Abstract

A Mind Habits Based Program to Develop Al-Azhar Model Secondary Institutes Students' EFL Critical Reading Skills

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The purpose of the study was to develop EFL critical reading skills of El-Azhar Model Secondary Stage Students through mind habits based program. To accomplish this purpose, the present study followed the pre-post, quasi-experimental-control group design. The researcher used two groups: experimental and control groups. Conducting the current treatment, a number of sixty EFL second secondary stage students from Kafr Saqr Model   Secondary Institute, Kafr Saqr Directorate, Sharkia Governorate, Egypt, were intentionally allocated in two groups, thirty students for the experimental group and thirty for the control one. Characteristically managed a pre/post-testing technique for the purpose of data gathering and analyzing. The researcher designed an EFL critical reading questionnaire and a critical reading test. Generally, the current study was conducted over a period of nine weeks; each task took about 50 minutes to be fully implemented through the second term of the academic year 2022-2023. Finally, the results of the study showed that the mind habits based program had a positive effect on developing the EFL critical reading skills of El-Azhar model second-year Secondary Students.

Key words: mind habits, EFL critical reading skills

الملخص

الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو تطوير مهارات القراءة النقدية لدي طلبة المعاهد الثانوية الازهرية النموذجية وذلك من خلال برنامج قائم علي عادات العقل. ولتحقيق هذا الغرض، استخدم الباحث المنهج التجريبي ذو التصميم شبه التجريبي. ولتحقيق ذلك الهدف، اختار الباحث عينة من طلبة الصف الثاني الثانوي النموذجي من معهد فتيات كفر صقر الثانوي النموذجي، ادارة كفر صقر التعليمية، محافظة الشرقية، جمهورية مصر العربية، وتم تقسيمهم الي مجموعتين: المجموعة التجريبية ثلاثين والمجموعة الضابطة ثلاثين. كما صمم الباحث استبيان لمهارات القراءة النقدية، واختبار مهارات القراءة النقدية لتطبقه قبلاً وبعدياً علي كلا المجموعتين، كما استغرق تطبيق الدراسة الحالية جلسة اسبوعياً لمدة تسع أسابيع؛ استغرقت كل جلسة حوالي ٥٠ دقيقة ليتم تنفيذها بالكامل خلال الفصل الدراسي الثاني من العام الدراسي ٢٠٢٢-٢٠٢٣. وأخيرا، أظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن البرنامج القائم علي عادات العقل كان له تأثير إيجابي على تطوير مهارات القراءة النقدية لدي عينة الدراسة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: القراءة النقدية، عادات العقل

1- Introduction

critical reading skills are skills that help readers be able to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate what is read. When teachers expose readers to critical reading skills, they will also make them see the cause and effect or comparing relationships in the text, or adopting critical attitude toward the text. In other words, when educators teach critical reading skills, they will also develop them to be critical thinkers as when they do critical reading it will produce critical thinking. Readers need to have fully understood a text where they would analyze, synthesize, and evaluate it, then only they would think critically about a text, choose or reject the ideas put forward, agree or disagree with the topics.

Critical reading is a crucial and top-level skill that must be acquired by readers. Thus, a reader must have some characteristics. A critical reader must know something about the subject s/he wants to read, and be able to use the mental tactics like the adequacy of knowledge, data collection, and hypothesis formation when s/he reads a text (Karabay, 2015). A critical reader must be able to determine his/her purpose, and give all his/her attention to the text (Çiftçi, 2006). It is because attention is crucial.

According to Scott (2017), critical reading plays a key role in the development of basic language skills, and can be defined as making an inference by reasoning, questioning, evaluating, and eventualizing a text and reaching a break. Another important point of

critical reading is that it can make vital contributions to the formation of a democratic society.

