PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA
MINISTRY OF HIGER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH
AbdElhafidBoussouf University - Mila

Institute of Lettres and Languages
Department of Foreign Languages
Section: English

The Bearings of Critical Reading on the Development of Critical Thinking Skills in the EFL Context

The Case of Third Year EFL Students at the University of Mila

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment for the Requirements of the Master Degree in
Didactics of Foreign Languages

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Academic year: 2021- 2022

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2021/2022

To read critically is to think critically.

(Newton, 1985, p. 26).

Dedication:

This work is dedicated to:

To my gems, the symbol of love and giving, my parents who never stop giving of themselves in countless ways. It is thanks to them that I have been able to pursue my goals. I owe profound gratitude for all the love and prayers they have sent my way along this journey. My dear parents, thank you for being my champions throughout the past 22 years.

To my heart's lad, the apple of my eye, my little brother, Fadi Abderrahmane who I hope to have instilled in him a love of learning and ingrained in him a will to persevere through any hardship that he may encounter in life.

To my two brothers; the source of strength and support.

To the memory of my aunt; may she rest in peace.

To the best grandmother in the entire universe.

To my babies, Afnan, Djawad and Rital.

To my soulmate and best friend Fouzia, who have been my constant source of support and for accompanying me during this long path.

To my dearest friends, my brightest stars; Romaissa, Selsabil and Amina for accompanying me during my university journey.

To my lovely friends and colleagues, Salsabil, Bouchra, Nessrine and Ibtissem; for everything they have done to me.

To my teammate Abir, with whom I carried out this work.

To my favorite teacher, Dr. Djalal MANSOUR; whose class I took years ago sparked an interest in identity and who has inspired me throughtout my university studies, you are my inspiration to achieve high outcomes.

ASSALA

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to:

My family, namely, my dear parents, sisters and my little brother.

All my English teachers who taught me from my freshman year up till my graduation year.

All my university friends ,especially, Abla, Amina, Romaissa, Faten, Rokia, Nesrine, Ikram, Salsabil and Oumaima.

My talented partner, Assala with whom I accomplished this work.

Anyone who boosted my morale on this long journey.

Abir

Acknowledgments

We would like to take this opportunity to convey our genuine gratitude for so many people who have helped, supported and guided us since the very beginning of this journey.

First and foremost, this must go to our supervisor, Doctor Lemya BOUGHOUAS who has the substance of a genius, and whose experience and insight has been invaluable throughout the undertaking of this study. Most of all, we are indebted for her warmth, patience and continued moral support for keeping us on track to finally get this done. We feel extremely fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with her and learn from her.

We are also grateful for Dr. Leila ZOUREZ and Dr. Assia AZZIOUI who kindly agreed to examine our dissertation and whose valuable comments and pieces of advice would be followed to refine this work.

We owe a huge debt of thanks to all the teachers who enlightened our path throughout our university studies. This experience has afforded us the chance to have the best and brightest teachers ever, particularly Dr. Djalal MANSOUR who always have served as an inspiration.

Of course, we must acknowledge the time given by all of the participants involved in this study, in sharing their rich insight in the questionnaire.

A special thanks goes to Ms. Messouada BOUDJERIDA for her assistance during the distribution's quest of our questionnaire. Equally, a thank you must be transmitted to Mr. Houssam MERMOUL for being the kindest teacher and for his never-ending aid.

We offer many thanks to third year students of English at the Department of Foreign Languages, university of Mila who have kindly contributed in helping us carrying out our fieldwork.

Abstract

Critical thinking skill is one of the must-have skills EFL students should pick up as it holds a plethora of merits for students, both inside and outside the classroom. As a matter of fact, it is said that critical reading helps in promoting critical thinking skills. Coping with this context, the current study aims at determining whether teachers and students are aware of the importance of reading and whether it contributes to developing critical thinking skills. In fact, it is hypothesized in this research that students who adopt critical reading as a habit would improve on their critical thinking skills down the line. In an attempt to test this hypothesis, both quantitative and qualitative methods is opted for; using both a students' questionnaire and a teachers' questionnaire in order to investigate the role of critical reading in promoting critical thinking in addition to finding out to which extent both EFL teachers and students are aware of the importance of reading. The students' questionnaire is distributed to eighty third year EFL students at the Department of Foreign Languages, University of Mila, while the teachers' questionnaire is administered to six teachers teaching at the University of Mila as well. In light of the major findings of this research, it is revealed that EFL students and teachers are mindful of the endless benefits of reading and that critical reading helps in promoting critical thinking skills among EFL students. In closing, the research work proffers a multiplicity of helpful recommendations proposed to both pedagogy and future research for the sake of delving the role of critical reading in enhancing learners' critical thinking skills.

