ طالب مقيديين فى الفرقة الأولى كلية اللغات الأجنبية و الترجمة بجامعة مصر للعلوم و التكنولوجيا و مثلوا مجموعة عينة واحدة قامت بالرد على التطبيقين القبلى و البعدى لأداتين تجميع البيانات البحثية و اللتان شملتا إستبيان مكون من ٢٠ بندا لإستراتيجيات القراءة النقدية و أختبار فهم القراءة باللغة الأجنبية، و تبنت الدراسة الطريقتين الكمية و الكيفية لتحليل البيانات البحثية ، و تم إستخدام تحليل التباين (انوفا) لتحديد الفروق المعنوية الإحصائية فى التطبيقين القبلى و البعدى لكل من إستبيان القراءة النقدية و أختبار فهم القراءة باللغة الأجنبية، بالإضافة إلى التحقق من الفاعلية الإيجابية لتدريس القراءة النقدية على تحسين أداء المشاركين فى القراءة باللغة الأجنبية ، و قدمت الدراسة مضامين على ضرورة دمج إستراتيجيات القراءة النقدية فى تدريس مهارة القراءة باللغة الأجنبية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: إستراتيجيات القراءة النقدية، تدريس القراءة النقدية، الطلاب المصريين، الأداء، فهم القراءة باللغة الأجنبية

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Introduction

EFL learners often encounter challenges in mastering skills of language learning. Among these challenges is their ability to fully comprehend text. The challenge is attributed to the traditional systems adopted FL teachers in giving reading comprehension instruction (Aghajani & Gholamrezapour, 2019). Van, Li and Wan (2022) clarified that teacher always guide their learners to what they think about the reading text not how to think about it. Thus, learners usually develop strategies based on short term memorization to fulfill a specific task of reading. This strategy prevents learners from having serious thinking about what the reading text. Leung, Mikami and Yoshikawa (2019) explained that although educators emphasize the significance of critical thinking as a fundamental goal of education, the issue of integrating critical thinking in the instruction of FL reading comprehension has been controversial. The issue of critical thinking instruction raised questions about the elements of critical thinking skills to be taught. These elements are related to FL culture and emotion, the potential generalization and transfer to FL learners.

Regardless of the views opposed the teaching of critical reading skills, reading is an essential skill to enhance the EFL learners' proficiency levels. The complexity of reading is attributed to its combination of thought and perception. In other words, reading is a cognitive task which requires skills and cognitive ability. Critical reading is more complicated than reading; it is a more active form of reading because it requires analyzing and evaluating the text not just interpreting it. In critical reading, students are required to examine the author's argument, evaluate the introduced evidence, and decide whether the reader can accept the author's arguments and opinions. According to Hyytinen, Toom and Postareff (2018) and Cho, Kim, Ju and Lee (2021), the EFL learners should be taught the critical reading strategies in order to achieve high levels of understanding English reading texts. They should be able to preview the text, contextualize the reading text (i.e. to relate it to its cultural context), make questions about the reading texts,

reflect on the text, outline and summarize, evaluate the text, compare and contrast the text with other texts. These seven elements constitute the main components of critical reading strategies. The ability of EFL learners to apply these strategies can enhance their comprehension of FL reading texts. Jonathan, Tan, Koh, Caleon and Tay (2017) pointed out that these strategies should be incorporated into the advanced courses of reading because of their positive influence on the learners' ability to distinguish between facts and opinions, make inferences, and detect the author's bias. The critical reading strategies also play an important role to make the EFL learners as successful readers through enhancing their FL vocabulary knowledge. The critical reading strategies can also enable EFL learners to become able to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate the reading texts. The benefits of critical reading strategies are not only restricted to develop the EFL learners' reading skills but also writing skills as both reading and writing apply similar strategies. Thus, it was necessary to investigate the effectiveness of critical reading strategies on developing the First year students' achievement in FL reading comprehension.

Statement of the problem

The present study discussed the effectiveness of critical reading instruction on developing FL freshmen' reading comprehension skills. The current study explored the critical reading strategies which the participants adopted prior to attending a program of critical reading instruction. It also identified the development of the participants' critical reading strategies due to the critical reading instruction. It discussed the participants' performance in FL reading comprehension before and after having the critical reading instruction. It provides educators with information about the First year students' critical reading strategies and the impact of critical reading instruction on enhancing their performance in FL reading comprehension.