Özdemir (2017) argued that it is necessary to understand the basic ideas and to explore ways to critical reading. If everything written can be enhanced around basic ideas, and if different ideas can be identified and reproduced, then critical reading can be realized as well. To improve critical reading skills of readers, it is also important how the reader comprehends himself/herself in the context, in other words, the critical reading level of the reader is also impactful. When a reader understands that his/her critical reading skill is inadequate, s/he will not have the desire to read critically or will read less.

Abdelrasoul (2014) investigated Reading Circles Strategy for Developing Preparatory Students' critical Reading Skills and Social Skills. Results indicated the importance of developing students' critical reading Skills and Social Skills.

Abdallah (2018) investigated the effect of Microblogging through Twitter for Developing EFL Student Teachers Critical Reading and Summarization skills. Results indicated the significance of developing EFL Student Teachers Critical Reading and Summarization skills.

Surdyanto and Kurniawan (2020) examined the effect of Developing Critical Reading Module Using Integrated Learning Content and Language Approach. Results indicated the importance of developing critical reading module.

2- Context of the Problem

The researcher, as an EFL teacher, observed that the secondary stage students have got low points in most of the critical reading skills. The researcher reviewed the previous studies that assured the persistence of EFL students' lack of critical reading skills. Besides, interviews were also conducted with EFL teachers in some secondary schools. They confirmed that most students lack the ability to read critically in English.

A pilot study was conducted in order to document the problem.

A pilot critical reading skills test was conducted to a group of fifteen 2nd year Al-Azhar model secondary stage institutes. They were not able to make value judgments about the text. They could not distinguish between literal and implied meanings and draw logical conclusions. They also could not give opinions, make comparisons, infer links of events, and find the source of the information and evaluate it. They were not able to Read between the lines to get information.

In order to help students, read critically, it is important to encourage the students to deal with reading habitually. So, the researcher focused on mind habits as a means to improve the students' critical reading skills. Actually, habits of mind were commonly used in physics, Science and Math studies but recently, it is time to focus on brain and mind-based methods to develop the English language.

Mind habits are the characteristics of what intelligent people do when they are confronted with problems and the ways students use to produce knowledge (Costa & Kallick, 2004). There are sixteen habits of mind that teachers and parents can use, observe and cultivate. The aim is to help students get into the habit of behaving intelligently.

The sixteen mind habits identified by Costa and Kallick (2004) are:

1. Persisting: means the ability of the students to carry out the task entrusted to them and to continue to work and not to surrender easily to the difficulties in the course of their work; the persistent student has the ability to analyze the problems he faces in an organized way; and he has the ability to use successful alternative strategies in a convenient way.

2. Managing Impulsivity: means the ability to carefully consider and listen to alternative viewpoints and instructions, to think before making a vision or developing a work-plan for a task, including the ability to think and reflect on alternatives and outcomes from alternative perspectives, and then create strategies to deal with the task, and delay in making judgments. This habit also means the deliberation and consideration in problem solving before making opinions about a specific idea, and considering different alternatives and outcomes until the full understanding of dimensions of those problems is realized.

3. Listening with Understanding and Empathy: students seek to understand other's thoughts and ideas. Highly effective persons spend a lot of time and energy listening. Listening to another person and understanding his point of view is one of the highest forms of intelligent behavior.

4. Thinking flexibly: means the ability of the readers to think about new alternatives, options, solutions, and different perspectives; the students who are thinking flexibly have the ability to change their mental state when facing a situation or solving a particular problem. This habit also means the looking at old ideas with new vision and creative imagination, suggesting multiple alternatives when solving a problem.

5. Thinking about Thinking (Metacognition): means the ability of the student to understand the steps needed for his plan, explaining his abilities and cognitive needs, the ability to assess the proficiency of his plan, planning his thinking skills, and the effects of his acts on himself and on others. The thinking about thinking helps student do mental his task, explain his strategies in decision making, develop maps and experimentation to make sure that the task is done before implementation, and for monitoring and evaluating plans.

6. Striving for Accuracy: Students aspire to be exact and master the demands of a task. They carefully use success criteria to self and peer assess.