Key words: critical reading, critical thinking, EFL students, foreign languages, promoting thinking.

List of Abbreviations

CR: Critical Reading

CT: Critical Thinking

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ESL: English as a Second Language

FL: Foreign Language

LMD: License, Masters, Doctorate

Q: Question

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ملخص (Arabic Summary)

Résumé

General Introduction

Developing students' critical reading and critical thinking skills is crucial for those in colleges in particular. As a matter of fact, college students need to read numerous journal, books and the like written in English. Thence, they are supposed to utilize critical reading strategies in order for them to raise their critical thinking skills. For the time being, critical thinking is considered vital for survival in the 21st century workforce, and has mainly been described as one of the main goals of higher education and academic success. In a learner-centered class, students are the responsibility for the teaching-learning process; in which the teacher plays the role of a guide and a monitor merely for the learning process to be progressed. By way of illustration, learners are expected to search for information for their own and make interpretations for it; that is, they need to think outside the box using their higher-order thinking skills. However, being able to do so entails holding different cognitive skills; basically the ability to think critically. The latter is highly needed in achieving higher academic outcomes. To this end, situating the study in a pedagogical context, the current dissertation spotlights the impact of critical reading in the development of critical thinking skills for EFL students.

1. Statement of the Problem

Reading is one of the four skills EFL students should work on mastering when learning a foreign language. It offers a ton of merits that have direct and positive influence on the development of learners' critical thinking skills as it is scientifically proven that reading catalyses the brain to make various neural connections every time one reads a new piece of information.

Indeed, reading is a vast world where students get to experience the world from a different perspective and decide on which route to go for based on their culture, social status, accept or reject what people may think is the absolute truth. It is noteworthy that there is high demand for critical thinkers in all areas of life these days: in education, at workplace, and any other field imaginable as these people have leaders' qualities and have a say in many things. Critical thinkers are known to be creative people who always go beyond the expected and generate original, new ideas that have never been discussed before. Furthermore, being a critical thinker means having the potential to solve problems which what an employer keeps an eye out for when hiring someone.

Regardless of the abovementioned limitless benefits of being a critical thinker, yet, EFL students still noticeably lack the critical thinking skill, making them chiefly passive receivers of information. Unfortunately, lacking such skill makes EFL students miss out on many opportunities in and outside classroom. As a result, education professionals and experts should take responsibility for adopting new methods to revive critical thinking skills in the EFL classrooms by working their way up to inject critical reading into curriculums so that a generation full of critical thinkers and creative people can be built up. Thus, the research problem is centered

around the investigation of the impacts of critical reading on the development of critical thinking skills among EFL students.

2. Aims of the Study

The present study aims at investigating whether teachers and students are aware of the importance of reading. Furthermore, this research endeavors to explore the impact of critical reading on critical thinking and whether or not critical reading contributes to the promotion and development of critical thinking skills among EFL students.

3. Research Questions

The present research attempts to answer the following questions:

1: Are teachers and students aware of the importance of reading?

2: Does reading critically contribute to the development of critical thinking skills among EFL students?

4. Research Hypothesis

It is hypothesized that students are aware of the importance of critical reading for the improvement of their critical thinking skills.

5. Research Methodology

5.1. Methods of investigation

In an attempt to test out the abovementioned hypothesis and answer the current research questions, quantitative and qualitative method are decided upon.

5.2. Research Tools and Population

Both the students' questionnaire and teachers' questionnaire are opted for as research tools to collect data concerning our topic.

The students' questionnaire is administered to third year EFL students at the Department of Foreign Languages, University of Mila. The sample was compromised of 80 students out of 211 students of the target population in total. The students' questionnaire was carefully planned out to help inform us about the students' attitudes towards critical reading and thinking and the extent to which they are conscious of the positive effects of critical reading on the amelioration of critical thinking skills.

Additionally, to reinforce and complement the issue under study, the teachers' questionnaire was distributed to 6 teachers at Mila University Center who are supposed to be familiar with reading at Mila University Center, and believed as well to enlighten the current issue under investigation with their perspectives. The teachers' questionnaire was conducted to provide us with further valuable information as to how EFL teachers should inject critical reading habits into their classrooms.

6. The Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation is composed of three main chapters. The first two chapters shape the theoretical part whereas the third one is devoted to the fieldwork.

The first chapter provides a detailed overview of the concept of critical reading. It takes the readers on a little journey to discover some aspects of reading including its definition, types, its significance, some critical reading strategies as well as ways to teach and assess reading.