The research questions

The present study tried to find answers to the following questions:

1. What are the participants' critical reading strategies adopted in their responses to the pre-administration of the questionnaire?
2. What are the participants' critical reading strategies adopted in their responses to the post-administration of the questionnaire?
3. Is there a statistical significant difference between the participants' responses in the pre-and post-administrations of the questionnaire?
4. How do the participants perform in the reading comprehension pretest?

5. How do the participants perform in the reading comprehension posttest?
6. To what extent there is a statistical significant difference between the participants' performance in the critical reading comprehension pretest and posttest?
7. What is the effectiveness of the program of critical reading strategies on enhancing the participants' performance in FL reading comprehension?

The Research Hypotheses
The present study tested the following null hypotheses:
1. There are no statistical significant differences among the participants in the pre- and post-administrations of the critical reading questionnaire and FL reading comprehension test.
2. The critical reading instruction has no positive effectiveness on the enhancement of the participants' performance in FL reading comprehension.

The research objectives
The current study aims to identify:
1. The students' critical reading strategies adopted in their responses to the pre-administration of the questionnaire.
2. The students 'critical reading strategies adopted in their responses to the post-administration of the questionnaire.
3. The statistical significant difference between the students' responses in the pre-and post-administrations of the questionnaire.
4. The students' performance in the reading comprehension pretest.
5. The participants' performance in the reading comprehension posttest.
6. The statistical significant difference between the students' performance in the critical reading comprehension pretest and posttest.
7. The effectiveness of the program of critical reading instruction on enhancing the students' performance in FL reading comprehension.

Significance of the study
The study is significant as it sheds light on the importance of critical reading strategies on FL freshmen reading comprehension skills. It provides educators with information about the First year students' critical reading strategies and the impact of critical reading instruction on enhancing their performance in FL reading comprehension. It pays the attention of those in charge of curriculum planning to observe the

expected critical reading strategies which First year students may adopt to understand the FL reading texts. Thus, FL curriculum planners can select the FL reading texts which suit these critical reading strategies. The present study significance is also attributed to its contribution to literature of language instruction in Egypt. The current study can also benefit other higher learning institutions in Egypt to develop their students' performance in FL reading comprehension.

Delimitations

It is expected that the findings of the present study will serve the process of teaching FL reading skill to the First year students at the Department of English, Misr University for Science and Technology. It is also hoped that these findings can be useful to students at other Departments of English in different higher learning institutions.

Literature review

El-Shazly (2017) examined the impact of utilizing the strategy of reciprocal teaching on enhancing the reading self-efficacy and critical reading of 33 First year secondary school students. El-Shazly elicited data through a number of instruments, namely a checklist of critical reading skills, a checklist of reading self-efficacy skills, a pretest and a posttest of critical reading skills and a pre-scale and a post-scale of critical reading self-efficacy. The participants were divided into a control group and an experimental group. The latter group of participants was taught reading comprehension by using the strategy of reciprocal teaching. The strategy comprises the participants' ability to make predictions, make questions, clarify and summarize. The experimental group was taught one hour and forty minute-classes per week over six weeks. As for findings, El-Shazly emphasized the effectiveness of utilizing the strategy of reciprocal teaching to enhance the First year secondary school students' critical reading and self-efficacy reading skills. El-Shazly clarified that this is attributed to the cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies included in the strategy of reciprocal teaching. Thus, El-Shazly recommended the integration of the strategy of reciprocal teaching into the English courses taught at the secondary schools stage. El-Shazly clarified the benefits behind such integration. These benefits include not only the enhancement of First year students' comprehension of the reading texts, but also the FL teachers' ability to plan reading activities and observe their students' performance in FL reading comprehension. On the other hand, El-Shazly found that the teacher-centered classes were ineffective for developing the control group participants' FL critical reading skills. As such, the

control group participants did not have opportunity to practice the critical reading skills due to the teacher-centered approach.

