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**Title:**

**Exploring EFL Critical Readers' Implements-Strategies and Fulfillment-  
The Case of Master Students at M'sila University**

Dissertation submitted to the Department of Letters and English Language  
in partial fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master

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## **Declaration**

We hereby solemnly declare that the work we are going to present in this thesis

***Exploring EFL Critical Readers' Implements-Strategies and Fulfillment-  
The Case of Master 1 Linguistics Students at the Department of Letters  
and English Language - M'sila University***

is our own to the limits of our knowledge, has not been submitted before to any other institution or university or degree and all sources that we have used and quoted from have been indicated by means of complete references. This work is to be carried out and completed at Mohamed Boudiaf University M'sila, Algeria.

**Herizi Nesrine**

Date: .June 2021

## **Abstract**

Cultivating critical reading skills in learners has become very crucial for success in higher education. Despite this, the majority of students at university level prioritize the decoding of written symbols over the active analysis of the implied meaning. Reading without being critical has turned EFL learners into passive receivers of knowledge. Therefore, this study was conducted to explore the critical readers' kit by determining what implements a critical reader should possess to achieve fulfillment. It also investigates the necessary reading strategies students can develop, and the teacher's role in developing students' critical reading abilities during reading sessions. To answer the research questions, a case study was undertaken at Mohamed Boudiaf University of M'sila, adopting students' questionnaire and EFL teachers' questionnaire as a data collection instruments. The finding showed that both EFL learners and their teachers have not yet discovered the critical reader's toolkit since they are not virtually familiar with the necessary implements and strategies that need to be adopted in order to transform passive readers into active critical readers. However, fostering critical readers is not an easy task as there are some potential obstacles and challenges that a reader might encounter. Consequently, some recommendations were presented to enable EFL learners to overcome these obstacles, and to direct teachers' focus toward the enhancement of critical thinking skills and critical reading strategies. Thus, this will not only prepare EFL learners to be better critical readers at universities ,but we also hope we could produce successful individuals who could survive in the real world.

**Keywords:** Critical Reading, Critical Reading Strategies, Critical Thinking Skills, the Strategic Critical Reader.

## ***Dedication***

All praise to Allah the most Merciful and the Almighty for the completion of this work.

- I would like to dedicate this humble work to my lovely parents whom I love the most, I will always be grateful for everything they have done, and still do for me.
- To my beloved nieces: Salma, Nadine, and Yasmine and my nephews: Sakar, Raid, Amir, Jwaydo, Idriss, and Adam.
- To my sisters and my brothers and all my family
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- To all the teachers who inspire me to reach this level

**Nesrine**

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**Nesrine**

## **List of Abbreviations**

**EFL:** English as a Foreign Language

**CR:** Critical Reader

## **List of Tables**

|                                                                                             |    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| <b>Table 1 :</b> Sample's characteristics according to gender.....                          | 25 |
| <b>Table 2 :</b> Sample's characteristics according to age.....                             | 26 |
| <b>Table 3:</b> Question 1 results.....                                                     | 26 |
| <b>Table 4 :</b> Question 2 results.....                                                    | 27 |
| <b>Table 5 :</b> Question 3 results.....                                                    | 28 |
| <b>Table 6 :</b> Question 4 results.....                                                    | 29 |
| <b>Table 7 :</b> Question 5 results.....                                                    | 30 |
| <b>Table 8 :</b> Question 6 results.....                                                    | 31 |
| <b>Table 9 :</b> Question 7 results.....                                                    | 32 |
| <b>Table 10 :</b> Question 8 results.....                                                   | 33 |
| <b>Table 11 :</b> Question 9 results.....                                                   | 34 |
| <b>Table 12 :</b> Question 10 results.....                                                  | 35 |
| <b>Table 13 :</b> Question 11 results.....                                                  | 36 |
| <b>Table 14 :</b> Question 12 results.....                                                  | 37 |
| <b>Table 15 :</b> Question 13 results.....                                                  | 38 |
| <b>Table 16 :</b> Question 14 results.....                                                  | 39 |
| <b>Table 17 :</b> Question 15 results.....                                                  | 40 |
| <b>Table 18 :</b> Sample's Characteristics according to gender.....                         | 43 |
| <b>Table 19:</b> -On teaching experience.....                                               | 44 |
| <b>Table20:</b> -On presenting challenging ideas during reading.....                        | 45 |
| <b>Table21:</b> -On debates after reading.....                                              | 46 |
| <b>Table22:</b> -On class conversations.....                                                | 46 |
| <b>Table23:</b> -On students 'ideas and responses.....                                      | 47 |
| <b>Table24:</b> -On critical reading strategies.....                                        | 48 |
| <b>Table25:</b> -On the effect of critical reading strategies on students' fulfillment..... | 51 |
| <b>Table26:</b> -On students' level of critical reading skills.....                         | 51 |

## List of Figures

|                                                                                                                          |    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| <b>Fig 1:</b> Sample's characteristics according to gender.....                                                          | 24 |
| <b>Fig 2:</b> Sample's characteristics according to age.....                                                             | 26 |
| <b>Fig 3:</b> Statistical representation on the belief that published texts provide absolute truth.....                  | 27 |
| <b>Fig 4:</b> Statistical representation on thinking logically and raising questions while reading.....                  | 28 |
| <b>Fig 5:</b> Statistical representation on accepting and believing everything read in texts and books.....              | 29 |
| <b>Fig 6:</b> Statistical representation on giving personal opinion during reading sessions.....                         | 30 |
| <b>Fig 7:</b> Statistical representation on confirming the author's evidence and focusing on understanding the text..... | 31 |
| <b>Fig 8:</b> Statistical representation on evaluating the writer's arguments and testing his arguments.....             | 32 |
| <b>Fig 9:</b> Statistical representation on challenging topics that requires critical thinking.....                      | 33 |
| <b>Fig 10:</b> Statistical representation on questions that initiate discussion and expressing opinions in class.....    | 34 |
| <b>Fig 11:</b> Statistical representation on memorization of information as a purpose for reading....                    | 35 |
| <b>Fig 12:</b> Statistical representation on the application of what is read in books in solving personal problems.....  | 36 |
| <b>Fig 13:</b> Statistical representation for not taking things for granted while reading texts..                        | 37 |
| <b>Fig 14:</b> Statement twelve-results statistical graphic representation.....                                          | 38 |
| <b>Fig 15:</b> Statistical representation on the strategic reader.....                                                   | 39 |
| <b>Fig 16:</b> Statistical representation on reading between the lines.....                                              | 40 |
| <b>Fig 17:</b> Statistical representation on silent reading and critical readers.....                                    | 41 |
| <b>Fig 18:</b> Sample's characteristics according to gender.....                                                         | 44 |

|                                                                                                                          |    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| <b>Fig 19:</b> Statistical representation on teaching experience.....                                                    | 44 |
| <b>Fig 20:</b> Statistical representation on presenting challenging ideas in reading sessions.....                       | 45 |
| <b>Fig 21:</b> Statistical representation on engaging students in debates after reading.....                             | 46 |
| <b>Fig 22:</b> Statistical representation on opening conversations for students in class.....                            | 47 |
| <b>Fig 23:</b> Statistical representation on accepting or refusing students' all ideas and responses.....                | 47 |
| <b>Fig 24:</b> Statistical representation on critical reading strategies.....                                            | 49 |
| <b>Fig 25:</b> Statistical representation on the impact of critical reading strategies on students' fulfillment.....     | 51 |
| <b>Fig 26:</b> Statistical representation on teachers' attitudes towards students' level of critical reading skills..... | 52 |

## **Tables of Contents**

| <b>Contents</b>                                               | <b>Page</b>  |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| <b>Declaration.....</b>                                       | <b>..ii</b>  |
| <b>ABSTRACT.....</b>                                          | <b>..iii</b> |
| <b>Dedication.....</b>                                        | <b>iv</b>    |
| <b>Acknowledgements.....</b>                                  | <b>V</b>     |
| <b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....</b>                             | <b>VI</b>    |
| <b>LIST OF TABLES.....</b>                                    | <b>VII</b>   |
| <b>LIST OF Figures.....</b>                                   | <b>VIII</b>  |
| <b>General Introduction.....</b>                              | <b>1</b>     |
| <b>1.Introduction.....</b>                                    | <b>1</b>     |
| <b>2.Statement of the Problem.....</b>                        | <b>1</b>     |
| <b>3.Research Questions.....</b>                              | <b>2</b>     |
| <b>4.Aims of the Study.....</b>                               | <b>2</b>     |
| <b>5.Hypothesis.....</b>                                      | <b>2</b>     |
| <b>6. Literature Review.....</b>                              | <b>3</b>     |
| <b>7.Research Design.....</b>                                 | <b>4</b>     |
| <b>8.Chapter Division.....</b>                                | <b>5</b>     |
| <b>9.Significance of the Study.....</b>                       | <b>5</b>     |
| <b>10.Limitations of the Study.....</b>                       | <b>6</b>     |
| <b><u>Chapter One: : EFL Critical Readers’ Implements</u></b> |              |
| <b>Introduction .....</b>                                     | <b>7</b>     |
| <b>1.1. Definition of reading.....</b>                        | <b>7</b>     |
| <b>1.2. Types of readings.....</b>                            | <b>9</b>     |
| <b>1.3. Definition of critical reading.....</b>               | <b>9</b>     |
| <b>1.4. Characteristics of critical reading.....</b>          | <b>11</b>    |

|                                                                         |           |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1.5. Reasons for Teaching Critical Reading Skills.....                  | 13        |
| 1.6. Process of Critical Reading.....                                   | 14        |
| 1.6.1. Analysis.....                                                    | 15        |
| 1.6.2. Interpretation.....                                              | 15        |
| 1.6.3. Evaluation.....                                                  | 15        |
| 1.7. The critical reader vs. the non-critical reader.....               | 16        |
| 1.8. The importance of genre and discourse for the critical reader..... | 17        |
| <b>Conclusion.....</b>                                                  | <b>19</b> |

## **Chapter Two: Methodology Research and Design**

|                                                                                          |           |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Part One: Research Methodology and Design.....</b>                                    | <b>21</b> |
| 2.1. Introduction.....                                                                   | 21        |
| 2.2. Research Design.....                                                                | 21        |
| 2.3. The Sample Population.....                                                          | 21        |
| 2.3.1. Teachers' Profile.....                                                            | 22        |
| 2.3.2. Students' Profile.....                                                            | 22        |
| 2.4. Instrumentation.....                                                                | 22        |
| 2.4.1. Students' Questionnaire.....                                                      | 22        |
| 2.4.2. Teachers' Questionnaire.....                                                      | 23        |
| 2.4.2.1. Section One:-On Teacher's identification.....                                   | 24        |
| 2.4.2.2. Section Two:-On the Teacher's Classroom Flexibility.....                        | 24        |
| 2.4.2.3. Section Three:- On the Evaluation of Learner's Critical Reading Strategies..... | 24        |
| <b>Part Two: Data Analysis and Interpretation.....</b>                                   | <b>25</b> |
| 2.5. Analysis of the Students' Questionnaire.....                                        | 25        |
| 2.5.1. Sample's Characteristics.....                                                     | 25        |
| 2.5.2. Study Results Displays.....                                                       | 26        |
| 2.5.3. Analysis of Open-ended Questions.....                                             | 41        |
| 2.6. Analysis of Teachers' Questionnaire.....                                            | 41        |

|                                                                        |           |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| 2.6.1. On Teachers' Identification.....                                | 43        |
| 2.6.2. On the Teachers' Classroom Flexibility.....                     | 45        |
| 2.6.3. On the evaluation of learners' critical reading strategies..... | 48        |
| 2.7. Discussion of the Findings.....                                   | 53        |
| 2.7.1. Discussion of Students' Questionnaire.....                      | 53        |
| 2.7.2. Discussion of Teachers' Questionnaire .....                     | 54        |
| <b>Conclusion.....</b>                                                 | <b>56</b> |

### **Chapter Three: Exploring EFL Critical Readers' -Strategies and Fulfillment**

|                                                           |           |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Introduction.....</b>                                  | <b>57</b> |
| 3.1. Cultivating critical reading.....                    | 58        |
| 3.2. Good critical reading.....                           | 60        |
| 3.2.1. Annotating While Reading.....                      | 64        |
| 3.2.2. Analysis and Evaluation.....                       | 64        |
| 3.2.3. Comparing Several Works.....                       | 65        |
| 3.3. The strategic critical reader.....                   | 65        |
| 3.4. Critical Reading Kit Contents.....                   | 67        |
| 3.4.1. Exploring the basic critical thinking skills ..... | 67        |
| 3.4.1.1. identifying key points and main ideas.....       | 68        |
| 3.4.1.1.1. Critical Thinking.....                         | 68        |
| 3.4.1.1.2. Critical Thinking Skill.....                   | 69        |
| 3.4.1.2. identifying cause/ effect relationship.....      | 69        |
| 3.4.2. Critical Reading Strategies.....                   | 70        |
| ○ Previewing.....                                         | 70        |
| ○ Contextualizing.....                                    | 70        |
| ○ Questioning.....                                        | 71        |
| ○ Reflecting.....                                         | 72        |

|                                                                                               |            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| ○ Outlining and Summarizing.....                                                              | 72         |
| ○ Evaluation.....                                                                             | 72         |
| ○ Comparing and Contrasting.....                                                              | 73         |
| <b>3.4.3. The Role of Critical Reading Strategies in Enhancing Reading Comprehension.....</b> | <b>74</b>  |
| <b>3.4.4. Promoting the use of metacognitive skills and strategies.....</b>                   | <b>74</b>  |
| <b>3.4.5. The Habits of Highly Effective Readers.....</b>                                     | <b>76</b>  |
| <b>3.5. Critical readers' Fulfillment.....</b>                                                | <b>77</b>  |
| <b>3.6. Challenges in Becoming a Critical Reader.....</b>                                     | <b>78</b>  |
| <b>3.7. Scaffolding the Critical Reader to Become More Adept .....</b>                        | <b>81</b>  |
| <b>Conclusion.....</b>                                                                        | <b>82</b>  |
| <b>Recommendations.....</b>                                                                   | <b>84</b>  |
| <b>General Conclusion.....</b>                                                                | <b>86</b>  |
| <b>References.....</b>                                                                        | <b>89</b>  |
| <b>Appendices.....</b>                                                                        | <b>100</b> |
| <b>المُلخَص .....</b>                                                                         | <b>104</b> |

# **General Introduction**

## **1. Introduction**

Over the last few decades, there had been much abundance of information sources which have turned learners into passive subjects and receivers of knowledge. Readers simply accept everything they read in texts, and never question nor criticize different ideas and opinions. John Dewey's (1916) and Paulo Freire's (1970) works on education have inspired many researchers, scholars, and teachers who were interested in helping learners to be autonomous, critical thinkers who have their voices heard.

Critical Pedagogy neglects the traditional approach of teaching in which the instructor is the main source of knowledge, and students are merely passive consumers of information. It essentially aims at empowering learners to think critically and question the authenticity of the knowledge being conveyed.

Critical reading is a major area of interest and central to the approach of Critical Pedagogy which has been extensively studied in recent years. Several researchers and critical pedagogues have made attempts to define critical reading and investigate its role in educational process (e.g., Freire, 1983; Patching, Kameenui, Carnine, Gersten, & Colvin 1983; Walz, 2001). Also, many studies were conducted to encourage the inclusion of critical reading in reading programs and focus on the development of critical thinking skills.

## **2. Statement of the Problem:**

Despite the efforts of many dedicated researchers and educators, today's students do not appear to be able to critically analyze text materials. Even at the university level, students are merely passive readers who consume knowledge without questioning that

knowledge, and they are not active critical readers. This is due to the fact that previous studies were unable to clarify sufficiently what it takes to be a critical reader. It would seem, therefore, that further investigations are needed in order to explore the critical readers' kit. For this reason, the actual study attempts to uncover the required implements and strategies that enable EFL learners to develop into critical readers and achieve fulfillment.

### **3. Research Questions**

Specifically, the current research study attempts to address and answer the following questions:

- 1) How can EFL learners develop into critical readers?
- 2) What type of critical reading strategies learners need to develop to achieve fulfillment?
- 3) Why don't teachers help learners become critical readers?

### **4. Aims of the study**

This dissertation seeks to address the following objectives:

- 1) Exploring critical readers' kit contents-implements and strategies-
- 2) Pointing out to the types of critical reading strategies that need to be developed by EFL learners in order to achieve fulfillment.
- 3) Examining EFL teachers' perceptions toward the inclusion of critical reading in the learning process.

### **5. Hypothesis**

If learners explore well the critical readers' kit, they could develop into real critical / strategic readers.

## **6. Literature Review**

Reading is more than a decoding activity of written texts. Rather, it should be viewed as a developmental process that leads to understanding what is beyond literal meaning. Freire (1983) introduced the act of reading as a critical act that fosters critical awareness about the individual role at society and his ability to change the world. Accordingly, Gray (1960) highlighted the differences between reading lines literally and reading between and beyond lines. The first refers to the literal meaning of the text, while the second refers to the critical evaluation of the text. Hence, reading is not a one-way process, but a dialogical process that involves readers as co-authors of textual meanings. Based on the critical perception, analysis, and interpretation of texts, readers will be able to transform what is read into practical actions to change the society.

The necessity of approaching critical reading urged many researchers to examine its nature, its significance, and how it should be taught. In 1983, a study was conducted (Patching et al., 1983) with above-average ability students in the domain of critical reading and critical thinking. It investigated the effectiveness of teaching students one aspect of critical reading which is the detection of potentially faulty arguments. The overall results pointed out that the formal instruction in any age group shows improvements in critical reading skills. In this study which attempted essentially to develop critical skills through the use of metacognitive strategies, William Patching (1983), the author of the book: *Direct Instruction in Critical Reading Skills*, defined critical reading as "the set of processes or operations that occur when readers correctly

identify valid (versus invalid) instances of argument, reasoning or presentation of evidence in written materials" (p.408).

In 1963, Coles conducted a study in which over 6800 students entering college nationally were tested over their ability to read a short passage, evaluate the accuracy of that passage, and write a short essay explaining their perspective. The results showed that fewer than 1% of those tested were able to recognize "the propagandistic nature of the prose." It was concluded that the majority of students know little or nothing about critical reading or thinking.

According to Collins (1993), to develop critical reading skills, teachers must create a comfortable environment where learners are encouraged to inquire, reflect, make predictions, and give their own interpretation to the texts they read. Ozdemir (2007) argued that critical reading requires learners to be intellectual and possess the ability of analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating. That is, a reader who is not critical cannot surpass the level of perception in cognitive processes; while a critical reader can acquire competencies up to the level of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Aşılıoğlu, 2008:7).