The second chapter sets out to offer some insights into critical thinking skills. It is initiated with bringing historical background about critical thinking from the perspectives of many philosophers and scholars. Then, raising the issue by defining it from three main approaches. Following that, an advantage is offered for both the significance of critical thinking and the qualities of critical thinkers. Subsequently, both standards and stages of critical thinking are fully covered. Next, there is coverage of teaching critical thinking in EFL classrooms. At last, the chapter is further expanded with the measurement of critical thinking skills.

As for the third chapter, it is fully devoted to the field work. It provides a detailed description, analysis and discussion of the data collected through both the students' questionnaire and the teachers' questionnaire. In addition to this, this chapter sheds light on some of the limitations encountered while conducting this study and provides readers and future researchers with some valuable suggestions and recommendations.

CHAPTER ONE*: Critical Reading

Introduction

It is often said that readers are leaders. This goes to show how significant reading is in the life of readers and how it could shape one's future as it makes one a leader and in charge of his own life. It is worthy of note that reading is one of the four skills along with speaking, listening and writing, and this skill, in particular, plays a vital role in expanding one's knowledge about the world.

Hence, this chapter sets out to offer some insights into the world of reading. As a starting point, it endeavors to introduce the concept of reading in general and critical reading in particular by providing a number of definitions given by outstanding scholars in the field. Then, it gradually narrows down the scope to discuss the distinction made between active reading and passive reading. What is more, there is a brief account for the most salient types of reading; being intensive reading and extensive reading. Furthermore, some common reading strategies are touched upon including: predicting and previewing, skimming, scanning and summarizing that are mostly used by learners while reading in a foreign language (FL). Next, focus moves towards the significance of reading then followed by the difference between reading in L1 and L2. The chapter further elucidates some teaching techniques used by teachers to teach reading in EFL classrooms. Besides, the present chapter expounds assessment of reading comprehension by identifying some tools and techniques to be utilized to meet this end. In closing, the relationship between CR and CT has been generously covered.

1.1. Definitions of Reading

Reading is one of the four skills EFL students find themselves obliged to acquire and master as it leads to academic success and helps them improve their language proficiency. Although the term "reading" is of a common use among people in general and EFL learners in particular, it proves to be a daunting task to give it a straightforward definition. Therefore, specialists in the area worked their way up to come up with a number of definitions that may possibly clear this term up a little bit better.

According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, reading is "to receive or take in the sense of (letters, symbols, etc.) especially by sight or touch" (n. d.). In other words, reading is all about understanding and making sense of the written material that we can be either seen or touched. This definition goes perfectly with Oxford dictionary, according to which, the verb "to read" means "to look at and understand the meaning of written or printed words or symbols" (n. d.).

Urquhart and Weir (1998) defined reading as: "the process of receiving and interpreting information encoded in language form via the medium of print" (p. 22). This entails that reading is a cognitive operation in which the reader receives encoded written information and tries to interpret written material by converting encoded information into understandable data in order to derive meaning, in which Sheeba and Hanif (2018) emphasize that "reading is a complex "cognitive process" of decoding symbols to construct or derive meaning". In line with this, Day and Bamford (1998) assert that reading is "the construction of meaning from a printed or written message" (p. 12). That is, reading is making an effort to construct understanding from written material.

A further definition was provided by Koda as cited in (Harestad, 2010, p. 13) who defines reading as: "converting print into language and then to the message intended by the author" (p. 1). Added to this, Nunan (1991 :70) (as cited in Habib, 2016 ,p. 132) state that reading is an active process as there is a lively, constant interaction between the elements comprising a text (letters, words, sentences, etc.) and the reader's understanding of the content of the text.

1.1.1. Reading VS Critical Reading

Reading is a complex, cognitive process that occurs in the brain in which the reader and text are in constant engagement; where the text conveys meaning and the reader tries to decode this meaning in which Aebersold and Field (1997) define reading as follows: "Reading is what happens when people look and at a text and assign meaning to the written symbols in that text" (p. 15). On his part, Baratta (2020) defines reading as: "the act of simply reading a text in front of you and nothing more (p. 11). This denotes that reading is a simple task, but it also implies that there is a type of reading which is a little bit effortful, that is critical reading. Wall and Wall (2005) define critical reading as follows: "Critical reading is a way of reading that will allow you to take a deeper look at literature" (p. 4). This denotes that reading critically is all about digging deep down; looking for deeper and hidden meanings that the naked eye cannot see.

Critical reading requires curiosity; that it, having the desire and willingness to know, understand and discover things. In fact, getting curious about something gets someone subconsciously to approach it with a critical mind in which Wall and Wall (2005) explain: "critical reading begins with one simple step: curiosity" (p. 4).