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

Banditvilai (2020) investigated the impact of critical reading strategies on the achievement of 59 Thai EFL participants in reading comprehension. Participants were second year students at English Department, Kasetsart University who studied an English Reading academic course. Data were collected through three instruments: a critical reading strategies questionnaire, a reading test and a semi-structured interview. The questionnaire measured the participants' attitudes towards the four critical reading strategies: skimming, scanning, predicting, and questioning at the pre and while reading stages. The first two instruments were analyzed quantitatively by using mean scores and standard deviation scores. The third instrument was analyzed qualitatively. Banditvilai found that critical reading strategies positively affected the participants' achievement in reading comprehension. The participants' improved strategies to skim, scan, predict and question the reading texts enhanced their ability of having better understanding of the reading texts. Banditvilai recommended that participants should be trained on practicing pre-reading activities in order to acquire prior knowledge about the particular reading texts they are studying.

Hromova, Kryvych, Chernihivska, Vinnytska, and Bloshchynskyi (2022) examined the possibility of providing critical reading instruction to low-intermediate FL students in Kyiv University. The 48 participants were first year students whose proficiency level was determined by using the general English test which is one of the Cambridge assessment tools.

Data were collected at three stages. First, the participants had to respond in writing to two questions about the definition of critical reading and its role in the learning process of FL reading. Second, the participants responded to a 7-item questionnaire designed in the form of five-point Likert scale in order to assess their critical reading skills. At this interval part, three-month critical reading instruction was introduced to the participants. Third, the participants defined the critical reading skills which they were able to apply at the while reading stage. In this task, the participants wrote comments on each of the ten paragraphs included in the reading text. As for findings, the participants primarily viewed themselves as roughly competent in critical reading even though they could not understand the practical use of applying critical reading. Due to the critical reading instruction, the participants became able to make justified judgments while reading the selected ten paragraphs. They also managed to support claims, find out various viewpoints on the problems included in the reading text, and express disagreement with some given opinions.

Safian and Jiar (2022) investigated reading self-efficacy and critical reading strategies employed by 231 ESL pre-university students in University Technology Malaysia. They collected data through various instruments. These instruments include reading self-efficacy scale, survey of reading strategies, and a questionnaire of critical thinking. As for the findings, the Spearman correlation am analysis indicated self-efficacy, reading strategies and critical thinking are strongly correlated to each other. The self-efficacy scale of reading consists of 11 items and was based on five-point Likert scale as participants were asked to give rates for their self-efficacy in L2 reading skills. The survey of reading strategy comprises 30 item and was based on five-point Likert scale as well. The survey covered three types of reading strategies namely strategies employed by the participants to solve reading problems, support strategy and global strategy. Similarly, the critical reading questionnaire consists of 30 items with five-point Likert scale. It handled why Malaysian ESL learners need to think critically to sustain the ability of critical reading. Safian and Jiar found that the psychological component of critical reading is highly interrelated to the EFL Malaysian learners' reading strategies. That is, lower critical reading strategies are associated with low achievement students. They also reported that Malaysian ESL learners have moderate self-efficacy in L2 reading. Thus, the findings are useful to curriculum planners who can integrate reading strategies and critical thinking into the design of reading comprehension syllabi in the

Malaysian context. For the purpose of having systematic development of Malaysian ESL learners' L2 literacy, Safian and Jiar recommended the cognitive levels of critical thinking can be utilized in developing a theoretical framework monitor the development of Malaysia ESL learners' critical reading skills.

Method

The present study adopted the mixed method of quantitative and qualitative analysis (Muijs, 2004, Mueller, 2009, Karadeniz, 2015, and Kalati, 2016). Quantitative analysis covers the use of mean scores to identify the types of critical reading strategies which the participants used to adopt in the pre- and post-administrations of the questionnaire of critical reading strategy. One way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was employed as well for three purposes. First, it indicated the difference between the participants' responses to the pre / post-administrations of the questionnaire items. Second, it indicates the difference between the participants' performance in the critical reading comprehension pre- and posttests. Third, the difference between the participants' performance in the two critical reading comprehension tests can indicate the effectiveness of the critical reading instruction. In addition, the participants' responses to the pre- and post-administrations of the questionnaire items were qualitatively analyzed.