7. Questioning and Posing Problems: Students ask thoughtful, high order questions. They try their own strategies to solve problems.

8. Applying past Knowledge to New Situations: Referring to previous knowledge and understanding past performance accomplishments to encourage students to consider how previous experiences could support understanding in a new setting.

9. Thinking and Communicating with Clarity and Precision: Students convey thoughts accurately when speaking, listening and writing. They consider appropriate use of vocabulary and gesture.

10. Gathering Data through All Senses: Providing students with a variety of learning opportunities that do not just focus on the auditory and visual forms of delivery. Students use all senses to source information to develop understandings.

11. Creating, Imagining, and Innovating: means the ability of the student to improve his style in order to achieve more fluency, detail, and innovation by putting himself in different roles, enabling himself to examine alternative possibilities from several angles. They are mental paths that arise to achieve creativity, practice original thinking, generate new products, and to use ingenious methods and intelligent solutions of problems.

12. Responding with Wonderment and Awe: Teachers are conscious to develop curiosity within their subjects. Actively linking content to relevant real-life situations and sharing impressive findings within the subject.

13. Taking Responsible Risks: means providing students with opportunities to take calculated risks. Students are prepared to answer questions and give opinions even if not completely sure. They are confident to move outside of their comfort zones.

14. Finding Humor: means the ability to perceive the relationships and situations from an appropriate, original and interesting location, and to accept the other student's humors, to encourage pleasure and fun and to create an atmosphere of fun in dealing with others.

15. Thinking Interdependently: Students have opportunities to productively work with others to understand and apply content. They learn from others through discussing, supporting and challenging ideas.

16. Remaining Open to Continuous Learning: Students enjoy learning and are keen to add to knowledge and skills. They are not fearful of not knowing an answer and trying new techniques.

3- Statement of the problem

In the light of reviewing the previous discussion, the pilot study and the researcher's experience in EFL teaching, it could be stated that students had weakness in EFL critical reading skills. The researcher proposed a new program to overcome such difficulties. It was a mind habits-based program that could develop EFL critical reading skills of Al-Azhar model secondary institute students.

4- Questions of the study

The study attempted to answer the following main question:

What was the effect of a mind habits based program on developing Al-Azhar model secondary institutes students' EFL critical reading skills?

This main question was divided into the following questions:

1) What were the critical reading skills targeted for (2nd year) Al-Azhar model secondary institutes students'?

2) What was the actual level of students in critical reading skills of (2nd year) Al-Azhar model secondary institutes students'?

3) How was a mind habits-based program be designed to help develop critical reading skills of Al-Azhar model secondary institutes students'?

4) To what extent is the program effective in developing the students' critical reading skills?

5- Instrument of the study

The following instruments were used in the present study:

1- A critical reading skills questionnaire.

2- A critical reading skills test.

6- Purpose of the study

This study made use of mind habits based program to enhance EFL critical reading skills of Al-Azhar model secondary institutes students'.

7- Significance of the study

Hopefully, the study could be significant for:

1- **Students** as it could

- improve their EFL critical reading skills.

- provide them with a suitable environment void of stress or anxiety to practise EFL reading and thinking critically.

2- **Teachers:** It could provide them with guidelines for using this program to enhance students' critical reading skills.

3- **Supervisors:** It could help them use this program to set training courses for EFL teachers.

4- **Curriculum designers:** They can consider this program on designing and preparing EFL textbooks.

5- **EFL researchers**: It could guide other researchers to conduct further studies on developing EFL skills through using the program activities.

8- Delimitations of the study

The current study was delimited to the following:

1- Al-Azhar second year secondary institute students at Kafr Saqr Religious model Institute in Sharkia governorate Egypt as they lack critical reading, skills.

2- Some critical reading skills that were approved by the jury members and suitable for students.