To push further, Wall and Wall (2005) assert that critical reading is analytical reading which includes thinking about phenomena, raising questions about the content to find answers

down the road. Hence, critical reading stems from analysis; that is, analyzing or breaking down the written material in front of you and then synthesizing it to suit the readers' opinions. In other words, critical reading implies having high critical thinking skills. Critical readers don't only read to derive meaning from the text given to them, rather they read by making use of their analysis, synthesis and evaluation abilities. That is, they filter the author's information to suit their background knowledge as well as judging the authors' ideas.

1.1.2. Passive and Active Reading

When one reads actively, he is present in the process of reading; his mind is alert and attentive of the material all the way to pick up everything that could possibly be picked up. When reading actively, the mind works nonstop to connect the dots and make sense out of a reading. According to Wall and Wall (2005), active reading is:

> The ability to be fully engaged with a book's content. You are affected by the material and conscious of how it is affecting you. You spend time making connections through images, dialogues and descriptions. You are on a hunt to determine the author's intentions (p. 13).

As for passive reading, Wall and Wall (2005) emphasize that:

> Passive reading is effortless reading. It is when you pick up a magazine or what we refer to as "light" reading. (think beach books, "chick lit", romance novels, etc.). You want the word to be easy, and the action to be fast and exciting or relaxed and simple. You don't want to have to think too much. You just want to sit back, relax and be entertained (p. 14).

Therefore, opposed to active reading, the level of activity in passive reading is lower than in active reading as the incentive behind passive reading is to relax and entertain and not to dig deeper into the written material.

1.2. Types of Reading

There are two types of reading: intensive and extensive reading. Put it another way, learners can read either intensively or extensively.

1.2.1. Extensive Reading

Extensive reading is a modern approach to teaching and learning reading .It is usually carried outside the classroom independently and for the sake of pleasure.

Grellet (1981) points out that extensive reading is "reading longer texts, usually for one's own pleasure. This is a fluency activity mainly involving global understanding" (p. 4). Put differently, extensive reading is reading for the sake of enjoyment. Similar to this view, Harmer (2007) emphasizes that "where possible, extensive reading should involve Reading for pleasure" (p. 99).

In the same vein, Mikuleckey and Jeffries (2007) ensure that extensive reading is:

Reading a lot at least one book every one or two weeks;

Choosing a book that is interesting to you;

No tests on comprehension or vocabulary;

Reading at your own pace (p. 3).

So, extensive reading is a much more relaxed, and enjoyable activity that focuses on overall comprehension and fluency over accuracy.

What is more, Harmer (2007) points out that extensive reading refers to "reading which students do often (but not exclusively) away from the classroom (p. 99). This goes to show that extensive reading is often done outside the classroom.

1.2.2 Intensive Reading

Intensive reading is a traditional approach to teaching. It is usually carried out inside the classroom under the guidance and supervision of the teacher. Intensive readers read texts carefully in order to get detailed comprehension of a text. In fact, this idea was emphasized by (Simensen 2007, as cited in Harestad, 2010, p. 160) defined intensive reading as: "reading carefully to remember the details and understand all the words and meanings" (p. 149).

Similar to this view, Ranandya (2007) states that intensive reading aims to "help students obtain detailed meaning from the text" (p. 135). That is, teachers get their students to read texts in a detailed manner by analyzing every sentence focusing on its grammar, vocabulary, etc.

1.3.   The Significance of Reading

Reading has proved to hold an essential place in both the FL context and in day-to-day life. Indeed, it is widely agreed upon that reading is of paramount significance to people in general and to EFL learners in particular. In fact, many public figures and reading researchers discussed the vital role reading plays in the life of readers.

From his speech, "Literacy and Education in a 21st-Century Economy", given to the American Library Association on June 25, 2005, the former American president Barak Obama

puts emphasis on the benefits of reading by stating that "Reading is the gateway skill that makes all other learning possible, from complex word problems and the meaning of our history to scientific discovery and technological proficiency". On their part, Pang et al (2003) assert that "learning to read is an important educational goal" (P. 6).

Pang et al (2003) further emphasize that for both children and adults, the ability to read:

> ➢ Opens up new worlds and opportunities.

> ➢ It enables us to gain new knowledge.

> ➢ Enjoy literature.

> ➢ Do everyday things that are part and parcel of modern life, such as, reading

the newspapers, job listings, instructional manuals, maps and so on (p. 6).

1.4. The Difference between L1 and L2 Reading

Although L1 and L2 reading share some common similarities, yet readers who read in their first language still differ from those who read in a second language in so many ways.

According to (Hudson, 2007 as cited in Harestad 2010, p. 22), first and second language readers differ in some important ways:

4. Most second language readers already know how to read in their first language. This skill can help or interfere with learning to read in a second language.

5. Reading in first languages usually begins with when the pupil already knows how to speak the language. Second language readers often begin reading without knowing much about either the grammar or vocabulary.