In addition, Walz (2001) explored the role of internet as a new context in enhancing learners' critical reading skills. He suggested that students are expected to be judgmental readers who are able to synthesize, evaluate, interpret and then use the information being read to help them become critical thinkers and autonomous learners in this digital era.

## **7. Methodology**

The current research takes place at Mohamed Boudiaf University of M'sila, throughout the academic year 2020/2021. So as to answer the research study questions,

a case study is adopted at the English Department. The research is exploratory in nature, and employs qualitative and quantitative data collection tools. The participants who partake in the data collection are EFL teachers and Master 1 students of English Linguistics. Ten teachers are selected to answer a questionnaire as an investigation to their perceptions towards critical reading, and twenty-five Master One EFL students are selected to answer another questionnaire related to critical reading implements, strategies, and its significance in the learning process.

## **8. Chapter Division/ Structure of the dissertation**

This dissertation comprises three major chapters. The first chapter represents a literature review of the probed topic. It deals with EFL critical readers' implements by presenting definition of reading and its types, critical reading and its characteristics, the significance of teaching critical reading, a contrast between the critical reader and the non-critical reader, and finally the importance of genre and discourse for the critical reader.

The second chapter is devoted to the practical side of this study. It includes the first part which explains the research design and methodology and also the data collection instruments. Accordingly, the second part is related to data presentation, analysis and discussion.

The third chapter, on the other hand, constitutes the core of the whole study. It explores, explains and illustrates critical readers' strategies and fulfillments. The chapter concludes with mentioning some challenges faced by readers, and recommending some pedagogical implications regarding the implementation of critical reading.

## **9. Significance of the study**

The research gives contribution for both students and teachers. Firstly, it equips learners with the required implements, skills and strategies that enable them to develop into critical readers. It gives them opportunities to find their own reading strategy, foster their critical thinking, and better interpret texts. Apart from that, it can contribute in the development of their English skills and personal growth in general.

For educators, this study urges them to be more aware of the necessity of helping learners become strategic readers. It can also encourage teachers to include critical reading in school programs, and design reading materials that motivate learners to think critically.

#### **10. Limitations of the Study**

The study scope was limited due to three main factors: place, sample number, and time duration. The case study was conducted at M'sila University, and targeted only few teacher and students (Master1) from the English Department. It was not convenient to reach a larger sample. Moreover, time restriction was another obstacle due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Accordingly, the findings of this study were inadequate, inaccurate, and so, they are not to be generalized as further, large-scale research studies are recommended.

# **Chapter One : EFL Critical Readers' Implements**

## **Introduction**

Reading critically is an essential skill for students who are seeking deep knowledge of a subject, or aiming at becoming future leaders or experts in a certain field. It is indeed a crucial part of academic life, and most professional careers demands this valuable skill. Specifically, critical reading will help students to get into college and graduate school with high scores, and eventually move on in their careers after school. Therefore, becoming a critical reader nowadays is quite fundamental for students specially at the university level.

Accordingly, the current chapter provides a literature review about the required implements that need to be possessed by EFL learners which help them develop into active critical readers. It starts with defining reading and its types in general. Then, it tackles critical reading, its process, its characteristics, and its importance for EFL learners. The final part incorporates a distinction between the critical reader and the non-critical reader as well as the importance of genre and discourse for the critical reader.

### **1.1. Definition of Reading**

Reading, which is a window to the world, is considered as the most significant linguistic skill in individuals' intellectual life. This is due to the fact that interpretation, information gathering, meaning construction, and the utility of the acquired knowledge in the communicative processes is strongly related to reading activities. The term "reading" has been defined in a variety of ways to explain the process through which one examines and understands a written text.

Carroll (1964) regards reading as " the activity of reconstructing a reasonable spoken message from a printed text, and making meaning responses to the reconstructed message that would be made to the spoken message" (p.62). The activity is done by the readers to respond to and comprehend a text being read connected to their prior knowledge (Spratt, Pulverness, and Williams: 2005: 21). Sharing the same view, Patricia Carrel et al (1988) state that reading is an 'interactive process' where readers use their past experiences and background knowledge to make sense of the text.

According to Widdowson (1979), reading is the "process of getting linguistic information via print." The process begins with written signs and letters (Sakaryalı, 2011:5; Kantemir, 1997:22; Temizkan, 2007:19). Within this complicated process, readers learn something from what they read and use it as a part of education in academic context (Grabe, 2009: 5). As reading is involved in learning, the readers attempt to make sense of the texts being read by interpreting, analyzing, synthesizing, and selecting the main ideas.

In another view, Harmer (1991) regards reading as "an exercise dominated by the eyes and the brain. The eyes receive messages and the brain then has to work out the significance of these messages" (p.153). This means that the action of reading depends essentially on the eyes and the brain to interpret messages that are conveyed by the writer in the form of written symbols. It also includes "the ability to draw meaning from the printed page and interpret this information appropriately" (Grabe & Stoller, 2002:9).

Furthermore, reading can also be defined as an active, thinking process "where the reader matches the writer thought for thought" (Rauch and Weinstein, 1968). For Shaw (1959), it is "thinking with the author, absorbing his ideas." In this regard, Urquhart and

Weir (1998: 18) identify reading as a cognitive activity that takes place in the mind. It "constantly involves guessing, predicting, checking and asking oneself questions" Grellet (1996: 8). Along the same vein, Pugh et al. (2000) state that "reading is the platform from which critical thinking, problem solving, and effective expressions are launched" (p. 25). To make it clear, reading is viewed as the starting point of promoting critical thinking skills and problem solving.

## **1.2. Types of reading**

There are different types of reading that can be used for grasping varying amounts of information. Each one of them has its own peculiarities, so it is essential to know when and how to use each type. Those types are scanning, skimming, extensive reading and intensive reading.

**1-Scanning:** it is a quick reading to find a specific information or detailed data within a passage. This type of reading is also called «diagonal reading».

**2- Skimming:** it is reading rapidly to get a general overview or the gist of the whole passage.

e.g. Viewing quickly a book in a store or a magazine on a shelf before buying it

**3- Extensive reading:** it is reading longer texts with the aim of getting an overall understanding of the material, approaching fluency, or simply for enjoyment.

**4- Intensive reading:** it is the careful reading of shorter texts in order to extract a specific piece of information, and get a detailed and complete comprehension.

## **1.3. Definition of Critical Reading**

The concept of critical reading, recently introduced as a model approach in education, can be seen as an attempt of "re-reading" which demands handling many concepts influencing our life directly or indirectly with a wider perspective. Reading critically does not necessarily denote negative criticism of what is read such as spotting the flaws and faulty arguments of a text. It is rather an active, careful, and deliberate process of evaluating ideas for the aim of making a judgment about their authenticity and worth (McWhorter, 1980: 377). Reading critically, therefore, differs from other forms of reading in that it goes beyond the literal meaning by questioning the content and the purposes of the text (Fisher 2001, Mclaughlin & DeVogd 2004).

### **Critical reading is defined as**

(1) the process of making judgments in reading; evaluating relevancy and adequacy of what is read; (2) an act of reading in which a questioning attitude, logical analysis, and inference are used to judge the worth of what is read according to an established standard; and (3) the judgment of validity or worth of what is read, based on sound criteria of standards developed through previous experience. (Harris & Hodges, 1981, p.74)

Sharing the same view, Hafner (1974: 40) regards critical reading as “a thinking process that is improved as individuals learn to use language more constructively and to clarify concepts through discussion that is generated and guided by skillful questioning”. The common thread shared by all these definitions is that critical reading requires thinking; it is not just a passive consumption of information, but an effective process that urges the reader to become actively engaged with the reading material.

This active way of reading involves a deeper and more complex engagement with a text, and depends essentially on the ability of analysis, synthesis, interpretation, and

evaluation. Turner (1988) describes it as “...reading with awareness of similarities and differences between what the reader has already seen and what he is seeing in the text he is reading” (p.186). It is clear that the process includes analytic thinking and evaluation of the content, and depends on cognitive skills and higher levels of thinking (McLaughlin & DeVogd 2004, Molden 2007, Thistlewaite 1990).

Freire and Macedo (1987: 20), on the other hand, claim that “understanding” through critical reading is based on the interpretation of the relationship between a text and its context. Critical reading is a level of understanding a text that allows readers to evaluate the author's ideas, arguments, perspectives, and above all purpose. Similarly, Ozdemir as cited in (Duran & Yalcintas, 2014) argued that the act of critical reading is not restricted to understanding the text, but also to determine authenticity of information, and its interpretations (Bagcı & Sahbaz, 2012) through assessing opinions and evaluating ideas (Candan, 2003). Russell (1956) further explains that “critical reading is the process of examining...verbal materials in the light of related objective evidence, comparing the statement with some norm or standard, and concluding or acting upon the judgment then made.”

To sum up, critical reading has been defined in many ways as explained above ; yet, all of these definitions emphasize the active engagement with the text and the careful analysis of the evidence. Readers, in this regard, attempt to make inference of the meaning behind the author's words, and move beyond what is directly stated on the surface. Consequently, they will be able to reach higher order thinking which is distinct from drills and memorization routine that turns so many students into passive consumers of knowledge.

#### **1.4. Characteristics of Critical Reading**

Critical reading is a more active way of reading which depends mainly on the ability to think critically. It is a deeper and more complex engagement with a text. Kurland (2000) refers to critical reading as a careful, active, reflective, analytic reading. In essence, this active process focuses on evaluating or judging ideas, and not just passively accepting them. Barris (1975) argues that:

Critical reading involves comparison of two or more sources of information...considering new ideas or information in the light of one's previous knowledge and beliefs...and the ability to detect and resist the influences of undesirable propaganda.

In fact, critical reading requires thinking, and urges the reader to become actively involved in the reading material. Shor, as cited in (Lankshear, 1994), describes critical reading as analytical habits of thinking which surpass the level of typical views, shallow impressions, and traditional myths. It ,instead, focuses on understanding the social contexts and exploring the deep meaning of any text, event, process, statement, technique or situation for the purpose of applying that meaning in a personal context. Its main characteristic features, therefore, are the ability to examine the evidence, interpretations or the stated arguments, and then detect what influence them.

According to Blair as cited in (Othman, 2013) and Nauman (2005), critical reading is considered as "the kind of deeply engaged reading". This kind of engagement can be achieved through maintaining an active interaction and collaboration between the reader and the writer. Milan et al. (2006) point out that critical reading requires students to move beyond what the text had concluded, and not only consider the author's words but also the meaning behind his words. Regardless of how objective or authoritative a text is, it does not offer its-own predetermined meaning. Critical readers, therefore, interact

with texts by "questioning them, responding to them, and expanding them" for the aim of creating meaning from every text.

Specifically, critical reading is characterized by ,as what Garrigus (2002) and Pirozzi (2003) have summarized:

- having purpose and setting goals
- asking questions and finding answers
- monitoring progress in reaching reading goals
- reading flexibly: looking forward or checking back if necessary
- allotting time and effort
- adjusting reading rate to difficulty level
- relating new information to previous knowledge
- coming to logical conclusions

(Adapted from Garrigus, 2002: 169 and Pirozzi, 2003: 197)

In essence, critical reading is characterized by being interactive since readers apply their prior knowledge along with the information in the text to interpret the written work. Critical Reading is comprehending in that the reader expects to understand the content of the reading material. Moreover, it is described to be flexible as the reader uses a variety of strategies to read critically. It is also purposeful since the active reader reads for a specific purpose. Finally, critical reading develops gradually because a reader cannot shift automatically from a literal reader to a critical reader in a short time. Fostering critical readers requires long-time effort and dedication.

### **1.5. Reasons for Teaching Critical Reading Skills**

Hudson (2007) asserts that critical reading skills are among the significant categories in reading. Thus, exposing students to critical reading skills is quite essential as they enable them to establish a critical stance towards the text, and to recognize the cause-

effect or comparing relationships within the text. Educators need to teach critical reading skills to ensure that their students not only know how to decode written symbols or use information and context to understand the content, but also know how to read between and behind the lines and construct meaning from any reading material.

According to Wallace (2003), there are three personal reasons for reading: we read to survive (reading for survival), we read to learn (reading for learning), and we read for enjoyment (reading for pleasure). Hence, the instruction of critical reading should be first based on understanding students' personal reasons for reading. If teachers neglect teaching these skills, their students might become passive learners who always agree to all the ideas presented to them. To avoid the creation of submissive readers, critical reading skills should be taught to help students become better readers and thinkers because they will regard reading as a process rather than as a product, and they will be able to challenge the author's views and come out with valid and objective arguments

### **1.6. The Process of Critical Reading**

The process of critical reading involves three phases, with some phases containing multiple components. It is crucial to note that vocabulary building and meaning construction occur throughout the entire critical reading process, and does not have to be related to any one particular phase. To guide this process and help readers to select the appropriate strategies for each phase, teachers often direct their students using the reading purpose, model strategies for them throughout the entire process, and follow their gradual progress until they can confidently use the critical reading strategies independently. Specifically, the process involves: analysis, interpretation, and evaluation.

1. **Analysis:** it is the first phase which denotes the act of looking at the parts of a text to detect its patterns. When a reader looks at these patterns, his/her critical thinking skills will be engaged in analyzing the argument the author is making. During this phase, the critical reader attempts to identify the supporting points that create the argument, the examples used as evidence for the supporting points, techniques of persuasion that are used (appeals to emotion, reason, authority, etc.), the rhetorical strategies (e.g. definition, explanation, description, narration, elaboration, argumentation, evaluation), and the modes of analysis used by the author (illustration, comparison/contrast, cause and effect, process analysis, classification/division, definition).
2. **Interpretation:** this phase includes reading ideas as well as sentences. It is indispensable to be aware of the cultural and historical context, the context of its author's life, the debates' context within the discipline at that period of time, and the intellectual context of the debates within the discipline today. To understand the patterns of the arguments, the reader should determine the kinds of reasoning that are employed in the text (historical, psychological, political, philosophical, scientific, etc), the methodology that is used, and the theory that is developed by the author.
3. **Evaluation:** it is the phase in which critical readers make judgments about intellectual /cognitive, practical, aesthetic or moral value of a text. Readers, in this phase, use their critical thinking skills to question the reliability of the sources, the relevance of the examples and supporting points of the argument, and the adequacy of the evidence or reasoning supporting that argument. It is also important to detect the strengths and weaknesses of the author's assumptions and attitudes.

### **1.7. Critical Reader vs. Non-Critical Reader**

A reader can be seen as a consumer of words, a recipient of knowledge who is passively waiting to fill his head with information printed in texts. According to a non-critical reader, published texts provide facts, almost absolute truths that are static, unquestionable, and unarguable. Carrell (1988) argued that reading was considered as a passive process in which the reader's role was limited to decoding the printed words in order to comprehend the author's intended meaning. Non-critical readers, in this term, focus on absorbing and understanding the ideas and opinions stated within the text without questioning them. Since typical readers only consume the content, their ultimate goal is getting the basic idea of that content, recognizing what the text says about the topic, and simply confirm evidence.

A critical reader, on the other hand, has the ability to think logically and raise questions while reading. Instead of merely compiling a set of facts to be memorized, critical readers evaluate and solve problems by identifying arguments and issues and seeking alternative views. They are regarded as active readers because they question, evaluate, and judge what they have read throughout the reading process (Collins, 1993). Piekarz (1964) asserts that: "Critical readers are those who, in addition to identifying facts accurately as they read, engage in interpretive and evaluative thinking --they project the literal meanings against their own background of experience....".

Sharing the same view, Wallace (2003) proposes that critical readers conclude the word meaning through making connections between the context and their own personal knowledge. In this sense, in order to create meaning, strategic readers implement a variety of approaches, strategies and techniques which include their personal experiences and existing knowledge to the reading process.

According to Dechant (1973), critical reading is essentially based on literal comprehension yet it requires the reader's evaluation which involves his personal judgment on the quality, accuracy, and truthfulness of what is read (p.268). The critical reader, states Dechant (1973), "formulates the question clearly, checks the authenticity of the materials, evaluates the author's credentials, looks for errors in reasoning, and develops a sensitivity of the rightness or wrongness of what is presented" (pp. 269-270). That is, when students read critically, CRs are able to raise questions, evaluate arguments and opinions, reflect on the ideas presented in texts, and express their own thoughts and perspectives.

In short, Poulson and Wallace (2004: 6) point out specific features that describe critical readers, which involve "adapting an attitude of skepticism", "habitually questioning the quality of their own and others", "scrutinizing claims", "being open-minded", and "being constructive". In other words, strategic readers deeply understand and evaluate information, and then form intelligent opinions. They are creative and open-minded as they are able to recognize connections between topics and employ their personal thoughts and ideas in testing every assertion, and in adding their own interpretation to the subject.

### **1.8. The Importance of Genre and Discourse for the Critical Reader**

Genre has been a subject of research for a long time in various fields of studies. The term "genre" is generally used to classify types of spoken or written discourse according to content, purpose, form, and language. Martin (1984, p.25) describes genre as "a staged, goal-orientated, and purposeful social activity that people engage in as members of their culture". To Swales (1990), it is a class of communicative events with some common set of communicative purposes. Simply put, genre is a type of text that uses a

specific structure and format (Duke & Purcell-Gates, 2003). This means that genre has a particular pattern and a specific purpose which makes it a conventional response to a repeated rhetorical situation.

In this regard, students are required to know that there are different kinds of genres, each with its own purposes, features, and conventions. For example, students can learn that narrative text tells a story, expository text is written to provide the reader with facts, and persuasive text is written to give arguments and to convince a reader. Once students recognize that there are different kinds of genres, they will be able to easily navigate through each kind of text to find the information they seek.

Learning about the features of different genres allows readers to organize information so that they can easily make sense of what they are reading, and quickly adjust their reading style. In fact, the process of critical reading requires learners to master a variety of genres. As readers know the right genre, they would be able to comprehend the text better. The ability to understand the text is not solely related to knowledge about the language itself, but also to knowledge about the genre (Devitt, 2004; Devitt, 2004; Swales, 2009). Toledo (2005) asserts that: "we cannot be certain whether or not readers have grasped the message unless we are aware of their knowledge of the contextual dimensions that constrain it at different levels".

This implies that readers should have knowledge about genre in the language in order to get the purpose of the text successfully. Indeed, the familiarity with genre and its conventions helps readers to save time by reading texts faster, interpreting the information in them more quickly, and ultimately evaluating that information critically. In short, knowledge about genre plays a major role in comprehending texts which will give readers the space for analysis and synthesis. Since readers expect a particular set of

conventions, they will be able to argue more about the text, and consequently they will use their critical reading skills to evaluate the text more.