9- Definition of Terms

Critical Reading definition:

According to Hudson (2007), critical reading skills are skills that will help students to be able to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate what is read. When teachers expose students to critical reading skills, they will also make students see the cause and effect or comparing relationships in the text, or adopting critical stance toward the text.

Operationally, critical reading is the ability of EFL second year secondary school students to make an inference by reasoning, questioning, evaluating, and eventualizing a text and reaching a conclusion.

Mind habits definition:

Sibarani, (2020), Mind habits refers to collective thoughts shared by the members of a community which covers three aspects they are the nature of knowledge and knowing the language, method of knowledge development, and rhetoric for the knowledge communication. Habits of minds develop as a result of learning. Personal belief governs the learning.

  Based on the previous definition of mind habits, the researcher defined habits of mind as important actions which help Second year secondary students improve their language learning especially their critical reading and thinking skills; they make solving problems, an ordinary and easy task through (questioning and posing problems, thinking and communicating with clarity and precision, thinking about our thinking, applying past knowledge to new situations, thinking interdependently, remaining open to continuous learning).

10- Hypotheses of the study

  On the basis of the theoretical background aforementioned provided, the following hypotheses were formulated:

1- There was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups in their performance

of the post EFL critical reading test results, in favor of experimental group students.

2- There was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group in their performance of the pre-post administrations of the EFL critical reading test results, in favor of the post administration.

3- The suggested program based on mind habits had an effect on developing the EFL critical reading skills of the experimental group students.

11- Literature review

- Perception of EFL Critical Reading

Many interpretations of reading critically have been presented. They differ in distinguishing the cognitive mechanisms that illustrate how texts can be read critically. Therefore, several sets of conceptualizations which help give some viewpoint simultaneously were conducted. Also Paul and Elder (2019) added that critical reading is an art that helps readers analyze, evaluate the text and think with a point of view that helps the nature of thought be improved. There are different methods that help students critically read:

- When vital questions and problems from the text are raised,
- When relevant information is gathered and assessed and then reasonable explanations of that information are offered,

• When their interpretations are tested against prior knowledge and current experience,

  • When their assumptions and its implications are examined, and

• When what is read is used to efficiently communicate with others or the probable solutions to complex problems are advanced.

To Pardede (2008), critical reading involves basically critical thinking. Thus, critical reading necessitates an understanding of the Par (2018) described meanings of reading and critical thinking. critical reading as an active process of constructing meaning from the texts by involving interpretation, making inference, analysis, giving judgment, and evaluation. In Wallace's view (2003), reading is a social, critical and interpretative process rather than a skill or a set of skills. He also claimed that a critical reader carries out a mental action on the word form and makes correlations between the context and his personal experience to infer the meaning of the word.

- **Habits of Mind**

God Almighty confirmed the value of the mind and honored human beings from the rest of the living beings with the mind, and ordered in all religions to work and get used to using it and exploit all its functions and capabilities in the reconstruction of the Earth, and if the high levels of maturity are contemplated and progressed of the human civilizations in all aspects, it can be found that they are

the result of utilizing the mind, imagination and thinking at various levels (Bottone, 2010).

The habits of mind represent the learned intellectual behaviors that are selected at certain times for the exercise of thinking, leading to productive action and becoming a normal way towards more intelligent acts. Mental habit refers to the way or behavior in which one uses or applies thinking. Costa and Kallick (2000) depicted the habits of mind as the mannerism that manages, organizes and arranges the mental processes and enhances the proper priorities system of these processes.

In the view of Costa and Kallick (2005), the habits of the mind are the tendency of the students to behave intelligently when confronted with a problem. If the solution and the answer are not available in its cognitive structure, the problem may be in the form of a confusing situation or puzzle, the habits of minds help to exercise the intelligent behavior when students does not know the suitable solution or answer.