Participants

Sixty first year students enrolled at the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Translation in Misr University for Science and Technology took part in the present study. Data were collected during the first term of the academic year 2022-2023.

Procedure

The sixty randomly selected participants acted as one sampling group whose responses to the questionnaire and performance in the test were analyzed in the pre- and post-administrations of data collection instruments. The present study relied on the pre- and post-administrations technique of the two instruments of data collection, namely critical reading strategies questionnaire and FL reading comprehension test. The pre-and post-administrations of each instrument spanned two sessions with 90 minutes per each session. Both instruments were piloted using 20 participants and the Cronbach's alpha coefficients were .87 for the critical reading strategies questionnaire and .92 for the FL reading comprehension test revealing high reliability. After pre-administration of the two data collection instruments, the whole participants were trained

for twelve weeks on using critical reading strategies as part of the syllabus of the academic course of reading comprehension.

Instruments

Two different instruments of data collection were used in the current study. These instruments are namely a 20-item questionnaire of critical reading strategies and a FL reading comprehension test. Both instruments were administered twice in the form of pre- and posttests. The 20-item questionnaire of critical reading strategies consists of four sections (Idrus and Salleh, 2017, Chou, 2017, and Hyytinen, Toom and Postareff, 2018). Section 1 deals with the seven top critical reading strategies, section 2 handles the bottom critical reading strategies, section 3 comprises items on inferences strategies and section 4 includes two items on generalization. The questionnaire is based on five-point Likert scale with five responses: straggly disagree (SD), disagree (D), not sure (NT), strongly agree (SA), and agree (A). The present study adopts the Critical Reading Practice Test (2023) as the FL comprehension reading pre- and posttests. The test includes two reading passages with 15 multiple choice questions (A, B, C, D, or E). The total test mark is 30 marks.

Data analysis

Table 1 describes the participants' views on the critical reading strategies in the pre- and post-administration of the critical reading questionnaire. As for the participants' responses to the pre-administered questionnaire, the mean scores of strong disagreement and disagreement were higher than those of strong agreement and agreement to most of the critical reading strategies. This reveals that the participants were unaware of what the critical reading strategies are and how to practice and apply them to FL reading texts. For examples, the participants strongly disagreed and disagreed to read the text twice in order to overcome difficulties of understanding. They were also unaware of the necessity to adjust their reading speed in accordance with the text difficulty. Neither did the participants divide the text into parts, practice guessing, restore concentration, nor pay attention to the text being read. The participants also did not use to highlight important information, take notes, differentiate between facts and opinions, and make questions or evaluations of the texts being read. The participants failed as well to make inferences about the reading texts. They did not understand the literal meanings of words, state the authors' purposes of the texts, and could not differentiate between valid and faulty generalization. Some of the participants were confused about these strategies as reflected in their choice of the *Not Sure* response.

On the other hand, the participants showed better understanding of the critical reading strategies after attending the critical reading instruction. This was evident in their responses to the post-administration of the critical reading questionnaire. In other words, the mean scores of the participants' responses strongly agreed and agreed were higher that their strongly disagreed and disagreed. The participants had also less Not Sure responses compared to the pre-administration of the questionnaire. Thus, the participants managed to developed better awareness of the top and bottom critical reading strategies including inferences and generalization. For examples, the participants learned strategies of dividing the reading text into parts, practicing guessing and paying attention. The participants became also aware of the necessity of highlighting the main information included in the text, taking notes and making questions and evaluations about the text. The participants were trained that understanding the literal meanings of words is a pre-requisite for determining the correct interpretation of the reading text. They could also make use of words indicating valid and faulty generalizations. The finding of the differences between the pre-and post-administrations of the critical reading questionnaire are similar to those reported by Banditvilai (2020) and Safian and Jiar (2022).