Genre and discourse are closely related. (Wallace 2003) and (Kress 1985) state that "discourse carries meanings about the nature of the institution from which it derives; genre carries meaning about the conventional social occasions on which texts arise". Accordingly, it is quite essential for readers to understand what is meant by genre and discourse. Wallace (2003) suggests that the word "discourse" can be used to describe the meaning that we obtain from a text. Fairclough (1989) adds that there are multiple discourses which readers could derive from any text, and not only one single discourse. To make it clearer, readers need to be aware of the fact that they could get not only one meaning but many meanings from a text they read. It is important for them to be engaged in such reading process as it allows them to develop critical reading skills.

When students acknowledge that they could come out with many discourses from any text they read, they will be encouraged to think critically where they need to analyze and synthesize the text they read. Therefore, understanding discourse allows students to think critically and construct meaning from any text, so that they could ultimately develop into critical readers.

## **Conclusion**

Exploring critical readers' kit helps EFL learners become better readers and be active thinkers while they read. This involves putting more emphasis on the important role of evaluating ideas or judging opinions, and not just passively taking them in. By becoming a more critical and active reader, students will be better researchers and better writers. Hence, readers will enjoy reading and writing a whole lot more as they will be actively engaged in both processes.

Critical readers are not made overnight. It is in fact a thoughtful process that requires the development of certain skills and strategies. Thus, encouraging and fostering critical reading and thinking skills is the responsibility of both students and educators in order to be able to face the challenges of this age.

## **Chapter Two: Research Methodology , Design and Instrumentation**

### **Part One: Research Methodology and Design**

#### **2.1. Introduction**

The present chapter is mainly devoted to the empirical phase of the study. In order to answer the research questions, along with the literature review which has been conducted before, a qualitative research methodology has been carried out. Accordingly, teachers' questionnaire and students' questionnaire have been selected as data collection instruments.

This chapter encompasses two parts: the first part presents the research methodology selected and adopted to collect relevant data. The second part displays the findings, their analysis and discussion. The chapter concludes with the study limitations, and pedagogical implications about how EFL students' critical reading strategies can be developed.

#### **2.2. Research Design**

The actual study aims at exploring critical readers' kit by determining which strategies, skills, and competencies strategic readers possess. For this purpose, a case study of Master One EFL university students is carried out using a questionnaire to students, and another questionnaire to EFL teachers.

The research instruments investigate to what extent EFL students and teachers implement critical reading, and what type of critical reading strategies they use the most in order to achieve fulfillment.

## **2.3. The Sample Population**

This investigation has required the contribution of the two main actors in the teaching/learning scene: Master 1 students of English Linguistics at Mohamed Boudiaf University of M'sila, and their EFL teachers.

### **2.3.1. Teachers' Profile**

The ten teachers to whom the questionnaire was addressed, were selected as stratified sampling, they work in Mohamed Boudiaf university in M'sila, some teachers have "doctorate degree" in English and others have "magister degree". Their teaching experience ranges from five to fifteen years.

### **2.3.2. Students' Profile**

The twenty-five informants were Master 1 EFL students from the university of M'sila, selected randomly. The age of these students ranged from twenty to thirty years old.

## **2.4. Instrumentation**

The main data collection instruments employed in this research study were: students' questionnaire and EFL teachers' questionnaire because they are less time consuming, as they give us the opportunity to question a large number of participants in a short period of time anonymously (Wallace1998).

### **2.4.1. Students' Questionnaire**

Brown (2001:6) defined questionnaires as "any written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to reach either by writing out their answers or selecting them among existing answers". Questionnaires allow researchers to collect data that students could report about themselves, such as

their perspectives and attitudes towards classroom instructions and activities. This information is not usually obtained from production data alone (Mackey & Gass 2005).

The questionnaire is distributed in the university of M'sila, and administered to Master1 EFL students. The research hypotheses were translated into two types: closed questions and open questions. The purpose of this questionnaire is to discover to what extent EFL students are critical readers, and to deduce the main strategies used to approach critical reading. The questionnaire contains three parts. The first one aims at obtaining basic information about the students, including mainly their gender and age.

The second part included fifteen statements, each was followed by five degree adverbs: always, often, sometimes, rarely and never. The students were asked to tick the adverb which best describes their belief of each statement. The statements referred both directly and indirectly to critical reading and its strategies.

The last part included three open-ended questions. The first question asked the students to make a distinction between literal reading and critical reading. The next question asked the students to present the types of critical reading strategies that they use the most during the reading process for the aim of achieving full comprehension of the text. The last question asked the students in a direct way whether they consider themselves literal readers or critical readers, explaining why.

#### **2.4.2. Teachers' Questionnaire**

The questionnaire consists of both close-ended and open-ended questions to gather quantitative and qualitative data. Close-ended questions are intended to obtain exact answers by providing the participants with yes/no questions or a set of suggested items to choose the appropriate answer(s) through ticking the right box(es), whereas open-ended questions aim at getting personal opinions and giving space to participants to add

further explanations. For the purpose of organising our questionnaire, it is intentionally divided into three sections and each section consists of a number of questions (see appendix 2).

#### **2.4.2.1. Section One: -On Teachers' Identification**

This section is devoted to the participants' personal information , to have background knowledge about their gender, and their teaching experience.

#### **2.4.2.2. Section Two: -On the Teacher's Classroom Flexibility (Q1-Q4)**

The second section targets teacher's classroom flexibility. The first question aims at enquiring whether teachers present challenging ideas to their students when practicing reading. After that, they have space to mention their students' reaction to these ideas. The second question investigates whether teachers involve their students in debates after reading any material. Then, they were asked whether they open conversations for their students or not. The last question of this section is intended to discover whether EFL teachers accept all of their students' ideas and responses or not.

#### **2.4.2.3. Section Three: On the Evaluation of learners' critical reading strategies (Q5-Q10)**

In this section, teachers are asked about their ways of evaluating their students' critical reading skills (Q5). Question (6) consists of a series of options to tick the three most important critical reading strategies that students should acquire, and then justifying their choices. After that, question (7) gives space to the teachers to explain their ways of helping students become strategic critical readers. On the other hand, question (8) looks into teachers perceptions towards the influence of critical reading strategies on students' fulfillment while question (9) attempts to determine whether the teachers are satisfied with their students' level

of critical reading skills or not. The last question gives the space for the teachers to propose their suggestions to non-strategic readers to help them develop into strategic critical readers.

## **Part Two: Data Analysis and Interpretation**

This part is mainly concerned with the quantitative and qualitative analysis obtained through questionnaires.

### **2.5. Analysis of Students' Questionnaires**

#### **2.5.1. Sample's characteristics:**

|               | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|---------------|---------------|-------------------|
| <b>Male</b>   | 5             | 20 %              |
| <b>Female</b> | 20            | 80 %              |

**Table1: Sample's Characteristics according to gender**

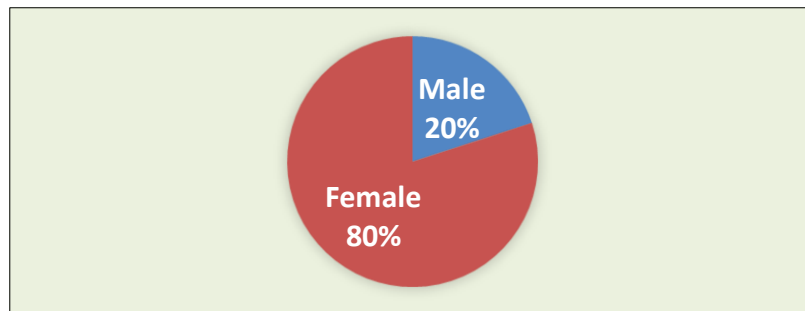


**Fig1: Sample's characteristics according to gender**

According to table 1 and Chart 1, The learners who participated in this research were from both genders, males and females, though the females were more than males in a rate of (80%) for females and (20%) for males.

|                 | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|-----------------|---------------|-------------------|
| <b>Below 22</b> | 8             | 32%               |
| <b>22 to 24</b> | 12            | 48%               |

|                 |   |     |
|-----------------|---|-----|
| <b>Above 24</b> | 5 | 20% |
|-----------------|---|-----|

**Table 2 : Sample's characteristics according to age**

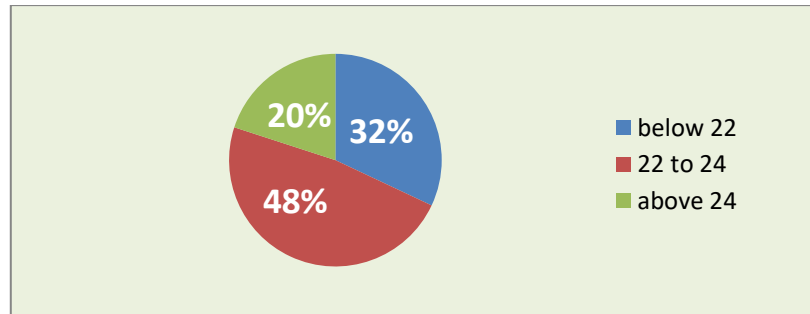


**Fig 2: Sample's characteristics according to age**

Table 2 and chart 2 represent the sample's characteristics according to age. It is noticed that the respondents aged between 22 and 24 rank the first, with the largest number (12) and the highest percentage (48). Students aged below 22 rank second, with 32 percent. Whereas, students aged above 24 rank the smallest number (5) with the lowest percentage (20).

### 2.5.2. Study results displays

The study results are displayed through the tables constituting the questionnaire.

|                                                                  |               |                   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| 1- I think that published texts provide facts and absolute truth |               |                   |
|                                                                  | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
| Always                                                           | 2             | 8 %               |
| Often                                                            | 7             | 28 %              |
| Sometimes                                                        | 15            | 60 %              |
| Rarely                                                           | 1             | 4 %               |
| Never                                                            | 0             | 0 %               |

**Table 3: Question (1) Results**

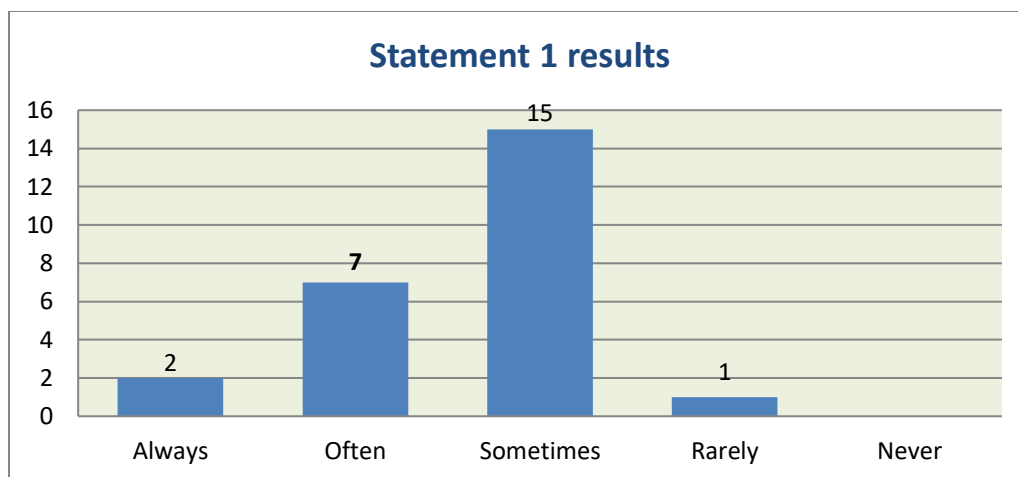


**Fig3: Statistical representation on the belief that published texts provide absolute truth**

The data provided in Table 3 and Figure 3 show that more than half of respondents sometimes think that published texts provide facts and absolute truth with a rate of sixty percent, twenty-eight percent answered with often, and eight percent with always. However, none of students answered with never and only four percent answered with rarely. The findings, then, demonstrate that the majority of participants think that published texts present an absolute truth.

| 2- I think logically and raise questions while reading |        |            |
|--------------------------------------------------------|--------|------------|
|                                                        | Number | Percentage |
| Always                                                 | 5      | 20 %       |
| Often                                                  | 12     | 48 %       |
| Sometimes                                              | 5      | 20 %       |
| Rarely                                                 | 3      | 12 %       |
| Never                                                  | 0      | 0 %        |

**Table 4: Question (2) answers**

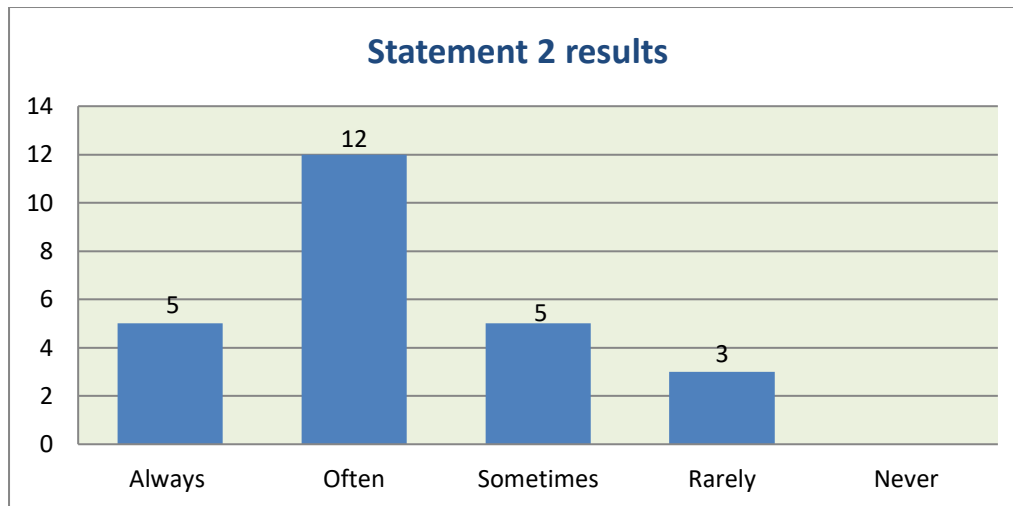


**Fig 4: Statistical representation on thinking logically and raising questions while reading**

Table 4 and Figure 4 demonstrate the second question findings. It is noticed that nearly half of the students (48%) answered that they often think logically and raise questions while reading. Twenty percent of them answered with sometimes; other twenty percent of students answered with always. Only twelve percent of the respondents answered with rarely, and none answered with never. The findings denote that most of students are logical thinkers who constantly ask questions while reading.

| 3- I believe and accept everything I read in texts and books |        |            |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------|------------|
|                                                              | Number | Percentage |
| Always                                                       | 5      | 20 %       |
| Often                                                        | 2      | 8 %        |
| Sometimes                                                    | 12     | 48 %       |
| Rarely                                                       | 2      | 8 %        |
| Never                                                        | 4      | 16 %       |

**Table 5: Question (3) Results**

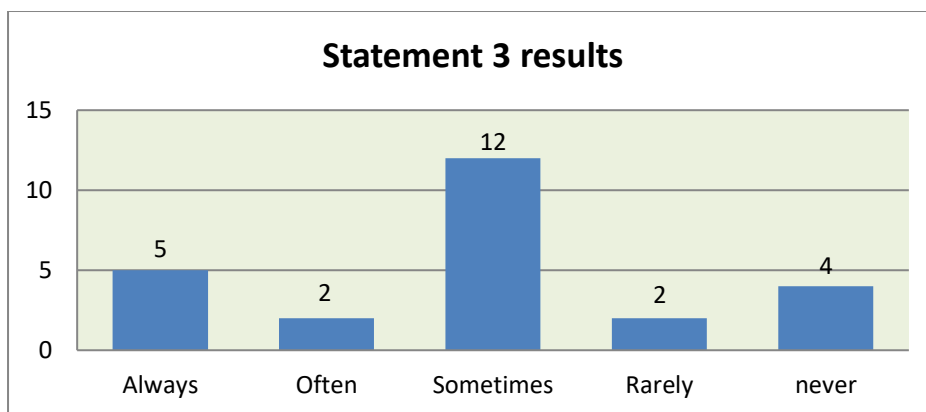


**Fig 5: Statistical representation on accepting and believing everything read in texts and books**

Table 5 and Figure 5 present the findings of the third statement. It is observed that almost half of students (48%) sometimes believe and accept everything they read in texts and books; adding to that, twenty percent of them always do that, and eight percent of students often believe everything in printed texts. However, sixteen percent of students answered with never, and eight percent answered with rarely. It is assumed from the results that the majority of respondents believe all what they read in books without questioning ideas.

| 4- I give my personal opinion about texts during reading sessions |        |            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|------------|
|                                                                   | Number | Percentage |
| Always                                                            | 3      | 12 %       |
| Often                                                             | 11     | 44 %       |
| Sometimes                                                         | 4      | 16 %       |
| Rarely                                                            | 5      | 20 %       |
| Never                                                             | 2      | 8 %        |

**Table 6: Question (4) Results**

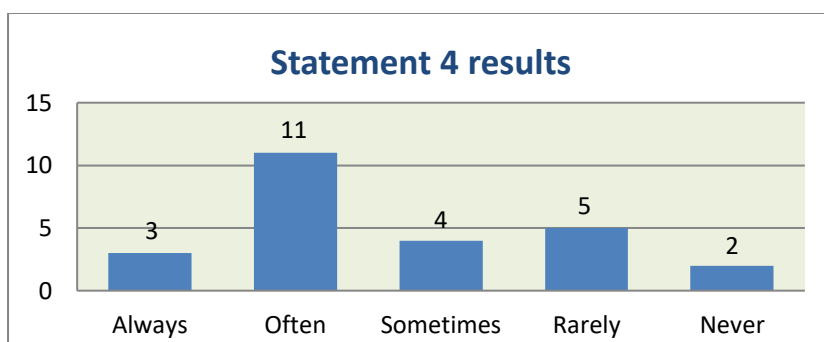


**Fig 6: Statistical representation on giving personal opinion during reading sessions**

Table 6 and Figure 6 designate the results of the sixth question. It is shown that the majority of students (44%) responded with often, sixteen percent with sometimes, and twelve percent responded with always. However, twenty percent of students answered that they rarely express their opinions about reading material, and eight percent stated that they never do that. It is deduced that most of the students like to give their personal opinion about texts during reading sessions.

| 5- I entirely focus on understanding what the text says about the topic, and simply confirm the author's evidence. |        |            |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|------------|
|                                                                                                                    | Number | Percentage |
| Always                                                                                                             | 4      | 16 %       |
| Often                                                                                                              | 7      | 28 %       |
| Sometimes                                                                                                          | 10     | 40 %       |
| Rarely                                                                                                             | 3      | 12 %       |
| Never                                                                                                              | 1      | 4 %        |