Costa and Kallick (2000) pointed out that the negligence of the use of the habits of mind causes many deficiencies in the outcomes of the learning process, as the habits of mind are not the occupancy of information and focus on how much knowledge is acquired only, but is the utilization of information and how to use it and develop dealing with modern technology , which forces the students to

follow the development and progress in various fields, the habits of mind are necessary for effective thinking as students who are familiar with these habits are not only able to think pointedly, but their mental habits help them reach the mental efficiencies necessary to solve problems when needed.

12- Method and Procedures of the study

- **Design of the Study**

The current study adopted the quasi-experimental design using two groups, experimental and control. The experimental group was instructed using a mind habits program whereas the control group was instructed in the traditional way.

- **Procedures of the study**

The present study could be preceded as follows:

1- Reviewing literature and previous studies related to the study variables

a- The independent variable: Mind habits to design the study program.

b- The dependent variable: Critical reading skills to crystallize the targeted skills.

2- Designing instruments of the study:

a- Designing a critical reading questionnaire to identify the most important skills for EFL students.

b- Designing a critical reading skills test.

3- Submitting these instruments to the jury members to validate it.

4- Designing the proposed program in the light of objectives, content, activities, strategies, learner's and teacher's roles, and evaluation.

5- Submitting the program to the jury members to validate it.

6- Choosing the study participants from Al-Azhar secondary model institutes and dividing them into experimental and control groups.

7- Pre administering the study instruments to both groups.

8- Teaching the experimental group by using the proposed program and the control group through regular instruction.

9- Post administering the study instruments to both groups.

10- Comparing the pre - post results statistically of both groups.

11- Interpreting results, providing Conclusions, recommendations and suggesting for further studies.

12- Results of the study

1. The experimental group outperformed the control one on the critical reading posttest as a whole and its sub-skills. Hence , the significant differences are due to exposing this group to the mind habits based program.

2. The obtained results proved significant differences between the pre and the post administrations of the critical reading skills test to the experimental group favoring the post results.

3. The mind habits based program proved to be statistically and educationally significant in developing participants' critical reading skills.

13- Recommendations

Based on the previous results, the present study recommends the following:

1- The critical skill should receive appropriate attention in order to be developed especially at secondary stages.

2- Habits of mind strategies should be integrated in the curriculum and in the classroom teaching.

3- Not only critical reading skills should be tackled inside the classroom, but also evaluating it regularly in order to identify students' needs and problems.

14- Suggestions for further research

Out of the study delimitations and results, the following research areas can be suggested:

1- Investigating the relationship between mind habits strategies and other reading skills, i.e. reflective and creative reading at various educational stages.

2- Investigating the relationship between mind habits and other language skills, e.g. writing, speaking and listening.

3- Designing similar mind habits programs for students at different stages (primary, preparatory and university).

4- Conducting more research using this program with other class categories in other courses of study.

5- Investigating the relationship between mind habits and other variables, such as reading motivation, preferences, reading awareness, reading comprehension, reading interests, and students' attitudes, towards studying English.

6- Investigating the relationship between other instructional strategies and students' critical reading skills.

7- Designing a course for training pre-service and in-service teachers to how to adopt the mind habits program

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Appendix (A)

The EFL critical reading test.

total score: 30   Time: 50 minutes

marks

Name: ………………   Class: …………..   Institute: …………………

Read the following passage, then choose the correct answer from a, b, c or d:

The application of spreading theories of economics has so far failed to lift developing countries out of the cycle of poverty that has effects on the majority of their inhabitants. Worldwide, there are still an estimated1.3 billion people earning a dollar or less a day and living in extreme poverty. Decades of huge loans by banks from affluent nations-at interest rates that cripple developing economics-do not appear to be providing a solution to poverty. Professor Muhammad Youns' Grameen Bank, however, is taking a different approach to the problem.

In 1976, the Bangladeshi economics professor started a microcredit programme with a loan of just 62 cents (U .S.) each to a group of 42 workers. Instead of loaning large amounts of money to well-off debtors, the bank he started made extremely small loans to poor Bangladeshis who were considered a bad risk by the traditional banking system.