Table 1: Mean scores of the participants' responses to pre / post-administrations of critical reading strategies questionnaire

Top strategies	SD		D		Not Sure		SA		A	
	Pre	post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Section 1: seven top critical reading strategies										
1.I read the text twice to overcome difficulty of understanding	3.76	2.04	3.23	2.45	2.21	1.15	2.25	3.87	1.93	3.22
2.My reading speed is always adjusted to the text difficulty.	4.56	2.26	3.54	2.11	2.98	1.42	2.54	4.76	2.43	3.99
3.I divide the text into parts to be read closely or to be ignored	4.72	2.15	4.75	2.43	3.51	2.07	2.53	5.85	2.32	4.89
4.I usually guess what the text is about	3.62	1.82	3.95	2.64	2.67	1.74	2.71	5.83	2.75	4.79
5.when I lose concentration, I always get back on	4.76	2.38	4.87	2.34	2.99	1.53	2.39	5.86	2.75	5.10

Top strategies	SD		D		Not Sure		SA		A	
	Pre	post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
track										
6.I always pay much attention to what the text which I am reading	3.73	2.56	4.23	2.67	2.88	1.37	2.97	6.95	2.64	4.98
7.I used to guess the meaning of words or phrases which I do not know	4.43	2.65	3.25	2.86	3.52	1.87	2.75	4.78	2.29	4.98
Section2: 7 bottom strategies										
8.I always highlight text information to be easily remembered	4.72	2.65	3.96	2.43	3.84	1.92	2.37	5.96	2.41	5.23
9.I always differentiate between facts and opinion of what I am reading	5.76	3.39	4.72	3.46	3.72	2.38	2.78	5.38	2.53	5.81
10.I always make questions on the reading text	5.64	3.47	5.83	3.59	3.78	2.20	2.76	5.98	2.68	5.83
11.I make critical analysis and evaluation of the reading text information	4.89	3.62	4.93	3.32	3.45	2.21	2.85	5.77	2.34	5.45
12.I take notes of the reading text for the purpose of understanding	5.83	3.74	4.72	3.23	3.56	2.70	3.20	5.88	2.47	5.65
13.I usually translate the reading text into Arabic	3.37	2.32	3.56	2.88	3.63	2.73	3.73	2.36	3.42	2.54
14.I do reading comprehension tasks for fun	3.76	3.56	3.31	3.27	3.48	2.42	3.66	3.87	3.64	3.84
Section 3: inferences strategies										
15.I make sure that I understand the literal meaning before making any interpretation	4.37	3.75	3.89	3.11	3.52	2.38	3.54	5.36	3.12	4.88

Top strategies	SD		D		Not Sure		SA		A	
	Pre	post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
16.I try to state the writer's suggestion behind the ideas and information	5.75	3.84	4.28	3.30	2.97	1.78	2.53	5.63	3.42	5.03
17.I try to state the writer's purpose behind the stated facts or details	4.95	2.91	4.87	2.84	2.89	2.20	2.68	4.82	2.18	4.56
18.I use the clues which the writer provided	5.44	3.40	4.62	2.89	2.63	1.80	2.76	4.88	2.39	4.10
Sectin4: generalization										
19. I know that words like some, most, sometimes, typically indicate valid generalization	5.83	2.29	4.83	2.38	2.43	1.02	3.61	5.27	2.63	4.94
20. I am aware that words such as everyone, none, never, nobody refer to faulty generalization	4.97	2.86	3.99	2.40	2.12	1.21	3.54	5.74	2.53	4.63

Table 2 shows the results of ANOVA which was primarily conducted to determine the significant differences between the participants' views on the critical reading strategies in the pre- and post-administrations of the critical reading questionnaire. The results indicate that the participants differed in their views on the critical reading strategies in the pre- and post-administrations of the questionnaire. The results show statistically significant differences between the participants' views in the two administrations of the questionnaire as the p value was < 0.05. The statistical significant differences were in favor of the participants' views in the post-administration of the critical reading questionnaire. Therefore, the present study rejects the null hypothesis that there are no statistical significant differences among the participants in the pre- and post-administrations of the critical reading questionnaire and FL reading comprehension test. The finding is compatible with those reported by El-Shazly (2017) and Hromova, et al. (2022).