**Table 7: Question (5) Results**

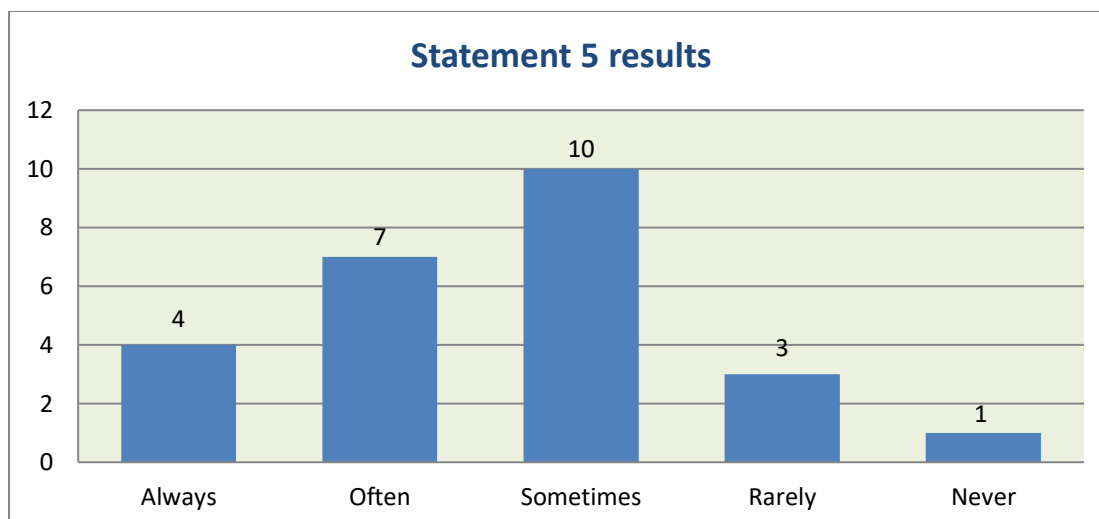


**Fig 7: Statistical representation on confirming the author's evidence and focusing on understanding the text**

According to Table 07 and Figure 07, the majority of respondents answered positively to the fifth statement. Most of them answered with sometimes (40 percent), often (28 percent), and always (16 percent). Twelve percent, on the other hand, answered with rarely, and only four percent responded with never. The results show that most of the sample respondents entirely focus on understanding texts and passively confirm the author's arguments.

| 6- I evaluate the writer's credibility and test his arguments |        |            |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|--------|------------|
|                                                               | Number | Percentage |
| Always                                                        | 0      | 0 %        |
| Often                                                         | 5      | 20 %       |
| Sometimes                                                     | 7      | 28 %       |
| Rarely                                                        | 10     | 40 %       |
| Never                                                         | 3      | 12 %       |

**Table08: Question (6) Results**

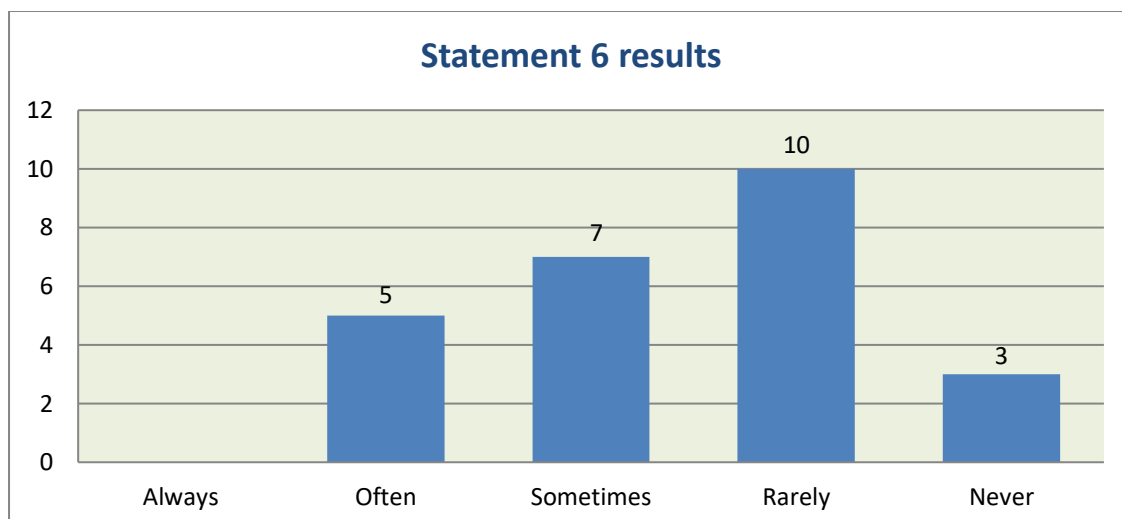


**Fig 8: Statistical representation on evaluating the writer's arguments and testing his arguments**

Table 8 and Figure 8 show the results of statement 6. It is denoted that the majority of students' answers are negative. Nearly half (40%) of the students rarely evaluate the writer's authenticity, and twelve percent of them never do that. On the other hand, twenty eight percent of respondents held that they often test the writer's arguments, twenty percent answered with often, and none of them answered with always. Thus, according to these findings, most of the students seem to be submissive when it comes to evaluating the writer's credibility.

| 7- I like topics which challenge me to think critically and analytically |        |            |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|------------|
|                                                                          | Number | Percentage |
| Always                                                                   | 10     | 40 %       |
| Often                                                                    | 7      | 28 %       |
| Sometimes                                                                | 6      | 24 %       |
| Rarely                                                                   | 1      | 4 %        |
| Never                                                                    | 1      | 4 %        |

**Table 9: Question (7) Results**

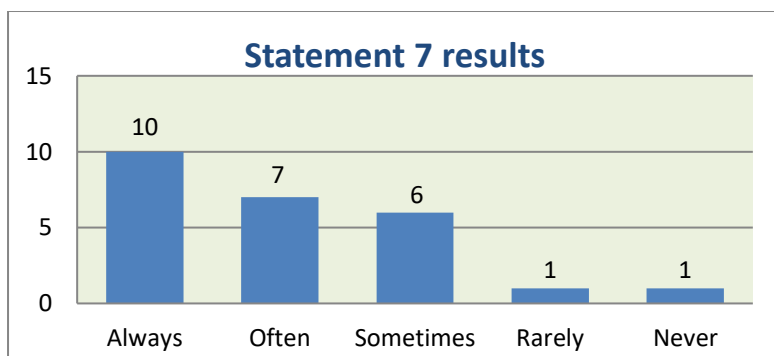


**Fig 9: Statistical representation on challenging topics that requires critical thinking**

According to Table 09 and Figure 09, the biggest portion of the sample responded positively to statement 7. It is shown that almost half of students (40%) always like topics that require their critical and analytical thinking. The results also demonstrate that twenty eight percent of students responded with often, and twenty four percent with sometimes. While only four percent answered with rarely, and other four percent answered with never. The findings reveal the fact that almost all of the students showed their willingness to discuss topics that challenge them to think critically and analytically.

| 8- I like questions which requires me to express my opinion in class |        |            |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|------------|
|                                                                      | Number | Percentage |
| Always                                                               | 12     | 48 %       |
| Often                                                                | 6      | 24%        |
| Sometimes                                                            | 4      | 16 %       |
| Rarely                                                               | 2      | 8 %        |
| Never                                                                | 1      | 4 %        |

**Table10: Question (8) Results**

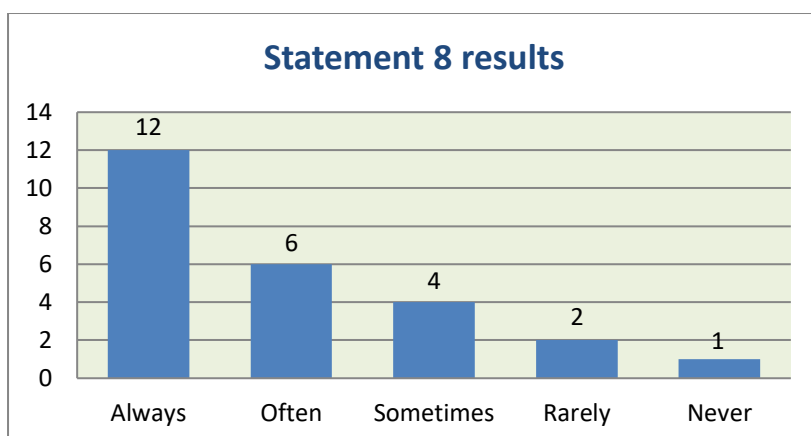


**Fig 10: Statistical representation on questions that initiate discussion and expressing opinions in class**

The data provided in Table 10 and Figure 10 show that almost half of the respondents always prefer questions that require them to express their opinions with a rate of forty-eight percent, twenty-four percent answered with often, and sixteen percent answered with sometimes. However, eight percent of students rarely express their point of views, and only four percent never like such questions. The results indicate that the majority of students prefer questions that motivate them to express their personal opinions during the reading sessions.

| 9- I read for the purpose of absorbing and memorizing data |        |            |
|------------------------------------------------------------|--------|------------|
|                                                            | Number | Percentage |
| Always                                                     | 5      | 20%        |
| Often                                                      | 3      | 12%        |
| Sometimes                                                  | 5      | 20 %       |
| Rarely                                                     | 10     | 40 %       |
| Never                                                      | 2      | 8 %        |

**Table11: Question (9) Results**

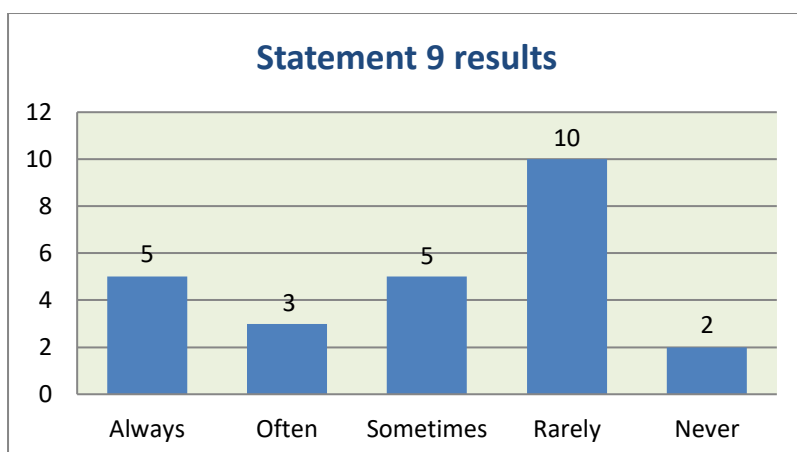


**Table 11: Statistical representation on memorization of information as a purpose for reading**

As seen in Table11 and Figure11 above, the frequency of the ninth statement results differs among the participants. Twenty percent of respondents always read for the purpose of memorizing information, other twenty percent of them do that sometimes, and twelve percent (3 students) do that often. The biggest portion went to those who rarely read for the aim of absorbing knowledge in a rate of forty percent besides students who never do that in a rate of eight percent. These results denote that students have various purposes for reading other than just mere consumption of information.

| 10- I employ what I have read in books in solving my personal problems |        |            |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|------------|
|                                                                        | Number | Percentage |
| Always                                                                 | 6      | 24%        |
| Often                                                                  | 8      | 32%        |
| Sometimes                                                              | 8      | 32 %       |
| Rarely                                                                 | 2      | 8 %        |
| Never                                                                  | 1      | 4 %        |

**Table12: Question (10) Results**

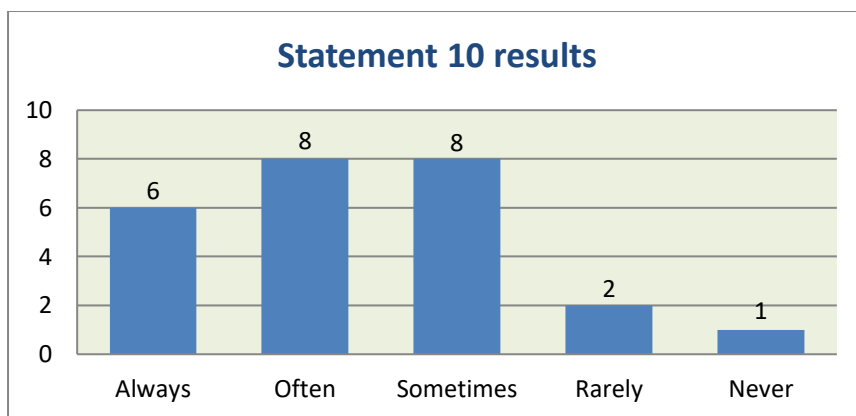


**Fig 12: Statistical representation on the application of what is read in books in solving personal problems**

Table 12 and Figure 12 present the findings of statement 10. It is observed that most students' answers are positive ones. The majority of them answered with often (32%), sometimes (32%), and always (24%). However, only eight percent responded with rarely and four percent answered with never. It is assumed from the results that most of students are willing to apply what they have read in books in solving their problems.

| 11- When I read texts, I do not easily take things for granted |        |            |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|--------|------------|
|                                                                | Number | Percentage |
| Always                                                         | 5      | 20%        |
| Often                                                          | 10     | 40%        |
| Sometimes                                                      | 9      | 36 %       |
| Rarely                                                         | 1      | 4 %        |
| Never                                                          | 0      | 0 %        |

**Table13: Question (11) Results**

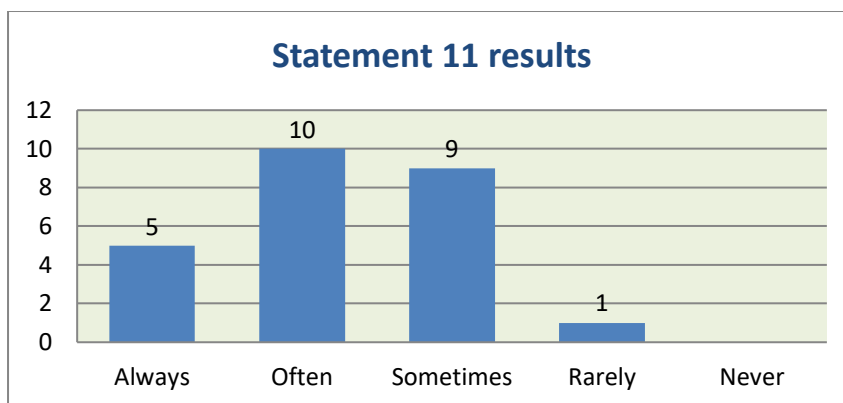


**Fig13: Statistical representation on not taking things for granted while reading texts**

Table 13 and Figure 13 represent the answers to statement 11. It is noticed that the majority of students (40%) often take everything for granted while reading texts; thirty-six percent of students answered with sometimes; and twenty percent answered with always. It is clearly that most of the respondents' answers are positive because only four percent of the students responded with rarely and none of them answered with never. Therefore, these results imply that almost all of the students believe everything they read and assume that printed texts provide them with unquestionable facts.

| 12- Books are not always informative |        |            |
|--------------------------------------|--------|------------|
|                                      | Number | Percentage |
| Always                               | 1      | 4%         |
| Often                                | 4      | 16%        |
| Sometimes                            | 8      | 32 %       |
| Rarely                               | 5      | 20 %       |
| Never                                | 7      | 28 %       |

**Table14: Question (12) Results**

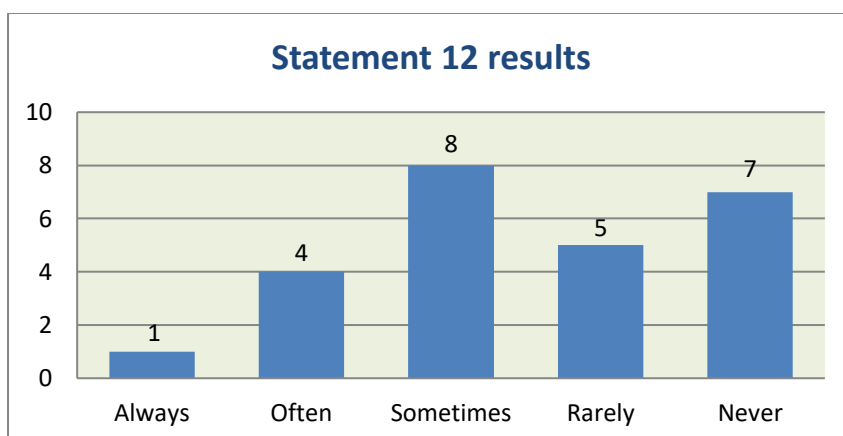


**Fig 14: Statement twelve-results statistical graphic representation**

Table 14 and Figure 14 demonstrate the results of statement 12. It is shown that nearly half of students ( 48%) sometimes held that books are not always informative. Besides, sixteen percent often do that, and four percent always do that. Twenty-eight percent of students, on the other hand, responded with never, and twenty percent of them responded with rarely. According to the different responses, it is assumed that some students believe that books are not always informative while others held the opposite view.

| 13- A strategic reader should be a critical reader |        |            |
|----------------------------------------------------|--------|------------|
|                                                    | Number | Percentage |
| Always                                             | 12     | 48 %       |
| Often                                              | 6      | 24 %       |
| Sometimes                                          | 4      | 16 %       |
| Rarely                                             | 3      | 12 %       |
| Never                                              | 0      | 0 %        |

**Table15: Question (13) Results**

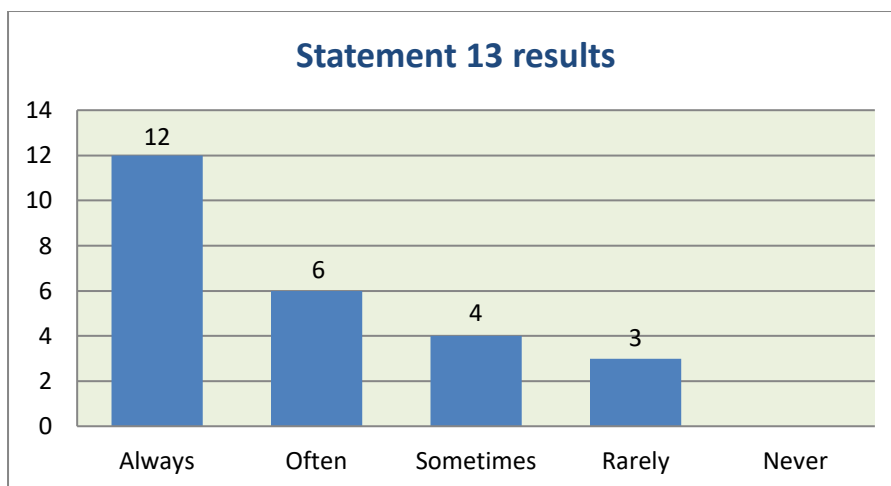


**Fig 15: Statistical representation on the strategic reader**

According to Table 15 and Figure 15, almost all of the students' answers to statement 13 are positive. Nearly half of the students (48%) responded that a strategic reader should be a critical reader, followed by twenty-four percent of students who answered with often, and sixteen percent of them with sometimes. While, twelve percent of the respondents answered with rarely, and none of them answered with never. Thus, these findings denote that most of the students believe that a strategic reader should be a critical reader.