6. There is a great cognitive difference between a child that learns to read in his first language and an adult that learns to read a second language.

1.5. Reading Strategies

Reading strategies are techniques learners must master in order to enjoy their reading and take the most out of it. Scanning, previewing and predicting, skimming and summarizing are among these techniques (Mikulecky & Jeffries, 1996, 2007), Nuttal (1996).

1.5.1 Scanning:

Reading fast can be acquired through learning how to scan. Scanning is a rapid way of reading to look for a specific answer to a question one has in mind. Thus, the main focus becomes on that missing piece of information neglecting other unnecessary pieces of information in a text. Mikulecky and Jeffries (1996) define scanning as:

> Being very high-speed reading. When you scan, you have a question in mind. You don't have to read every word, only the words that answer your question. Practice in scanning will help you learn to skip over unimportant words so that you can read faster (p. 15).

1.5.2. Previewing and Predicting:

Students make use of previewing and predicting to gain more comprehension while reading as they prepare the reader's mind to better process the information and better comprehend the content to come.

Nuttal (1996) emphasizes the significance of predicting as "it activates schemata; that is, it calls into mind any experiences and associated knowledge that we already have about the topic

of the text" (p. 13). Similar to this view, previewing textbooks is of a paramount significance as it aids to discover the content of the book before- hand (Mikulecky & Jeffries, 2007). Mikulecky and Jeffries (2007) further point out:

> Previewing is a rapid kind of reading that allows you to get a general sense of what a passage, article or book is about and how it is organized. Your eyes scan quickly over the page looking for answers to general questions about the material (p. 75).

1.5.3. Skimming:

In order to get a general understanding of a text or any given material, readers should take advantage of skimming. Skimming is done to get the essence of a text. It helps extract the main idea or ideas of a given material. Mikulecky and Jeffries (2007) point out:

> Skimming is a kind of rapid reading for finding the general idea or gist of a passage or a book. In your daily or academic life, you probably skim many things: movie reviews, newspaper articles, and passages and websites that might be useful for a research paper (p. 170).

1.5.4. Summarizing:

Summarizing is common among students as they are often asked to summarize long texts in a reading session. "Summarizing is the retelling of the important parts of a passage in a much shorter form" (Mikulecky & Jeffries, 1996, p. 167). That is, when we summarize, we compress longer texts into shorter ones containing only the most significant pieces of information.

Added to this, both Mikulecky and Jeffries (1996) highlighted the significance of summarizing in the following points:

➢   To make sure you have understood something.

➢   To explain the sense of a passage to someone else.

➢   To review texts for examination (p. 167).

Mikulecky and Jeffries (1996) further outlined three steps to summarizing a paragraph. These steps are as follows:

Step1. Read the paragraph all the way through to be sure you understand it.

Step2. Check to see if the paragraph contains a topic sentence.

If the paragraph has a topic sentence, does it state the main idea of the paragraph?

If so, you can use the topic sentence as a summary. If the topic sentence is not a good statement of the main idea, write a summary which states the main idea.

Step3. Take out unnecessary words (p. 196).

1.6. Teaching Reading in EFL Classrooms

There is a plethora of techniques EFL teachers make use of to teach reading including: close procedure, brainstorming, summarizing technique (Kurniawan, 2018), the fluency development lesson (FDL) and assisted reading (Rasisnki et al., 2008).

1.6.1. Close Procedure

According to (Iskandarwassid and Sunendar 2008, as cited in Kurniawan, 2018, p. 6), close procedure is a technique used by teachers where students are given a passage that is missing

some words and learners, on their part, are asked to fill the missing words in. According to (Naseri, Assassi & Zoghi 2013, as cited in Kurniawan, 2018, p. 6), the purpose of this procedure is to identify learners comprehension from the reading operation, discover what systems students made use of to derive meaning from a text, test the students lexis and knowledge of a subject and. Last but not least, to encourage learners to monitor for learning and to think in a critical analytical way.

1.6.2. Brainstorming

It is an activity used by teachers in order to get students prepared for the topic to be read. According to (Iskandarwassid and Sunendar 2008, as cited in Kurniawan, 2018, p. 5-6), brainstorming helps making students recognize their background knowledge about the topic to be read and discussed.

1.6.3. Summarizing Technique

According to (Iskandarwassid and Sunedar, as cited in Kurniawan, 2018, p. 6), the summarizing technique is used to summarize what learners have already read to help understand the main ideas discussed in the text. Teachers, on their part, monitor and evaluate the learners understanding based on their summarization. In the same line, Abualigah et al (2020) further state that summarizing is: "the process of creating a summary of a certain document that contains the most important information of the original one, the purpose of it is to get a summary of the main points of the document" (p. 1). In other words, this technique focuses on getting the most important pieces of information and leave out the unnecessary ones.