Table 2: ANOVA of the pre-and post-administrations of the critical reading questionnaire

pre/post administrations	Sum of squares	df	Means of squares	F	Significance
Within pre/post administrations	345.472	28	275.642	59.762	.000
Between pre/post administrations	38.831	72	3.815		
Total	384.303	100			

In addition, one way of variance was used to determine the significant differences between the participants' performances in the two FL reading comprehension tests. Table 3 indicates that the participants' performances in the reading comprehension differed in the pre- and posttests. The p value was <0.05 indicating statistical significant differences in the reading comprehension two tests. These differences were in favor for the participants' performance in the reading comprehension posttest in comparison to the pretest. This finding affirms the positive role critical reading instruction in enhancing the participants' performance in the critical reading posttest. Therefore, the present study rejects the null hypothesis that the critical reading instruction has no positive effectiveness on the enhancement of the participants' performance in FL reading comprehension. That is, the participants had poor performance in the reading comprehension pretest because of their poor knowledge in the critical reading strategies. Becoming more aware of what the critical reading strategies are and how to the top and bottom critical reading strategies, the participants managed to enhance their performance in the reading comprehension posttest. The finding is similar to those reported by Rohmah (2018), Leung, et al. (2019), van, et al. (2022).

Table 3: ANOVA of the pre/post administrations of the FL reading comprehension test

pre/post administrations	Sum of squares	df	Means of squares	F	Significance.
Within pre-and post-administrations	397.643	28	298.735	64.830	.000
Between pre-and post-administrations	40.725	72	3.94		
Total	438.368	100			

Discussion, Conclusion and Implications

The present study concluded that the participants differed in their views on the critical reading strategies in the two administrations of the critical reading questionnaire. The participants used to neglect practicing the top and bottom critical reading strategies including inferences and

generalization. The mean scores of the participants' responses of strongly disagreed and disagreed were higher than their strongly agreed and agreed responses indicating negative views about the necessary critical reading strategies. On the other hand, the participants developed better understanding and more awareness of the critical reading strategies due to the critical reading instruction which they received. This was evident in having more positive views on the critical reading strategies. These positive views were reflected in the participants' higher responses of strongly agreed and agreed than strongly disagreed and disagreed responses to the questionnaire items. The participants also had fewer Not Sure responses in the post-administered questionnaire than in the pre-administered questionnaire. This indicates that the participants became no longer confused about the use of critical reading strategies due to the critical reading instruction. In addition, the participants' performances in the FL reading comprehension tests varied between the pretest and the posttest. The finding of the differences between the pre-and post-administrations of the critical reading questionnaire are similar to those reported by Banditvilai (2020) and Safian and Jiar (2022).

The statistical significant differences were in favor for the participants' responses to the post-administration of the critical reading questionnaire. The finding was compatible with those reported by El-Shazly (2017) and Hromova, et al. (2022). Undoubtedly, the participants' poor performance in the reading comprehension pretest was attributed to their unawareness of utilizing the critical reading strategies. The critical reading strategies taught to the whole participants had changed the ways they handled FL reading comprehension texts. This was reflected in their improved performance in the reading comprehension posttest. The participants constructed meaning through a process of complex interaction with the reading text. This process merges their prior knowledge mediated with their language skills. Thus, they were able to analyze and synthesize the reading texts. They were able to make inferences, questions and evaluations about the texts and distinguish between valid and faulty generalizations. The finding emphasized the effectiveness of teaching critical reading strategies on enhancing the First year students' performance in FL reading comprehension. The finding is similar to those reported by Rohmah (2018), Leung, et al. (2019), van, et al. (2022). Therefore, FL teachers should encourage and train their students to develop critical reading strategies in order to have in-depth understanding of the reading texts and the authors' purposes between lines. Thus, FL teachers should create activities that provide training and practice for their students to experience applying various critical reading

strategies to different reading comprehensions. In addition, FL curriculum planners should select proper reading comprehensions with different types of exercises that train students to apply different critical reading strategies.
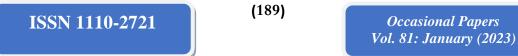
Recommendations for Further Studies

The current study suggested carrying out the following studies for future research:

1. A study can be conducted on the critical reading strategies using samples from other educational stages like secondary and preparatory schools.
2. A study can be carried out exploring the FL teachers' perception of the effect of critical reading strategies on their students' achievement.
3. A study may discuss the impact of classroom management on the possibility of teaching critical reading strategies to First year students.
4. A study can investigate various models of teaching critical reading skills.

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