| 14- I like reading between the lines |        |            |
|--------------------------------------|--------|------------|
|                                      | Number | Percentage |
| Always                               | 13     | 52%        |
| Often                                | 8      | 32%        |
| Sometimes                            | 2      | 8 %        |
| Rarely                               | 1      | 4 %        |
| Never                                | 1      | 4 %        |

**Table16: Question (14) Results**

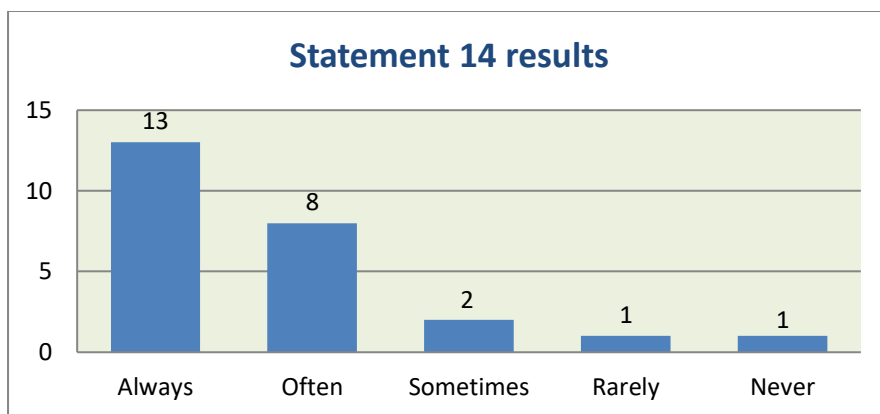


**Fig 16: Statistical representation on reading between the lines**

According to Table 16 and Figure 16, the biggest portion of the sample responded positively to statement 14. It is shown that more than half of students (52%) always like to read between the lines. The results also demonstrate that thirty-two percent of students responded with often, and eight percent with sometimes. While, only four percent answered with rarely, and other four percent with never. The findings reveal that almost all of students are in favour of reading between the lines.

| 15- Silent reading favours critical readers |        |            |
|---------------------------------------------|--------|------------|
|                                             | Number | Percentage |
| Always                                      | 7      | 29%        |
| Often                                       | 4      | 17%        |
| Sometimes                                   | 7      | 29 %       |
| Rarely                                      | 2      | 8 %        |
| Never                                       | 4      | 17 %       |

**Table17: Question (15) Results**

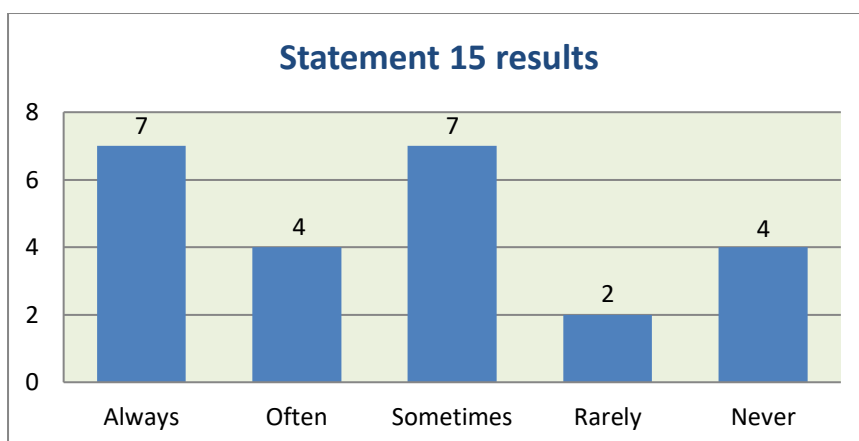


**Fig 17: statistical representation on silent reading and critical readers**

Table 17 and Figure 17 demonstrate the findings of statement 15. It is noticed that students' answers are distinct. Most of respondents (29%) always held that silent reading favours critical readers, other twenty-nine percent sometimes held the same view, followed by seventeen percent of students who answered with often. However, seventeen percent of respondents answered with never, and only eight percent with rarely. It is deduced from the findings that the majority of students believe that silent reading requires critical readers.

### 2.5.3. Analysis of open-ended questions

**Question1: According to you, what makes Critical Reading different from regular reading?**

Most of the students answered this question while a few did not. The answers were varied according to the students' different perspectives; yet, they shared certain points. The majority of students responded that critical reading requires higher levels of cognitive abilities, and depends on logical reasoning not like regular reading. Some referred to critical reading as reading between the lines, as quoted here: "Critical reading means you read between the lines, and try to understand the implicit message.."; "...critical reader reads between the lines, analyzes, thinks logically, and don't accept everything; whereas, a regular reader reads and absorbs without thinking." Some of the

students believe that critical reading helps learners to express their opinion and solve their real-life problems, as quoted here: "...To read critically means you give your opinion, discuss the idea of the text, and develop your thinking level". One of the students stated that "critical reading goes beyond reading the language written towards understanding the author's ideology, message, beliefs...It uses the mind to analyze, make questions, and make logical connections". However, some students did not differentiate between critical reading and regular reading, and they presented unclear answers. Some of them thought that critical reading is beneficial while regular reading is only for entertainment, and others responded that the only difference is that critical reading is time-consuming. The rest of the students did not answer the question.

**Question2: During the reading process, what type of critical reading strategies do you use to achieve full comprehension of the text?**

The sample's respondents provided various answers to the second question. For the strategies they use, the students listed: scanning, prediction, skimming, searching for and highlighting key words, repetition by reading again and again, explaining difficult words, summarizing ideas, and thinking about similar examples in real life. Most of the students believe that these reading strategies help them to achieve full comprehension of the text, as quoted here: "...using scanning strategy helps the reader know more details, and also guessing meaning from context helps the reader acquire more vocabulary...". The rest of students were not aware of the type of critical reading strategy that helps them interpret the reading material. Some of them stated that they "do not know or do not remember" the strategies they use while reading, and others left a blank space.

**Question3: Do you consider yourself a critical reader or a literal reader? Why?**

The answers of the third question showed that the majority of students consider themselves literal readers except in some cases in which they employ their critical reading skills. Most of them responded that they can be both, assuming that the type, purpose, and topic of the text determine which type of reader they should be. In this regard, some of the students' answers were: "...the type of text determines my purpose, sometimes I read as a critical reader and sometimes I read to enjoy or to memorize."; "I consider myself a literal reader except when it comes to reading human development books."; "It depends on my temper and the topic I am reading. If I am good and interested in the topic, I read critically and I enjoy doing that. Yet if I am not, I just turn into literal reader." "...according to the text that I read because sometime I read for enjoyment and pleasure, but I usually read to get more information about a specific topic." ; "I consider myself a literal reader because literal makes reading fun and engaging." Thus, it is deduced that students prefer to be literal readers who rarely criticize texts. However, only few students read critically and showed their willingness to develop into critical readers, as quoted here: "...I am trying to become a critical reader because reading blindly is neither beneficial nor developmental." "...I consider myself a critical reader because information is not always true."

## **2.6. Analysis of Teachers' Questionnaire**

### **2.6.1. Section One: On teachers' identification**

This section consists of two items related to teachers' background information.

#### **Item 1: -On teachers' gender**

|               | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|---------------|---------------|-------------------|
| <b>Male</b>   | 4             | 40 %              |
| <b>Female</b> | 6             | 60 %              |

**Table18: Sample's Characteristics according to gender**

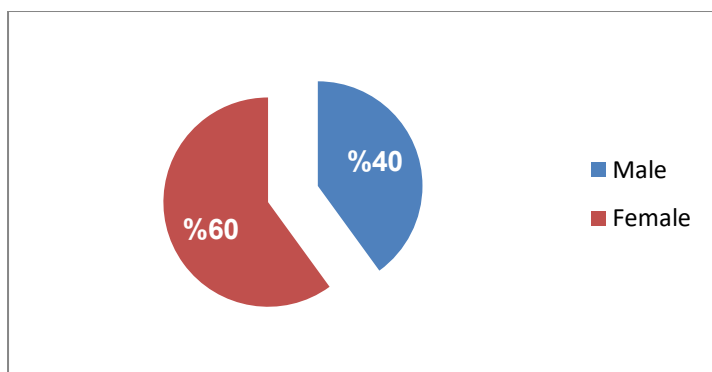


**Fig18: Sample's characteristics according to gender**

Table 18 and fig 18 represent the sample's characteristics according to gender. It is shown that the majority of the teachers (60%) were female; whereas, forty percent of the respondents were male.

## Item 2: -On teachers' teaching experience

The second question is concerned with the period teachers have been teaching English. Knowing the experience of our sample is very important factor.

| Experience   | Number | Percentage |
|--------------|--------|------------|
| 1-10         | 5      | 50 %       |
| 10-15        | 3      | 30 %       |
| More than 15 | 2      | 20 %       |

**Table19: -On teaching experience**

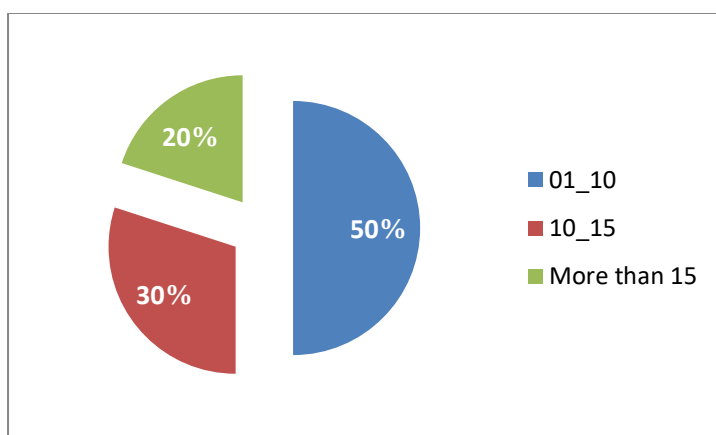


**Fig19: Statistical representation on teaching experience**

As to the years of teaching experience, half of the teachers (50%) showed an experience of one to ten years whereas only 03 of the others representing 30 percent ranging from ten to fifteen, and 20 percent present more than fifteen years of experience.

### **2.6.2. Section Two: On the teacher's classroom flexibility**

**Q1: Do you present challenging ideas to your students when practicing reading?**

| Answer | Number | Percentage |
|--------|--------|------------|
| Yes    | 8      | 80%        |
| No     | 2      | 20%        |

**Table 20: -On presenting challenging ideas during reading**

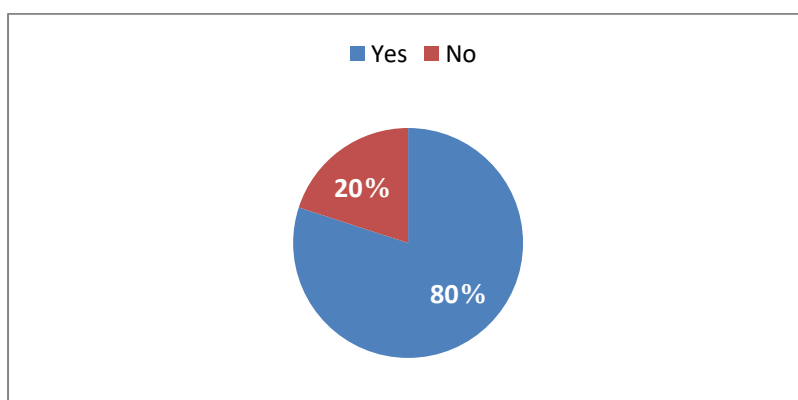


**Fig 20: Statistical representation on presenting challenging ideas in reading sessions**

The majority of the teachers (80%) stated that they provide their students with challenging ideas during reading; whereas only 20 percent of them showed their rejection.

**If yes, how do your students react to them?**

This sub-question aims to explore students' reactions to challenging ideas in reading sessions. Teachers, who are in favour of presenting ideas that challenge students when practicing reading, provided the following responses as justifications:

- Few students react positively to challenging ideas

- These ideas interest them and draw their attention
- Most students have difficulty adjusting to the new challenging ideas, but after a while they start responding in creative ways (not all of them)
- Generally, students react analytically and critically in the sense that they are used to handle tasks intelligently and not superficially
- Such ideas motivate them to read more various materials such as novels, chats, plays, etc
- They react positively most of the time as this enriches their experience.

**Q2: Do you engage your students in debates after reading any material?**

| Answer | Number | Percentage |
|--------|--------|------------|
| Yes    | 10     | 100%       |
| No     | 0      | 00%        |

**Table 21: -On debates after reading**

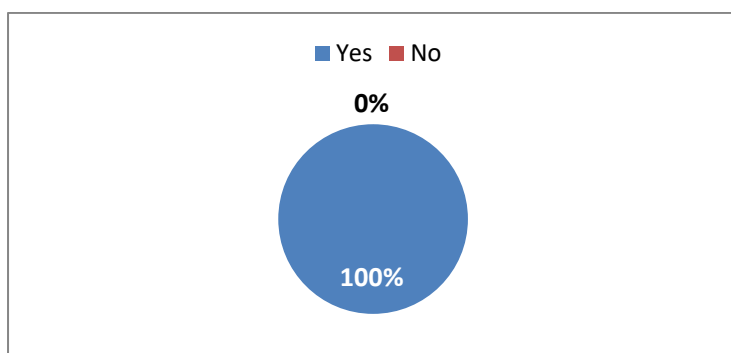


**Fig 21: Statistical representation on engaging students in debates after reading**

As to the question related to involving students in debates, the results show that all the teachers (100%) agree with definitive yes, that they do encourage their students to debate after reading any material. This means that engaging learners in debates is essential after reading texts.

**Q3: Do you open conversations for your students in your classes?**

| Answer | Number | Percentage |
|--------|--------|------------|
| Yes    | 8      | 80%        |
| No     | 2      | 20%        |

**Table 22: -On class conversations**

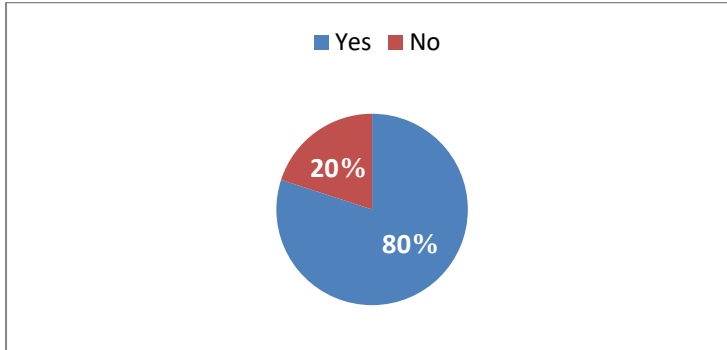


**Fig 22: Statistical representation on opening conversations for students in class**

The largest number of the teachers (80%) indicated that they open debates for their students in class. Whereas, a small percentage of our sample (20%) opted for a "No" as an answer.

**Q4: Do you accept all their ideas whatever the responses are?**

| Answer | Number | Percentage |
|--------|--------|------------|
| Yes    | 7      | 70%        |
| No     | 3      | 30%        |

**Table 23: -On students' ideas and responses**

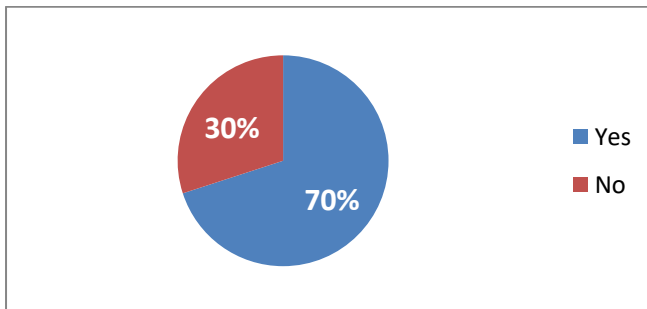


**Fig 23: Statistical representation on accepting or refusing students' all ideas and responses**

According to Table 23 and Fig 23, the findings reveal that most of the teachers accept all of their students' responses. Thirty percent, on the other hand, showed their refusal.

### **2.6.3. Section Three: On the evaluation of learners' critical reading strategies**

#### **Q5: On what basis do you evaluate your students' critical reading skills?**

The purpose of this question was to discover teachers' tools to evaluate their students' critical reading skills. In this question, the participants were asked about their ways to evaluate their students' critical reading strategies. Different answers are interpreted in the following points:

- On the basis of achieving the goals of the reading task
- On the depth of students' ideas
- On their understanding of the theme and the implied ideas
- On how well they connect things and are able to support their arguments
- On the basis of their pronunciation and their understanding of the reading material
- Focusing on grave mistakes while reading literary texts and historical documents
- On students' thoughts and presented ideas
- Considering the reading outcome where ideas are well discussed and harmoniously reconstructed

#### **Q6: According to you, what are the three most important critical reading strategies a student must basically acquire? Select three**

In this question, we gave the participants the opportunity to choose and select three strategies according to their perspectives. We aimed to know the most important critical reading strategies that should be possessed by students.

| <b>Answers</b>        | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|-----------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| <b>1. Summarizing</b> | 6             | 20%               |

|                                      |   |     |
|--------------------------------------|---|-----|
| 2. Exploring the figurative language | 5 | 16% |
| 3. Annotating                        | 3 | 10% |
| 4. Paraphrasing                      | 5 | 17% |
| 5. Outlining                         | 5 | 17% |
| 6. Judging the writer's credibility  | 6 | 20% |

**Table 24: -On critical reading strategies**

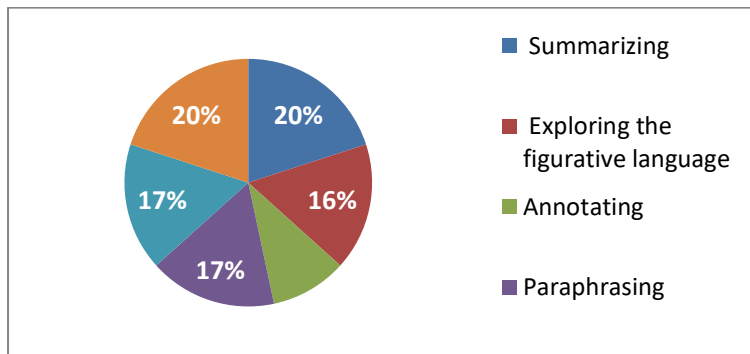


**Fig 24: Statistical representation on critical reading strategies**

The data provided in Table 24 and Fig 24 demonstrate teachers' responses concerning the most important critical reading strategies that should be acquired by students. It is noticed that 20 percent of the teachers selected summarizing, seventeen percent of them selected paraphrasing, other seventeen percent selected outlining, and only ten percent of them suggested annotating. Besides, twenty percent of the total proposed the strategy of judging the writer's credibility; whereas, sixteen percent of the teachers suggested the strategy of exploring the figurative language. On the whole, there is a multitude of answers that can be all accepted, depending on the reading task and students' preferences.