1.6.4. The Fluency Development Lesson (FDL)

It is a direct fluency model developed by (Rasinski, Padak, Linek and Sturtevant 1994, as cited in Rasinski, Homan and Biggs, 2008, p. 12) to aid struggling readers who have fluency problems and have a hard time reading. In this model, the teacher gathers up with learners for about ten to fifteen minutes to read a text. The teacher models reading the text and then asks the students to read it after her the same way repeatedly. So, it could be said that the FDL is based on the iterative reading practice.

It is noteworthy that the FDL utilizes short rhythmical texts, namely poems and song lyrics instead of taking texts from basic reading programs (Zimmerman et al., 2019). Zimmerman et al (2019) further explain that "A full FDL lesson includes modeling, shared text, choral reading, discussion, paired reading, performance, word work and word study" (p. 9). That is, readers have a shared text to work on, discuss the content of it with teacher, rehear it several times and performing it.

1.6.5. Assisted Reading

Also called paired, neurological, impress, audio-assisted, or duolog reading. Assisted reading, according to (Rasinski & Hoffman, 2003, as cited in Rasinski, Homan and Biggs, 2008, p. 7) has positive impacts on students' fluency. In assisted reading, the student reads a passage from a text while listening to a fluent reading of the same text at the same time. In fact, teachers get their learners to engage in assisted reading by setting them up a listening center in which learners are supposed to read while listening to a pre-recorded version of the reading.

Assisted repeated reading implies the repetitive reading of short passages from a text many times. It helps to improve language fluency (Chang & Millet, 2013) as well as vocabulary

acquisition (Liu & Todd, 2014, as cited in Serrano & Huang, 2018, p. 1). In other words, the assisted repeated reading technique helps disfluent readers go from not being able to read smoothly out loud to being able to read in a rapid, prosodic manner.

Apart from improving fluency, assisted reading has proven to help with vocabulary acquisition. In fact, (Webb and Chang 2015, as cited in Serrano & Huang, 2018, p. 2) conducted a study on the impact of assisted reading on vocabulary learning with Taiwanese secondary school students. The results indicated an increase of vocabulary gain with a percentage of 39% after adopting the assisted reading technique.

1.7.   Assessment of Reading Comprehension

Assessing reading comprehension proves to be a daunting task for researchers since reading it is an internal, mental process that cannot be measured physically. Thus, reading researchers directed their attention towards finding ways to assess readers' comprehension of a text.

1.7.1. Types of Assessment

Assessment is a major part of both teaching and learning. As a matter of fact, it is used in educational settings for several purposes in order to meet certain ends among of which "assessing to encourage learning, assessing to monitor progress and provide feedback, assessing to diagnose problems, and assessing to measure proficiency" (Nation, 2008, p. 75). Yet, the main purpose behind assessment is the improvement of both teaching and learning.

Of note, there are two major types of assessment that teachers make use to guarantee high quality of teaching and learning which are formative assessment and summative assessment.

1.7.1.1. Formative Assessment

Formative assessment is a type of ongoing, daily assessment of students' performance in order to continuously improve their learning through quizzes, questions or even assignments. Black and William (2010) defined formative assessment as : "Activities undertaken by teachers_ and by their students in assessing themselves _ that provide information to be used as feedback to modify teaching and learning activities" (p. 82). That is, formative assessment gives both teachers and students feedback that they should take into account to upgrade learning and teaching.

In fact, the aim of formative assessment is not only to grade the students' performance, but also to better and progress the performance of student, so the main focus of formative assessment is improving students' learning. Wiggins (1998) explains the same idea by stating that "the aim of [formative] assessment is primarily to educate and improve students' performance, not merely to audit it" (p. 7).

1.7.1.2. Summative Assessment

Summative assessment, on the other hand, is utilized to show what learners have attained from the classroom instruction at the end of a semester or school year. Habib (2016) points out that "summative assessment provides evidence of what learners got at the end of a specific term of learning" (p. 130). By way of explanation, summative assessment is product oriented as it focuses on the marks and grades of learners instead of their progress.

1.7.2. Tasks to Assess Reading Comprehension

(Sally and Katie 2008, as cited in Habib, 2016, p. 137-139) outlined the tasks used to assess reading comprehension.

Yes-No Questions

This type of questions is answered by yes or no. However, these questions may be tricky because they cannot detect the readers' comprehension all the way as some correct answers can be generated by chance. As such, other types of questions are recommended to accompany yes or no questions so that the students' reading comprehension is fully guaranteed.