He **astounded** his critics by proving that the poor were more likely to repay their debts than the wealthy. Virtually none of the thousands of women who have been financially assisted by the bank for over 20 years have defaulted on their payments. Yet all are expected to pay interest and stick to the rules of contract. These borrowings have enabled Bangladeshi women to set up numerous small-scale projects which directly benefit their families and the communities where they live. The success of the experiment has brought about a revolution in the anti-poverty programmes.

choose the correct answer from a, b, c or d:

1- The best title for the passage is ……………… **(identify the main idea)**

a. A common problem with new solution   c- The developing countries' loan

b. A new problem with common solution   d- A new way of begging money

2- We can infer from the passage that the word **"astounded"** means …………

(guess the meaning of unfamiliar words)

a- Astonished   b- Admitted   c-Provided   d- Improved

3- The last line of the passage represents…….. **(make judgment based on evidence)**

a- The success of the experience   c- the failure of the experience

b- The increase of poverty   d- the decrease of interests

4- At the beginning of his experiment, Professor Muhammad Youns was …………… **(express felling, thoughts or opinions)**

a- supported   b- criticized   c- suspected   d- appreciated

5- Professor Muhammad Youns' Grameen Bank way to treat poverty was ………….. **(express the logical connections between ideas)**

a- unique   b- common   c- unreliable   d- dishonest

6- Do theories of economics manage to overcome the poverty in the world? Why? **(identify cause and effect relationship)**

a- Yes, as many people live happily and comfortably.

b- Yes, as there are few developing countries.

c- No, as there are loans need to be paid by many developed countries.

d- No, because most developing countries' people suffer from poverty.

Read the following passage, then choose the correct answer from a, b, c or d:

Tropical cyclones are called typhoons in Asia and hurricanes in North and South America. These storms go around like a wheel turning to the left when they hit in the northern part of the world. They have wind speeds of 60kph or more. In the United States, the Tropical Predication Center in Miami, Florida keeps an eye out for hurricanes.

When meteorologists <u>detect</u> a hurricane, they give it a name. They can use either a male or female name. Why should tropical cyclones have names? The name makes it easier for people to keep up with information about a hurricane and its possible dangers. The World Meteorological Organization (WMO), an international weather group, decides what names will be used.

The WMO makes lists of names using the English alphabet. Each name on the list starts with a different letter. The first hurricane of the year gets the first name on the year's list. The second hurricane gets the next name. For example, if the first hurricane is named Abel, the second name might be named Betty. The name lists do not include names beginning with the letters Q, U, X, Y, and Z. There aren't many names that begin with these letters.

Asian countries use a different list, which is made up by the WMO's Typhoon Committee. Tis list has a few personal names, but most of the names are of flowers, animals, trees, and other similar things.

choose the correct answer from a, b, c or d:

1- The best title for the passage is ……………   **(identify the main idea)**

a- Tropical cyclones   b- Cyclones' speed

c- The World Meteorological Organization   d- The USA cyclones

2- Hurricanes and typhoons are two kinds of…...**(logical connections between ideas)**

a- floods   b- continents   c- storms   d- rivers

3- The writer thinks that …………   **(express felling, thoughts or opinions)**

a- using names makes matters easier.   b- using names makes confusion.

c-using numbers is better than names.   d- using letters is better than names.

4- After reading the passage, what does a meteorologist study?
(make judgment based on evidence)

a- The science of the atmosphere and its phenomena.

b- The science of the volcanoes and the earthquakes.

c- The oceans and the marine life.   d-The living things and their lives' cycle.

5- According to the passage, the verb **'detect'** means ………..
(guess the meaning of unfamiliar words)

a- invent   b- discover   c- float   d- sink

6- Giving the cyclones names helps to ……   **(identify cause and effect relationship)**

a- Call for them easily at any time.

b- Send information about them to the WOM.

c- Make them known for people to remember them.

d- Go around like a wheel turning to the left.