Then, we asked teachers to justify their options. The most important and repeated answers are the following:

- ✓ Outlining helps students to organize their thoughts and observations of the text.

- ✓ Paraphrasing is a sign of the richness of students' acquired vocabulary and their ability to reproduce the text's main arguments.
- ✓ Summarizing is important since it demonstrates students' understanding of key words in a reading passage, and their ability to deconstruct while reading and reconstruct after reading.
- ✓ Figurative language is significant since it goes beyond the literal meaning of words, and shows learner's background knowledge and tradition of reading.
- ✓ Exploring the figurative language helps readers to unpack the text and the author's intention by decoding, deconstructing, and then understanding implicit and underlying meanings.
- ✓ Annotating helps students keep track of information they find in the text because taking notes is important to generate good critical perspective.
- ✓ Judging the writer's credibility is the ultimate objective of critical reading.

**Q7: How do you help your students become critical strategic readers?**

The seventh question investigates the methods and the ways used by the teachers to help their students become critical strategic readers. The participants gave various answers to this open-ended question, it includes the following:

- Asking students to read between the lines
- Challenging students with controversial topics
- Asking them deep and guided questions
- Engaging them in debates and class discussions
- Motivating them to question everything in written texts (the form, content, word choice, etc)
- Providing them with problematic issues to discuss

- Encouraging them to look for the text's inferences
- Asking them to deconstruct words and go beyond the surface structure
- Varying sources of evidence
- Encouraging them to question things they read and employ their critical thinking skills
- Pointing their attention to an ideal class model

**Q8: According to you, do critical reading strategies affect students' fulfillment?**

| Answer | Number | Percentage |
|--------|--------|------------|
| Yes    | 10     | 100%       |
| No     | 00     | 00%        |

**Table 25: -On the effect of critical reading strategies on students' fulfillment**

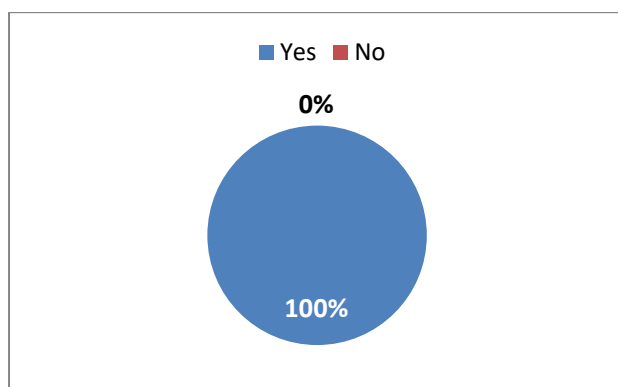


**Fig 25: Statistical representation on the impact of critical reading strategies on students' fulfillment**

As to the question related to whether critical reading strategies affect students' fulfillment, the total sum of teachers opted for 'Yes'. This is an indication that critical reading strategies influence students' achievements.

**Q9: On the whole, are you satisfied with your students' level of critical reading skills?**

| Answer | Number | Percentage |
|--------|--------|------------|
| Yes    | 5      | 50%        |

|    |   |     |
|----|---|-----|
| No | 5 | 50% |
|----|---|-----|

**Table 26: -On students' level of critical reading skills**

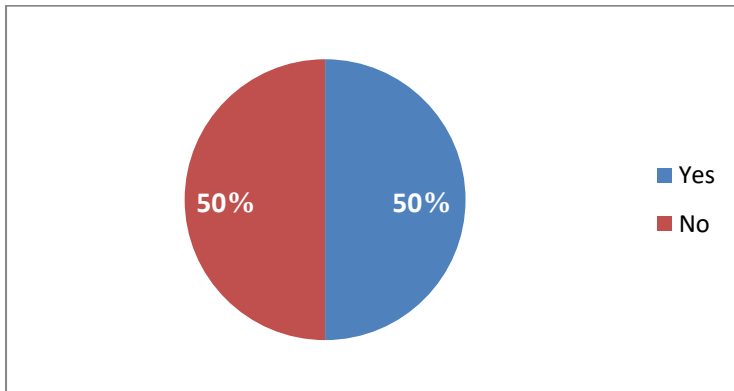


**Fig 26: Statistical representation on teachers' attitudes towards students' level of critical reading skills**

The purpose of this question is to discover if teachers are truly satisfied with their students' critical reading level or not. Throughout the answers of the ninth question, we notice that there is an equal percentage of teachers who respond positively and negatively: (50%) for each answer.

**Q10: What do you suggest for non- strategic critical readers to develop into critical readers?**

In this given open-ended question, we asked teacher to give suggestions for non-strategic readers on how to become critical readers. They provide some suggestions among them:

- Analyze and synthesize the text
- Check one's own understanding of a reading passage
- Inquire for information
- Process and connect ideas
- Go beyond the text and its context
- Link the text to other disciplines
- Read and read more

- Vary the reading material
- Write summaries to test one's own understanding of the text
- Setting a reading purpose
- Joining groups of peers reading and critical discussions
- Self- assess one's reading and evaluate one's development

## **2.7.Discussion of the findings**

The analysis of both teachers' questionnaire and students' questionnaire leads to the following discussion. Despite the restricted number of participants, the findings have contributed to the purpose, and significance of the actual study.

### **2.7.1.Discussion of students' questionnaire**

As has been noted through the analysis of students' responses, the study confirmed that students generally consider information presented in published texts as unquestionable facts, and they tend to believe and accept everything they read in books without evaluating the writer's credibility. Moreover, the majority of the students entirely focus on understanding the topic, memorizing information, and simply confirming the author's evidence. Hence, it is deduced that most of the students read for the purpose of acquiring knowledge, and passively consume new information.

When the results of learners' questionnaire were analyzed about the difference between literal reading and critical reading, students clarify that there is a difference but they are unable to detect it. Therefore, some students suggested some answers that critical reading means reading behind the lines by using the mind in analyzing, posing questions, and making logical connections; whereas, literal reading signifies only the process of decoding written symbols and interpreting their meaning. However, the poor

knowledge of some respondents about critical reading shows that students demonstrate clear unawareness of the concept.

Furthermore, Master1 EFL learners mentioned a variety of critical reading strategies such as: scanning, , skimming, prediction, searching for and highlighting key words, repetition, explaining difficult words, summarizing ideas, and thinking about similar examples in real life. They claim that these strategies help them to achieve full comprehension of the reading material.

Overall, the majority of students consider themselves literal readers as they only read for getting information or enjoyment. Some of them view themselves as critical readers since they prefer challenging ideas that require them to express their opinion, and employ what they read in solving their real-life problems. In fact, the findings reveal that even literal readers showed their willingness to develop into critical readers in order to be able to face the challenges of our modern world. This can be achieved through testing every assertion, realizing that books are not always informative, and shifting their focus on critical and analytical thinking.

#### **2.7.2. Discussion of teachers' questionnaire**

The questionnaire was mainly addressed to teachers of English who teach different specialties. The total numbers of the questioned teachers were ten. The purpose behind the questionnaire is to report teacher's opinions concerning teaching critical reading strategies.

The majority of teachers reported that their experience surpasses four years of teaching. Moreover, they differed in their experience as teachers of EFL. This fact allowed the researcher to consider various views that would be of a great value for the study.

Teachers' responses on classroom flexibility denote that most of EFL teachers are in favour of presenting challenging ideas to their students when practicing reading. They reported that their students reacted positively to these ideas. The majority of the teachers also agreed on opening conversations for their students and engaging them in debates after reading any material. However, not all of the participants showed their willingness to accept all of students' responses and ideas during class. When it comes to evaluating learners' critical reading strategies, the teachers reported that the evaluation is based on students' understanding of the theme and the implied meanings, their ability to connect different ideas, achieving the goals of the reading task, and on the depth of students' thoughts and presented ideas.

EFL teachers mentioned that their learners should develop critical reading strategies like: outlining, annotating, paraphrasing, making summaries, and judging the writer's credibility, but sometimes students are not aware of such strategies. Teachers' answers also sparked that the selection of the type of critical reading strategy depends on the reading task and on the learners' needs and preferences.

After deep clarification to the teachers' responses on how EFL learners can be developed into critical readers, the results showed a significant use of various strategies in fostering strategic critical readers. Teachers reported that asking students deep and guided questions, challenging them with controversial topics, engaging them in debates and class discussions, and encouraging them to employ their critical thinking skills in questioning everything they read would be all necessary to cultivate students' critical reading skills. Besides, the respondents expressed a strong agreement on using critical reading strategies to achieve students' fulfillment ; yet, they were not all satisfied with their students' level of critical reading skills.

In a nutshell, the result of the questionnaire provided in-depth information right from how non-strategic readers could develop into critical readers in order to achieve academic and professional success. Teachers suggested that testing the author's arguments, searching for the implied meaning, participating in group discussions and debates, and expressing personal opinions would be all useful and sufficient to help EFL learners become critical readers. Thus, the teachers played an important role in developing students' critical reading abilities.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter was devoted to a description of the empirical phase, two research instruments were addressed to Master 1 EFL students and their EFL teachers of Mohamed Boudiaf University of M'sila. The findings were discussed and results showed that the learners use some of critical reading strategies ;yet, they are unaware of how to become a critical reader, and even teachers have not fully explored the critical readers' toolkit. Most EFL teachers and students, on the other hand, appeared to react positively to the thesis topic. Their answers demonstrated positive attitudes towards Critical reading, and how it actually enriches and empowers the teaching-learning process alike. Most of the participants' answers were in harmony with the study objectives, and contributed a good deal to its credibility and validity.

## **Chapter Three: Exploring EFL Critical Readers'-Strategies and Fulfillment**

### **Introduction**

In our modern society, the literate people are no longer defined as those who can read and write, rather they refer to those who possess the critical thinking competence. Acquiring this competence allows citizens to form evaluative judgments, make logical decisions, and to reflect on their situation in the society. In fact, having the ability to think critically is considered as one of the objectives of higher education. Paul (1992) even regarded critical thinking as “the aim of education” rather than “an aim of education.” Supporting this view, Cohen (2015, p.177) believes that "critical thinking is fed and nurtured by great books, which firmly places critical reading skills at the heart of learning". To make it clearer, reading is the starting point of promoting critical thinking skills because it pushes learners to think and reflect deeply on the encountered information.

Additionally, reading, as a major receptive communication skill, can be seen as the most efficient procedure that allows for accumulating and evaluating information. It provides a greater flexibility in reviewing materials, comparing various sources, and reflecting on important points. Pugh et al. (2000) hold the view that "reading is the platform from which critical thinking, problem solving, and effective expressions are launched" (p. 25). This denotes that skillful reading can be seen as the starting point to cultivate the ability to think critically and solve problems effectively.

On the other hand, Manarin et al. (2015) found that critical reading means reading for social or civic engagement. For instance: “placing [a] text within a larger context, evaluating meaning, questioning assumptions, applying concepts, or engaging with the

text” (p. 10). That is, students with critical reading skills employ their interpretations of texts in reflecting on social situations and in expanding their understanding of the larger world.

Consequently, developing pedagogical strategies for cultivating EFL students’ critical reading skills has never been more urgent. In critical reading, readers "evaluate the writer’s information and draw conclusions of their own" (Wassman & Paye ,1985). To achieve that, they apply certain processes, strategies, models and questions for the aim of clarity and comprehension (Wallace,2003). Accordingly, this chapter aims to explore EFL critical readers' effective strategies and techniques that allow them to achieve fulfillment and enhance their reading and learning experiences.

### **3.1. Cultivating Critical Reading**

Learning to read critically is essential for adopting good study habits, and ultimately effective reading skills will have a positive impact on almost every area of the reader's life. However, cultivating critical reading is not an easy task, it will rather take a lot of practice and patience. That is, more effort and understanding are needed in critical reading than in a mere "skimming" of the text (Wallace, 2003). "It is more than the ability to understand the explicit meaning of the passage. It involves application, analysis, evaluation and imagination" (Phillips & Sotiriou,1992). Hence, it may require a major change in readers' awareness and understanding of the reading process itself. In this way, readers should shift their focus from getting a basic grasp of the text to questioning and forming judgments about how a text works.

Treating texts as if they were sources of ultimate knowledge and absolute truth can advocate the view of reading as consumption. According to this perspective, writers produce ideas and information, and readers consume them. Clegg (1988) argues that

"critical reading distinguishes between truth and distortion, information and propaganda, public policy and personal prejudice." It is indeed critical reading that paves the way for examination and debate, and neglects blind approval. Maker & Lenier (1986) adopt a similar view claiming that "Critical reading enables to size up the author's arguments and to evaluate how well he or she supports them.

A reader must think beyond what is stated and decide what the author is trying to imply" (p.138). Specifically, students with critical reading competency have the ability to distinguish fact from opinion and recognize inferences, attitudes and draw conclusion (Adams, 1989). As CR allows them to seek alternative views and create new ideas from what they have read, they can ultimately develop into active, autonomous, and strategic readers.

In order to be prepared to step into the academic debate, readers should make their own evaluation of how far they are willing to accept and believe what they read. According to Poulson & Wallace (2004), CR "asks for keeping an open mind, retaining a conditional willingness to be convinced, etc". It also depends on the maintenance of objectivity by avoiding the interference of personal prejudices, biases, and expectation in the interpretation of the content (Milan, 1995). A practical point, therefore, is understanding that printed texts do not contain unquestionable truth, but may only present the argument of the writer. By taking this starting point, a reader will be prepared to fully engage in critical reading.

In fact, there are two steps that needs to be done in order to approach critical reading:

**1-Self-Reflection:** it is based on a reader's identification of his own prior experiences, assumptions, biases, knowledge, and perspectives that may have an impact

on the way the text is interpreted. Keeping in mind that the essential aim of CR is to allow readers to change perspective, and to transform their state from being a reader of a text to using a text for critique (Wallace, 2003, pp. 43-44). This means that critical readers should question their ability to keep an open mind, and consider other opinions.

**2- Reading to understand:** since "CR is the ability to read with analysis and judgment" (Spache & Berg, 1984), a strategic reader should consider the following elements:

- a. Examining the text and its context by asking the following questions: Who is the author? Who is the publisher? Where and when was it written? What kind of text is it?
- b. Skimming the text: What is the topic? What are the main ideas?
- c. Resolving confusion by looking up difficult terms or unfamiliar words in dictionaries, and going over complex ideas to clarify them.

### **3.2. Good Critical Reading**

Academic, or critical, reading is distinctly different from the passive reading which is commonly associated with reading novels and stories. Reading at university-level takes much more skill than simple recognition of words on the page. Whilst studying at University, students read large number of texts and publications such as research articles, reports, critiques, essays, and analyses which demand a greater amount of concentration and deep understanding. Due to the fact that these reading materials present complex issues and arguable claims, students need to synthesize new material with previous knowledge, draw conclusions, and determine their approval or disapproval to the writers' arguments.

Students are expected to be able to recognize which information is credible and valuable to use (Mikulecky & Jeffries, 2009). This means that they should read critically, and do much more than understand and remember the basic content. Cohen (2015) considers learning skills for critical reading as the essence of life. To him, critical readers are active participants when treating a text and evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the author's arguments and ideas. Stressing the importance of critical reading, students need to develop the necessary skills and techniques that help them approach texts critically.

Beyond shadow of doubt, learning how to read critically is the primary goal of higher education. When students conduct a research, they look for information on internet where they encounter endless articles and websites. For this reason, they need critical reading to be selective in choosing the relevant and authentic data. To account for this, McWhorter (1980: 377) asserts that critical reading stands for the attentive and deliberate evaluation of ideas for the aim of making a judgment about their credibility or worth.

Before starting the reading process, students should state their purpose and know the outcome that they aim to get. Manarin et al. (2015) found that college instructors use the term critical reading to refer to reading for academic purposes, for instance: “identifying patterns of textual elements; distinguishing between main ideas and subordinate ideas; evaluating credibility; making judgments about how a text is argued; [and] making relevant inferences” (p.47). In order to explain one-way students can read texts critically, McWhorter (1994: 48) assumed that critical readers should evaluate the reading material by asking certain questions which are called critical reading techniques.

The first question that needs to be asked by readers is whether the author is a qualified expert or not. Since presented data in print is not all accurate and competently assured of, students should assess whether the content they are reading is written by an expert in the field who possesses the required knowledge and experience to discuss such topic or by a layman. For example, an article about economy should be written by someone who has studied about it.

This information about the author is often found at the end of the article. Further, students should distinguish between facts and opinions. Facts are statements that can be verified or proven to be true or false. They are followed by some evidences. The evidence proposed by the author should persuade the readers about the information they obtain. Oshima and Hogue (1999: 72) explain, “facts are objective statements of truths. However, opinions are statements that are neither true or false and express attitudes, beliefs, and feelings.

Thus, it is essential for readers to distinguish between these two. As students read a work, they accept factual statements from reliable sources and use them in building arguments, supporting ideas, and drawing conclusions. When it comes to opinions, readers have the freedom to accept or reject them as they are only one of person's point of views.

Furthermore, readers should identify the author's main purpose because it will determine how they read and which critical questions they need to ask. In academic reading, the author's purpose is either to inform or to persuade. However, the author can have more than one purpose which demands from readers to identify the most dominant one. McWhorther (1986: 223) noted that authors have clear purposes in most cases, but

they sometimes tend to vary by making their purposes less obvious. In such cases, student need to infer the author's purpose to have a full comprehension of the text.

Besides that, they should inquire whether the author supports his or her generalizations. Generalization, is a reasoned statement about a whole group based on known information about part of it, demands a shift from the already known to a conclusion about the unknown. Generalizations cannot be accepted as total fact because they are mostly based on the author's experience and strong beliefs. Therefore, readers should evaluate generalizations by evaluating the quality, type, and amount of evidence used to support them.