1.7.2.1.   True or False Questions

This type of questions is common among most learners. In fact, learners are given a series of statements concerning the text, and they are supposed to decide whether these statements are true or false according to the given text.

1.7.2.2.   Matching

Matching is less common compared to the aforementioned tasks. In a matching task, learners are asked, for instance, to match a description to the appropriate paragraph or even match words to their synonyms and meanings.

1.7.2.3.   WH Questions

WH questions are questions that begin with wh such as:"where","why","who", "when", and "how". WH questions are helpful as they provide learners with a literal comprehension of a text and help boost their critical thinking skills by making evaluations and personal predictions.

1.7.2.4.   Open-Ended Questions

These questions are commonly used in standardized assessments. They aim at assessing the learners' ability to make inferences from the text. In this type of questions, learners are asked various questions in an attempt to assess their memory and understanding of the text. However, it

is worth mentioning that form of assessment has some shortcomings as learners have to generate verbal or written answers which may underestimate their comprehension because of their language deficits.

1.7.2.5.   Multiple-Choice Questions

They are the most familiar to learners. In this type of questions, learners are given a list of options, often, three or four options and only one option is right and learners are asked to pick out the right option from the list. The suggested choices can be in the form of statements, a question with answers, or incomplete statements with a choice of phrases and words. This type of reading task is the most familiar to learners. It is essential to have statements corresponding to specific paragraphs or sections of the text, but there may be statements that assess comprehension of the entire text.

1.7.2.6.   Gapped Texts

This type of reading comprehension test is usually used to test grammar and vocabulary. It includes texts or diagrams from which a single word, phrase, sentence, or paragraph is deleted.

In some tasks, learners must choose what should fill in the gap using their own words. While in some others, they are given number of choice items to pick out from to fill in the gap.

1.8.   The Relationship between Critical Reading and Critical Thinking

Over the past decades, developing critical thinking skills has received much attention from education experts as the world is in much need of critical thinkers nowadays. In fact, it is said that critical reading can play a vital role in ameliorating critical thinking skills in learners.

Ever since critical thinking has been in use in EFL context, there have been debates regarding its conceptualization. Simply, critical thinking is said to be the cognitive process that entails someone's mind to think critically, using a set of skills such as analyzing, synthesizing and evaluating for the sake of making connections and generating logical ideas. (Ennis, 1984).

According to Tomitch (2000):"Reading critically means going beyond the individual words in a text, far beyond the literal meaning of sentences and even beyond text integration" (p. 11) as cited in (Maria, 2011, p. 18). This entails that reading critically in not only about decoding symbols and deriving meaning from text, rather it is applying one's logic into the text to be read which consists of deeper cognitive thinking abilities. Relevant to this, Reichl (2009) further posits that "reading is not an isolable skill in itself but it is based on more general thinking abilities that are an integral part of all cognitive activity" (p. 33). According to Tankeersley (2003), to read critically, readers make use of the upper levels of Bloom's Taxonomy being; analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Readers break down the pieces of information being presented to them (analysis), put them back together (synthesis) and lastly, making judgements based on what they think is wrong or right (evaluation).

Aditiara et al (n.d.) investigated the correlation between critical reading and critical thinking among 27 students at Surakarta University. The results showed that there is a positive correlation between critical think skill and critical reading skill.

In light of the above mentioned discussion, it seems evident that critical reading is the doorway to the amelioration of critical thinking skills, since it is proven to be of great help in improving EFL students' thinking skills as well as their academic outcomes. Ergo, it can be

undoubtedly said that there is a significant lucid correlation between critical reading and critical thinking skills.

Conclusion

To wrap this up, this chapter aims at walking you through a rich literature review on the concept of reading by identifying its definition, types; being intensive and extensive reading and its significance among EFL learners. Following this, there is coverage of the difference between reading in L1 and L2. Furthermore, some staple techniques for both teaching and assessing reading are equally touched upon. At last, there is a discussion about the correlation between CR and CT. By way of conclusion, this chapter attempts to precisely allocate a rich theoretical background about reading so that it can pave the way for the second chapter, which mainly revolves around the development of critical thinking skills.

CHAPTER TWO: Critical Thinking

Introduction

For the time being, critical thinking is conceived as the salient attribute to the 21st century Higher Education. It has become one of the most popular skills to integrate in EFL/ESL classes alongside language production (Speaking and Writing) and receptive skills (Listening and Reading). As a matter of fact, considering the concept of critical thinking as an effective pedagogical component at college; which helps in attaining optimal outcomes, is no doubt necessary, peculiarly in the present world with the continuous progress of technology. Therefore, fostering critical thinking among EFL learners has become a must that should be never delayed.