Other question that should be asked by critical readers are: "What assumption is the author making?" "Is the author biased?" And "how strong are the data and evidence?" Readers, in this sense, need to analyze the author's ideas and arguments in order to realize what is assumed and to detect if the author is biased in his or her viewpoints or not.

Many writers express their opinions, make generalizations, or provide evidence to support their ideas. Various kinds of evidence involve personal experience or observation, statistical data, or examples and descriptions of specific events. For this reason, critical readers are required to weigh and evaluate the quality of this evidence by considering two factors which are the type of the presented evidence and the relevance of that evidence.

The seven questions above are about the authors' reason or background that justify why they write the texts or articles. These questions represent the focal point an active reader should consider in analyzing texts and articles. In order to answer such questions, McWhorther (1994: 54) suggests three steps/ techniques as follow:

**3.2.1. Annotating while reading:** annotating or making notes is a useful strategy in reading because it helps readers to keep track of their ideas, attitudes and questions as they read. The annotations might include: key terms or definitions; questions; assumptions, , generalizations, and other features. The complexity of texts in college requires readers to annotate the text, highlight passages and make written notes in the margins in order to monitor their comprehension and react to ideas. McWhorter (1994: 232) states the following types of annotation:

- Marking definitions
- Highlighting examples
- Circling unknown words
- Putting question marks next to unclear ideas
- Writing notes and comments
- Drawing arrows to show relationships

These types of annotations can be used by critical readers to assess their understanding and strengthen their recall.

**3.2.2. Analysis and evaluation:** after reading the work and making annotations, the next step is to review the annotations in order to draw conclusions and make final impressions of the work. The aim of reviewing is to re-examine the reading material including the structure, the content, and the language of the article in more details. One effective way of reviewing a text is to make an informal outline that lists the main ideas, and to map out the text. In fact, active readers write lists of words, questions, and issues during the process of analysis. This allows them to evaluate the author's bias and explore patterns. Generating the following questions can help readers in their analysis of the work: "What did the author intend to achieve?" "How effectively did he or her achieve that?" "How valuable is the material?" "What are its strengths and its weaknesses?"

**3.2.3. Comparing several works:** once readers carefully read, annotate, and analyze each work, they will be able to discover similarities and differences among them. This comparison is based on factors such as types of arguments used and quality of evidence, overall theme, style, intended audience, authority and purpose of each author, degree of bias shown in each work, effectiveness of each work, and its points of agreements and disagreements.

### **3.3. The Strategic Critical Reader**

A strategy can be seen as a plan which is intentionally chosen by the reader to achieve a specific purpose or to complete a particular task (Paris, Lipson, & Wixson, 1983; Paris, A strategy can be seen as a plan which is intentionally chosen by the reader to achieve a specific purpose or to complete a particular task (Paris, Lipson, & Wixson, 1983; Paris, Wasik, & Turner, 1991). Noticeably, when students have the ability to choose and use a strategy automatically, they will achieve autonomy in using that strategy. Active readers use strategies to understand what they read before, while, and after. When they lose the meaning of what they are reading, they have the ability to monitor their understanding, and unconsciously select and use a reading strategy such as asking questions and rereading. This will help them to reconnect with the meaning of the text, and step toward strategic reading.

Before reading, strategic readers use their prior knowledge to think about the topic, make predictions about the intended meaning, and preview the text by skimming and scanning to get the overall meaning. Researchers argue that making connection to prior knowledge is the most important element in reading comprehension because it enables the reader to understand new information, and to create interest and purpose for reading a particular text.

Rather than relying on others to perform the intellectual work of generating questions, strategic readers always raise their own questions to check their progress of reading. During reading, they monitor understanding through questioning and reflecting on the ideas presented in the text. Despite the challenges that they may encounter while reading such as confusing passages, ambiguous terms, or unfamiliar references, proficient readers are capable of adjusting their reading, re-reading, or using additional strategies to interpret any unclear passage. Instead of saying “I read it, but I didn’t understand it.”, strategic readers recognize the fact that "reading means you understood it".

In fact, Critical readers have the ability to simultaneously perform more than twelve “strategic actions” that range from simple actions like understanding words and summarizing ideas to more complex actions like critiquing and evaluating elements of the text and linking these elements to personal experiences (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012, p. 273). To construct meaning, strategic readers apply a set of strategies and skills in relation to reading goals (Paris, Wasik, & Turner, 1991). As Duke, Pearson, Strachan, and Billman (2011) explained:

When we read, we use our knowledge along with our perceptions of what we think the text says to literally build, or construct, mental representations of what the text means. Once those representations are constructed, we can merge, or integrate, the information in those models with the knowledge stored in our minds. When we achieve that integration, we call it learning; we literally know more than we did before the reading. (p. 53)

Accordingly, comprehension is achieved when readers are active participants in the creation of meaning, and not passive receivers of words. During the reading process,

efficient readers employ their prior knowledge along with clues from the content to create meaning. Thus, learning to use strategies effectively is crucial to construct meaning. Readers who are not strategic usually face difficulties in their reading (Paris, Wasik, & Turner, 1991). These reading difficulties may have a negative impact on the way readers learn throughout their whole lives (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985).

Research shows that skillful or expert readers are strategic (Baker & Brown, 1984a, 1984b). This means that they have purposes for their reading, and they constantly adapt their reading to each purpose and for each reading activity. In this regard, Grabe (2008) defines "the strategic reader" as "one who automatically and routinely applies combinations of effective and appropriate strategies depending on readers' goals, reading tasks, and strategic processing abilities". In short, the strategic reader uses a variety of strategies and skills that are necessary for accomplishing the reading objectives and successfully completing the reading tasks.

### **3.4. Critical Reading Kit Contents**

Students, at the university level, find it difficult and frustrating to comprehend and analyze literary and academic texts. For this reason, they are expected to master certain skills and strategies that enable them to approach texts critically. Exploring the critical reader's toolkit, therefore, is very important for university students in order to move beyond the literal comprehension of texts and be able to develop a critical stance.

#### **3.4.1. Exploring the Basic Critical Thinking Skills**

Critical reading is related to critical thinking in that approaching texts critically means applying critical thinking skills while reading (Douglas 2000, Thistlewaite, 1990). At its very basic level, critical thinking is a "reasonable reflective thinking that is focused

on deciding what to believe or do” (Ennis ,1991: 1-2). Dewey (1909: 9) has defined critical thinking as “an individual’s active, enduring and delicate thinking over any beliefs or assumptions and the evidences and conclusions based on the beliefs and assumptions”. He further explained that critical thinking can be classified into “critical analysis”, “critical consciousness” and “critical reflection”.

According to Pascarella & Terenzini (1991), critical thinking is the ability to "identify central issues and assumptions in an argument, recognize important relationships, make correct inferences from data, deduce conclusions from information or data provided, interpret whether conclusions are warranted on the basis of the data given, and evaluate evidence or authority" (p.118).

In addition, Wen Qiufang (2008, 2009) proposed that the critical thinking skills consist of two major components: cognitive and affective. The cognitive component comprises the mental skills and cognitive standards while the affective component includes some typical emotional attributes. The cognitive skills, which are the most important competency, involve observation, analysis, inference, problem-solving, and decision-making. Adding to that, the standards include clarity, preciseness, depth, logic, relevance, and flexibility.

#### **3.4.1.1. Identifying Key Points and Main Ideas**

**3.4.1.1.1.Critical Thinking:** It is the ability to think clearly and rationally, and to interpret the logical connection between ideas. It mainly refers to the mental process of analyzing, reflecting and questioning particular arguments and conclusions in order to expose fallacies and make accurate judgments.

**3.4.1.1.2.Critical Thinking Skills:** crucial means and abilities to solve problems, create new ideas, and make reasoned decisions. These skills involve: observation, analysis, inference, problem-solving, and decision-making.

- **Observation:** It is the starting point of critical thinking. Those who are skilled in observation can quickly sense and identify a new problem, and even predict it before it happens based on their experience.
- **Analysis:** Once a problem has been identified, it is essential to analyze the situation by knowing the facts and data about the problem in order to eventually solve it.
- **Inference:** It is a skill that involves drawing conclusions and developing answers about the collected information.
- **Problem-solving:** It is the act of defining a problem; determining its causes; identifying, prioritizing, and selecting alternatives for a solution; and its implementation.
- **Decision-making:** It is the process of selecting a logical choice or an action from many available options.

#### **3.4.1.2. Identifying Cause/Effect Relationship**

Understanding the relationship between cause and effect is a basic critical thinking skill which is applied in all aspects of life. In university classes, students analyze the causes and effects of historical events and scientific phenomena. In everyday life, people consider the causes of pollution and the advantages of the recycling process on the environment. Thinking about cause and effect signals the relationship between events by showing reasons and results. The emphasis may be only on the causes or only on the effects, or it may include both. Therefore, a critical reader attempts to identify

the writer's focus, list the given causes and effects, and understand the main idea assisted by the writer's clarification of causes and effects. In fact, acquiring the causal relationship skill enable readers to understand why things happen the way they do in the text. Students should search for clue words that will help them to identify the causal relationship of events in the text for the aim of better comprehension.

### **3.4.2. Critical Reading Strategies**

Critical reading is much more complex than reading in the sense that critical reading is not just a process of comprehending the message of the text, but it also analyzes and evaluates ideas and arguments. In order to develop critical reading, it is essential to teach critical reading strategies. Salisbury University's (2009) suggests seven strategies namely previewing, contextualizing, questioning, reflecting on challenges to one's beliefs and perspectives, outlining and summarizing, evaluating, and comparing and contrasting.

- 1. Previewing:** it concentrates on learning about the text before reading it carefully. Yet, previewing critically is not limited to looking at the title, subtitle, and the style of the text, but it also includes getting an overview of its content and organization as well as rhetorical situation (skimming). Several studies (Echevarria et.al., 2008; Sousa, 2011; McCormick, 1989; Dole, Valencia, Greer, & Wardrop, 1991; McCormick, 1898) claimed that previewing allows readers to enhance comprehension by activating prior knowledge.
- 2. Contextualizing:** it is "placing a text in its historical, biographical, and cultural contexts" (Salisbury University, 2009, para.1). When reading a text, the critical reader reads it through the lens of his own experience; and recognizes the fact that the writing was written in the past so he/she has to contextualize and realize

the differences of the contemporary attitudes and values and the ones represented in the text (Graves, 1998). When contextualizing a reading material, the reader should be aware of its cultural, historical, material ,or intellectual circumstances ; and whether these change, complicate, or impact his/her perspective of the writing (Harvard University, 2015).

This reading strategy also requires the reader to represent the context of the text and understand how its context is different from his/her own. This can be done through finding the language or ideas that seem odd or out of date; including one's knowledge of the time and place in which the reading material was written; and finally, evaluating the influence these differences make on one's interpretation and judgment of the text (Axelrod & Cooper, 1998).

3. **Questioning:** is a critical reading strategy that encourages readers to ask questions about the content and write them down during the reading process (Salisbury University, 2009). Salisbury University states that —... in difficult academic readings, you will understand the material better and remember it longer if you write a question for every paragraph or brief section (para.3). Lastly, the university advised students that each question should focus on the main idea, not on details and illustrations, and each should be expressed in their own words and not just copied from parts of the paragraph. Several studies show that generating questions and discussing stories before and after reading stories to children promote comprehension (Bissett, 1970; Crowell & Au, 1979; Huck, 1976; Lamme 1981 cited in Morrow, 1984). Many researchers claim that posing questions is crucial in cognitive process that performs at deep conceptual levels as reading comprehension (Collins, Brown, & Larkin, 1980; Graesser, Person, &

Huber, 1992; Graesser& Clark, 1985; Hilton, 1990; Kintsch, 1998 cited in Craig et al, 2000).

4. **Reflecting:** reflecting on challenges to one's beliefs and values is a critical strategy that is applied when the reader reads paragraphs that challenge his beliefs, status, and attitude. A critical reader's reflection on his beliefs and values is often based on the examination of his/her responses to the reading material (Halpern, 2003). However, the reader's belief about an issue are sometimes hard to express as they are so deep-rooted. To discover these beliefs, it is essential to examine how a text challenges the reader by asking whether texts threatened, inspired, ashamed, or disturbed him/her.
5. **Outlining and Summarizing:** Anderson-Medius (1990) state that outlining is a high-level skill which helps readers to analyze and recognize the relationship between information for the purpose of connecting them appropriately. Bianco and McCormick (1989) further explain that outlining has five functions: (1) allows readers to focus on main ideas; (2) ameliorates familiarity with the structure of the text; (3) fosters better retention; (4) generates alternative materials to supplemental material; (5) motivates readers to participate in learning. Besides, Corder-Ponce (2000) argues that summarization is the most important reading strategies which leads to better comprehension and effective studying.
6. **Evaluating:** it is the process of examining how the text evidence depicts the subject matter (Bisset, 2014). This strategy involves a careful examination of the choices the author made in presenting the content, language, and structure of the text. A critical reader is required to evaluate each of these three area of choice, and consider their impact on text meaning (Kurland, 1998). The logic of the

author's argument is another area that should be evaluated by the critical reader in terms of appropriateness, believability, and consistency throughout the entire process of the reading. In testing the appropriateness of the author's argument, the reader should analyze the text according to logical fallacies such as false analogy. Next, testing for believability requires the application of other fallacies that relate to reasoning, such as generalizations, begging the question, and failing to accept the burden of the proof. Finally, testing for consistency needs careful analysis to ensure the absence of contradictory statements (Axelrod & Cooper, 1998).

7. **Comparing and contrasting:** it is the act of discovering similarities and differences between texts to comprehend them better. The reader differentiates and relates various texts to the previously read text for the aim of exploring their likenesses and differences. Silver (2015) states that comparing and contrasting strategy includes five distinct goals namely: (1) improve memories and strength the reader's ability to remember key content by emphasizing on the analysis of pair of ideas; (2) promote higher order thinking skills; (3) enhance comprehension by focusing on the important details, making abstract ideas concrete, and reducing confusion between connected concepts; (4) develop writing in content area by presenting a basic structure that organizes information and provide clearer and more accurate ideas; (5) cultivate habits of the mind.

Costa and Kallick (2008,2009) cited in Silver argued that developing the habits of mind such as thinking about thinking (metacognition), relating previous knowledge to new situations, communicating with clarity, and thinking with flexibility will equip students with the necessary tools that can help them achieve academic success. Moreover, Allen (2004) suggests that the process of

comparing and contrasting is essential to simplify concepts and make information unforgettable by asking readers to think deeply about the content of the text for the purpose of detecting similarities and differences.

#### **3.4.3. The Role of Critical Reading Strategies in Enhancing Reading Comprehension**

Duke and Pearson (2002) claim that the use of critical reading strategies plays a major role in promoting students' reading comprehension. In 2007, a study was conducted by Jasim about critical reading strategies found that the integrity of critical reading strategies as part of advanced reading courses is strongly recommended since they have a positive effect on students' ability to differentiate facts from opinions, detect bias and discrimination, make deductions, and recognize different types of propaganda. When students apply critical reading strategies, they will be able to acquire a wider range of vocabulary and retain them easily. This ultimately allows students to become autonomous thinkers and efficient readers (Khabiri & Pakzadhav, 2011).

According to Nasrollahi et al. (2015), the application of critical reading strategies orchestrates the cultivation of critical reading, critical thinking, and higher levels of thinking ability respectively. Similarly, Kadir and his colleagues (2014) noted that learning critical reading skills is the initial step that can lead students develop into critical thinkers through the constant analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of texts during reading sessions. Yu (2015), on the other hand, states that critical reading strategies help readers to better comprehend texts in college English reading, and the most applied strategies in university classroom teaching are: pre-reading, questioning and answering, reading in context, outlining and summarizing, and reflecting after reading.

#### **3.4.4. Promoting the Use of Metacognitive Skills and Strategies**

Metacognition refers to the mental process of thinking about one's own thinking and the ability to assess and evaluate one's thinking. Hennessey (1999) defines metacognition as "an awareness of one's own thinking, an awareness of the content of one's conceptions, an active monitoring of one's cognitive processes" (p. 3). In other words, it is the knowledge about one's own thinking and the ability to control that thinking process.

John Flavell (1979), who is one of the proponent earliest researchers in metacognition theory, proposed a formal model of metacognition which consists of metacognitive strategies as one of its essential components. He noted that metacognitive strategies "are designed to monitor cognitive progress." These strategies are described as ordered processes that are used to control one's own cognitive activities and to achieve cognitive goals such as understanding a reading material, writing an effective sentence, or solving a math problem. The student, who possesses good metacognitive skills, has the ability to apply these processes in controlling his own learning process, monitoring cognitive activities, and comparing cognitive consequences with external or internal standards.

It is worth noting that if teachers engage their students with metacognitive activities every day, students would become successful learners and also develop into critical readers and thinkers. In reading sessions, students should be encouraged to use their metacognitive skills and strategies by asking them to think beyond what they are thinking about the ideas in the text in order to comprehend the reading material better. According to Flavell & Miller (2002), metacognitive skills play a strategic role in achieving the reader's goals by allowing him/her to solve problems in cognitive activities such as logical reasoning, reading comprehension, writing, and language

acquisition. For this reason, educators are required to employ and foster metacognitive skills when teaching reading at school.

Hudson (2007) asserts that metacognition in reading signifies the act of planning, monitoring, and evaluation of the reading process. Planning is based on the identification of the reading purpose, and the selection of the needed actions in accomplishing the reader's aims. Monitoring, on the other hand, includes guiding and overseeing the readers' efforts to ensure the accomplishment of his/her goals. Finally, evaluation occurs when the reader examines his/her cognitive ability to perform the reading task.

#### **3.4.5. The Habits of Highly Effective Critical Readers**

Good critical readers learn habits that help them become autonomous and active learners. There are some prominent habits that characterize effective readers in particular.

- **Effective readers adapt reading strategies that match different reading tasks.** Effective readers are selective and strategic because they are able to choose the appropriate reading strategy that suits the reading task, and they can adjust and adapt these strategies when needed.
- **Effective readers control time, place and atmosphere to suit their reading task.** To read effectively, critical readers choose the right time when they are most alert, the suitable environment for them to focus (a quiet library, an active coffee shop, sitting outside), and the optimal atmosphere that suits them best (complete isolation and calmness, music playing, setting with a group of peers who are also studying).

- **Effective readers divide chapters into manageable groupings or chunks.**

Having a large reading assignment requires readers to break the reading activity into manageable chunks of time. When losing focus, they should give themselves a break to regain concentration. Reading a textbook can be a difficult task. Thus, strategic readers often reward themselves with short breaks in order to be refreshed and prepared to read another chunk of the material.

- **Effective readers interact actively with the text.** Marking important information while reading helps readers to stay focused and think critically about the text. This involves taking notes, comments, and highlighting key terms. The active interaction with the text also allows information to be retained in the long-term memory as well as enhancing comprehension.

- **Effective readers use recitation to reinforce what they have just read.** It is frequently a short process of recalling what have been read. Recitation includes summarizing out loud, in one's own words, the important ideas in the chapter which will make information more permanent in the reader's memory.

### **3.5. Critical Readers' fulfillment**

Society today, perhaps more than ever before, urges people to make evaluative judgments about many issues that influence it now and which may influence it in the future. In order to deal with complicated issues, make decisions, and solve problems, citizens must have the ability to evaluate critically what they see, hear, and read. For university students, critical reading skills are very necessary not only for their academic success but also for their future in the work place. When graduates are employed, they are expected to contribute meaningfully in the work field; For instance, making a successful business deal, selecting the appropriate political candidates, or making

informed decisions about medical or consumer matter, or other important decisions in their lives. Therefore, there must be a broader understanding of what critical reading involves, and how can passive readers be transformed into critical readers and co-authors of meaning.

Developing the necessary skills and strategies for reading critically has become very essential as it brings several advantages to the learners. Brown & Keeley (2007) asserted that the use of these skills enhances one's own decision-making; and thus, develop a more confident and independent person. Indeed, reading critically develops students' autonomy because passing exams at university requires students to think analytically and reflect on written questions (Hughes, 2014). Moreover, teaching students critical reading strategies creates a critical spirit that allows them to reflect and analyze their own thinking and others' thoughts as well (Slavin, 2018).

Shannon as cited in (Jongsma, 1991), on the other hand, views critical reading as "a means for understanding one's history and culture and their connection to current social structure and for fostering an activism toward equal participation for all the decisions that affect and control our lives". Regarding the cultural implications of critical reading, it gives more understanding about different cultures by promoting insights into cultural assumptions and practices, similarities and differences across national boundaries. In essence, students act as co-authors by taking ownership of meaning through activities including discussion, rewriting, and reflection. Critical reading, therefore, enables individuals to become agents of change and active participants in debates about injustice and inclusion by extending their acts of reading from the classroom into larger contexts, specifically what Freire (2005) describes as "reading the world" (p.31).

### **3.6. Challenges in Becoming a Critical Reader**

Students in the 21<sup>st</sup> century classrooms are expected to read and comprehend texts of much greater complexity. They are required to analyze, make inferences, develop argumentation, construct their own meaning, and generate some questions about what, why, how, and what the author write the text for. Yet, this still becomes a serious problem for so many readers. In fact, there are a lot of problems and challenges that hinder the transformation of non-strategic readers into critical readers.

Many readers, especially students do not read with a purpose. They usually read because they are obliged to do an assignment or prepare for a test. Much of "school reading" is based on skimming for answers in which students are preoccupied with completing an assignment. In this case, students become passive consumers of information without determining why such information is important in a given course and to their education. Therefore , stating a purpose is very crucial as it permits students to play an active role in the reading process.

Since many readers do not have a purpose when reading, they rarely consider a reading activity especially argumentative writing as their habit. The lack of practice can be an obstacle in approaching critical reading. People usually form a habit of reading newspapers, magazines, novels, comics, etc. because their main purpose is enjoyment and pleasure. However, it will be different if it was reading for comprehension and even evaluation. The readers tend to skip an argumentative essay in a newspaper or any complex passage. They may only read what is on the surface to get the information, but without a critical evaluation.

Accordingly, Gokturk (1997) argues that it is quite essential for the individual's social and academic achievements to obtain a reading habit after learning to read and write, and then start reading with a critical stance. To make it clearer, students should

first become good readers before being good critical readers. Hence, it is essential to involve in activities that help them to form reading habits.

In addition, most learners have misconceptions about critical reading. They think that reading critically should refer to the act of criticizing someone's idea to come to a final conclusion that the idea is good or bad, can or cannot be accepted, etc. Being critical does not mean that the reader has the right to judge the author; it is rather making an objective analysis about why, how, and what for the author writes a text. Indeed, it is a reflective skill, which is difficult to acquire, that requires the critical reader to "stand back" and evaluate a text from different angles including logical, social, ethical, rhetorical, and personal perspectives, making use of past experiences (Wheeler, 2007), to construct a new meaning according to himself/herself (Asilioglu, 2008, pp. 8).

Unfortunately, the majority of learners are not aware of the significance of critical reading, and they believe that it is too complicated and difficult for them to read critically because they should have deep concentration and reach high levels of thinking. They also hold that analyzing and evaluating texts prevent them from enjoying the reading process, so they rarely apply these skills beyond classroom walls. Flynn's (1989) proposes that:

When students actively struggle with interesting problems within a supportive environment they are simultaneously challenged and encouraged to test out their ideas. Young readers develop into independent, critical readers as they learn to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate knowledge by thinking their way through problems in a cooperative environment (p. 668).

Accordingly, the environment and time chosen to read can also have an impact on the reader's concentration to analyze the texts. Poor time management makes the reading

activity ineffective as readers do not pay much attention to how long they should read and complete the task. When readers do not manage their time of reading, they will lose their focus and need more time to read again and again. In these terms, Christine Nuttall (1996) suggested that “teachers have to create the right conditions for reading to become a valued part of every students’ life”.

### **3.7.Scaffolding the Critical Reader to Become More Adept**

The problems above represents only some of the challenges that readers encounter when practicing critical reading. These problems could be different for each reader, but they could be all overcome through the use of certain strategies and ways. Brown (2000: 113) explains, “strategies are specific methods of approaching a problem or task, planned designs for controlling and manipulating certain information”. Indeed, classroom strategies can play a major role in developing critical readers’ behaviors for all students. The critical reader, therefore, should select the suitable strategies based on the problem faced. To solve the problems above and develop into active critical readers, students should make advantage of the following tips:

First of all, previewing and stating the purpose of reading allow readers to get a sense of the content of the text and how it is structured before reading it. When readers have already stated a purpose for reading a particular material, they would be able to determine what to do and what to get, and also prepare everything they need to support the critical reading activity. Knott (2011: 2) proposes that the activity should begin with skimming research materials first, especially introduction and conclusion, for the aim of strategically choosing on what to put more critical effort. This technique helps readers to get the overall meaning without reading the whole text.

Practicing a lot by varying the types of text can also have a positive effect on the success of readers being critical. For instance, readers who read various types of articles whether about economy, science, philosophy, social, history, biology, etc tend to develop different ways of arguing and analyzing texts of different disciplines. Thus, it will be helpful for them to be critical readers. Reading critically, on the other hand, requires learners to consider the speed of reading in order to achieve full comprehension of the text. By slowing down, readers will have the chance to detect the important points and make more connections between different ideas.

It is worth noting that critical readers should keep an open mind by reflecting objectively to the reading material without involving personal or premature judgment about the text. They should also prepare to become part of the author's audience as it makes it easier for them to get the author's purpose. This could be done through learning about the history of the author and the text, and the author's anticipated audience. In short, readers can do many things to be active and critical. To achieve that, they should overcome all obstacles or problems that can slow them down and make them become passive readers. Adding to that, they can follow some tips and have the willingness to apply critical reading strategies creatively and regularly.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter is devoted to recommendations and further suggestions that are addressed to non-critical readers to adhere to become adept critical readers. The transformation from passive readers into critical readers is dispensable as it allows individuals to experience a lot of benefits including better jobs, more opportunities, higher income, and other personal and social fulfillments. Hence, this chapter aims to equip EFL learners with all the necessary skills and strategies that allow this major transformation to occur.

Accordingly, the chapter introduced the content of the critical reader's kit by identifying the main skills of critical thinking ,explaining the process of good critical reading in details, and then describing the features of the strategic critical reader. After that, it highlighted the significant strategies for reading critically and the effective habits of skilled readers, and also presented the importance of developing metacognitive skills and strategies. Adding to that, the chapter indicated the influence of critical reading strategies on students' fulfillment ,and their role in enhancing reading comprehension. Finally, some challenges that a critical reader might encounter were mentioned, and how these challenges could be overcome.

## **Recommendations**

The research findings indicate an urgent need for change in EFL context at university level for the sake of fostering critical readers. However, both teachers and students have not been trained for such change as they have not yet discovered the critical reader's kit. Therefore, some recommendation are suggested below which offer directions to EFL students and teachers alike for enhancing critical reading skills and strategies.

- **Allowing Sufficient Time for Reading**

Since critical reading demands the use of higher thinking levels and deep analysis of reading materials, educators should give their students sufficient time for reading in order to approach texts critically. Considering the fact that second year master students are required to write dissertations which need a lot of readings of different sources, it is suggested for teachers to include critical reading sessions during the first year of master degree. Also it is recommended to ask students to read and analyze many articles because reading books is time-consuming. Another point is that students should be given enough time to take notes and write summaries after finishing reading any material because it is sometimes difficult for them to interpret hidden messages, and to find logical connection between the ideas of the text.

- **Giving Students the Opportunity to Select the Reading Material**

Most students often face difficulties in analyzing texts critically when they are totally controlled by the teacher and obliged to read a particular passage. Thus, it is quite essential to create a comfortable environment for learners where they can think freely and choose the reading material that they are interested in. Educators should decide about the contents to be delivered, and give the choice of books and

chapters for students. In this way, learners are more likely to engage in discussions, express their opinions, and share their ideas about the reading material.

- **Integrating Critical Reading as a Module**

It was noticed that most students in the reading sessions were not aware of the required reading strategies to read books critically. They were accustomed to reading texts passively because they did not have Critical Reading module which is very important for EFL learners to develop their reading skills. For this reason, we suggest the inclusion of Critical Reading as a module for university students to cultivate the necessary reading strategies to read texts critically. The teacher, in this regard, should devote more sessions to teach students how to read between and behind the lines and raise their awareness about the importance of critical reading.

## **General Conclusion**

In teaching English as a foreign language, the act of reading critically is highly recommended for students to achieve higher levels in their studies. However, most university students are still passive consumers of knowledge due to the wide access to all sorts of information which made them accept everything as an absolute truth. In order to help students become autonomous learners, the major role of teachers is to enhance their students' critical thinking abilities and critical reading skills, and help them eventually develop into critical strategic readers.

This actual study has focused on three major objectives. The ultimate purpose was to explore the critical reader's toolkit. Also, the study aimed at investigating the role of critical reading strategies in achieving learners' fulfillment. Moreover, it attempted to examine teachers' perceptions towards the integration of critical reading in the learning process.

The first chapter covered the theoretical background of the research topic. It began with providing definitions about reading and its types, and critical reading and its characteristics. Then, it presented the major differences among critical and non-critical readers, reasons for teaching critical reading, and the importance of genre and discourse for the critical reader.

As for the methodology followed in undertaking this study, it was described, analyzed, and discussed in the second chapter. The research was conducted in the English Department at Mohamed Boudiaf University of M'sila. The case study was Master One students and their EFL teachers selected randomly for the academic year of 2020-2021 using students' questionnaire and teachers' questionnaire as data gathering tools; those tools were adopted to test the suggested hypotheses.

After analyzing the data collected via the questionnaires, the researcher came up with a number of conclusions with reference to the hypotheses and research questions provided earlier. The results obtained from the qualitative and quantitative analyses of the collected data revealed that both students and teachers hold positive attitudes towards critical reading and they sometimes implement some of its strategies. However, the findings showed that both of them have not yet discovered the efficient implements and strategies that are needed to be adopted for cultivating critical readers. Finally, a general discussion of all the results was briefly provided followed by some proposed recommendations at the end concerning the integration of critical reading in education. The interpretation of the findings confirmed its efficiency and usefulness in the school context and its major impact on achieving students' fulfillment.

The last chapter sought to explore critical readers' strategies and how these latter help them achieve fulfillment. It started with providing a full, detailed explanation of the process of reading critically. Then, it identified the most significant critical reading strategies, described the features of a strategic reader, highlighted the basic skills of critical thinking, and ultimately explored the kit of the critical reader. Finally, this chapter explained the role of critical reading skills in making academic and personal accomplishments.

To conclude with, this research was an attempt to answer a limited number of questions. Given the fact that reading critically has endless advantages for both teachers and learners, it is advisable to consider the previously mentioned challenges and the proposed tips and recommendations to have more fruitful results.

As far as future prospects are concerned, the present work could be a useful starting point for future researchers in the field of investing thinking skills in education and put

it into practice in the Algerian schools., hoping that it raises the faculty's awareness towards the significance of teaching students how to read critically and analytically in order to develop active, autonomous learners and future effective citizens.

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## Appendices

## Appendix 1

## Students' Questionnaire

**Dear students,**

You are kindly requested to fill in the questionnaire below by putting a tick next to each statement. Your answers will greatly contribute to our dissertation completion.

## Part One : Background Information

**1) Gender:**      **1. Male**                      **2. Female**

**2) Age: .....**

**Part Two : On Students' perceptions to reading-Tick the corresponding answer**

| <u>Items</u>                                                                                                      | <u>always</u> | <u>often</u> | <u>sometimes</u> | <u>rarely</u> | <u>never</u> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|------------------|---------------|--------------|
| 1. I think that published texts provide facts and absolute truth                                                  |               |              |                  |               |              |
| 2. I think logically and raise questions while reading                                                            |               |              |                  |               |              |
| 3. I believe and accept everything I read in texts and books                                                      |               |              |                  |               |              |
| 4. I give my personal opinion about texts during reading sessions                                                 |               |              |                  |               |              |
| 5. I entirely focus on understanding what the text says about the topic, and simply confirm the author's evidence |               |              |                  |               |              |
| 6. I evaluate the writer's credibility and test his arguments                                                     |               |              |                  |               |              |
| 7. I like the topics which challenge me to think critically and analytically                                      |               |              |                  |               |              |
| 8. I like questions which require me to express my opinion in class                                               |               |              |                  |               |              |
| 9. I read for the purpose of absorbing and memorizing data                                                        |               |              |                  |               |              |
| 10. I employ what I have read in books in solving my personal problems                                            |               |              |                  |               |              |

|                                                                |  |  |  |  |  |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| 11. When I read texts, I do not easily take things for granted |  |  |  |  |  |
| 12. Books are not always informative                           |  |  |  |  |  |
| 13. A strategic reader should be a critical reader             |  |  |  |  |  |
| 14. I like reading between the lines                           |  |  |  |  |  |
| 15. Silent reading favours critical readers                    |  |  |  |  |  |

### **Part Three: On Critical Reading Strategies**

**1- According to you, what makes Critical Reading different from regular reading?**

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.....

.....

**2- During the reading process, what type of critical reading strategies do you use to achieve full comprehension of the text?**

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**3- Do you consider yourself a critical reader or a literal reader? Why?**

.....

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**We are sincerely thankful for your collaboration**

## Appendix 2

### Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear Sir/ Madam

We would be very grateful if you devote some of your time to answer the following questionnaire that will serve to complete a Master two dissertation work.

#### Section One: On teacher's Identification

Gender:            Male    ☐            Female    ☐

Age.....            Teaching Experience .....years

#### Section Two: On the teacher's classroom flexibility

1. Do you present challenging ideas to your students when practicing reading?

Yes    ☐            No    ☐

If yes, how do your students react to them?

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

2. Do you engage your students in debates after reading any material?

Yes    ☐            No    ☐

3. Do you open conversations for your students in your classes?

Yes    ☐            No    ☐

4. Do you accept all their ideas whatever the responses are?

Yes    ☐            No    ☐

#### Section Three: On the Evaluation of learners' critical reading strategies

5. On what basis do you evaluate your students critical reading skills?

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

6. According to you, what are the three most important critical reading strategies a student must basically acquire? Select three

- |                |                          |                                      |                          |
|----------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. summarizing | <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. Exploring the figurative language | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. annotating  | <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. Paraphrasing                      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. outlining   | <input type="checkbox"/> | 6. Judging the Writer's credibility  | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Why?

1.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

2.....  
.....  
.....

3.....  
.....  
.....

7. How do you help your students become critical strategic readers?

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

8. According to you, do critical reading strategies affect students' fulfillment?

Yes

☐

No

☐

9. On the whole, are you satisfied with your students' level of critical reading skills?

Yes

☐

No

☐

10. What do you suggest for non- strategic critical readers to develop into critical readers?

1.....  
.....  
2.....  
.....  
3.....  
.....  
4.....  
.....

**We are sincerely thankful for your collaboration**

## الملخص

أصبحت تنمية مهارات القراءة النقدية ضرورية جدا للنجاح في التعليم العالي. وبالرغم من ذلك يفضل أغلبية الطلاب في المستوى الجامعي تفكيك الرموز المكتوبة على التحليل الفعال للمعنى الضمني. فقد حولت القراءة الغير نقدية طلاب الإنجليزية إلى مستقبلين غير فعالين للمعرفة. لذلك أنجزت هذه الدراسة لاكتشاف عدّة القارئ النقدي عن طريق تحديد الأدوات التي يمتلكها لتحقيق الإنجازات. كما أنها تحقّق في استراتيجيات القراءة الواجب على الطلاب تطويرها ، وفي دور الأستاذ في تنمية قدرات الطلاب في القراءة النقدية أثناء حصص القراءة. للإجابة على أسئلة البحث ، تم إجراء دراسة حالة في جامعة محمد بوضياف بالمسيلة باتخاذ استبيان للطلبة واستبيان لأساتذة اللغة الإنجليزية كأدوات لجمع البيانات. أظهرت النتائج أن كل من طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية وأساتذتهم لم يكتشفوا بعد معدات القارئ النقدي بما أنهم لم يتعرفوا فعليا على الوسائل والاستراتيجيات الضروري تطويرها من أجل تحويل القراء الخاملين إلى قراء نقديين فعالين. بالرغم من ذلك تنمية القراء النقديين ليست بالعمل الهين بسبب وجود بعض العقبات المحتملة والتحديات التي قد يواجهها القارئ. ولذلك تم تقديم بعض التوصيات لتمكين طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية من تخطي هذه العوائق , وتوجيه تركيز الأساتذة نحو تعزيز مهارات التفكير النقدي واستراتيجيات القراءة النقدية. وبالتالي لا يتم فقط تحضير طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية ليصبحوا قراء نقديين بشكل أفضل , وإنما نأمل أيضا أن ننتج أفرادا ناجحين قادرين على النجاة في العالم الواقعي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: القراءة النقدية, استراتيجيات القراءة النقدية, مهارات التفكير النقدي, القارئ النقدي

الاستراتيجي