This chapter sets out to review the literature that revolves around critical thinking skills. In this line of thought, the chapter begins with introducing the concept of critical thinking through providing a historical background of it. Then, it started to explore the conceptualization of critical thinking as a multifaceted process through reviewing the approaches to understanding its nature. Moreover, it accounts for the importance of critical thinking in various domains of people's lives, being in the classroom, in the workplace or in life in general. Further, light is shed on six major stages through which critical thinking is to be developed. In addition, the chapter highlights nine main standards of critical thinking which underpin this research over and above. In the same vein, different approaches to teaching critical thinking skills in the EFL classroom are examined for the purpose of encouraging critical thinking skills development. To finish the current study, focus moves towards a comprehensive framework for the assessment of critical thinking skills in the EFL context through using effective practices in the way for improving it.

2.1. Historical Overview of Critical Thinking

Thinking is the foundation of all cognitive activities or processes and is unique to all human beings. It is man's peculiar trait that characterizes him from the rest of living species. Being aware of this privilege, he started to use it to investigate the world around him. The birth of critical thinking can be traced back to 2500 years ago to the era of the Greek philosopher Socrates. Socrates' method of inquiry known as "Socratic Questioning" is deemed as the threshold of a systematic and rational mode of thinking that is developed to become what is now called critical thinking. Etymologically speaking, the word "critical" is derived from two Greek roots; "Kriticos" which means "discerning judgment" and "kriterion" meaning "standards". (Jones, 2020). On the other hand, Halpern (2003) stated that "thinking is the manipulation or transformation of some internal representation" (p. 84). That is to say, once we start persisting thinking in our minds, we carry all the knowledge inside in order to achieve some objective. In the same line, thinking's ability is considered to be the fundamental state of all human beings because all of us need to achieve an objective.

For a better understanding of critical thinking history, hereunder are some recent definitions proposed in the last forty years by many scholars. They are presented in chronological order covering the era of 1980s.

According to (Dumke 1980, as cited in Jones, 2019), critical thinking is the concept of analysis that enables learners to analyze and criticize logically. It requires the knowledge of evidence that can lead to advocate ideas providing factual judgments. Critical thinking is considered to be the language of logic last combines the induction and deduction altogether. The major role of critical thinking is gathering information from ambiguous situations and statements,

and there is no conclusion drawn endless it is based on sound reasoning inductively and deductively. Thus, conclusions are built on factual judgments.

Paul (1981) in his turn provided a definition of critical thinking which looks rather different from others of scholars. This definition is quite interesting because it draws attention to a merit of critical thinking on which teachers and researchers in the field seem to be highly agreed, that developing one's critical thinking ability can be accomplished only through thinking about your thinking, known as metacognition. Subsequently, learners of critical thinking should be taught the skills of questioning, contradicting, making assumptions, investigating, identifying and so on a regular basis. That eventually becomes the natural habit of one towards achieving critical thinking.

Pushing further, Christenbury and (Kelly 1983, as cited in Jones, 2019) emphasize that asking questions is the soul of critical thinking. The goal of such questions should be based on skill reinforcement. De facto, critical thinking is a process that focuses on skills enhancement built strategically to reflect an attitude of its users eventually. This process entails interaction between teachers and students' questions. Accordingly, teacher-student relationship is regarded as the ultimate healthy balance.

Last but not least, Ennis (1984) is regarded as one of the most famous contributors to critical thinking with his view on it, which has gained wide currency in the field. He pointed out that critical thinking is a cognitive process associated with the use of the brain, referring to reasoning and the use of logic. In other words, it is the identification of a problem that leads to assumption creation and testing its consistency and validity. Each assumption should be based on clarity and logic behind it filling the gap of uncertainty.

In a nutshell, it is worth highlighting that the number of thinkers who developed the notion of critical thinking since the 1940s till today is massive. Notwithstanding its extensive use by many authors and reckoned as significant skill in the 21st century, accurate definition of critical thinking remains a moot issue.

2.2. Issue Raising

How to think rather than what to think has been a subject of research among educational psychologists and philosophers. Regardless to the different views have been set forth as an endeavor to define critical thinking, scholars have not come to a consensus on the meaning the concept refers to. As a matter of fact, critical thinking is no doubt broad. In the few past centuries, critical thinking has basically been associated with two main fundamental academic disciplines, which are Philosophy and Psychology. Subsequently, scholars as Sternberg (1986); have adopted a third discipline in which critical thinking should be implemented in, which is education. These three academic disciplines have come to approach critical thinking from their own perspective and germinated definitions that reflect their respective concerns (Lai, 2011). The three approaches are elucidated more fully below.

2.2.1. The Philosophical Approach

Traditionally, the writings of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle were regarded as the synopses of the philosophical approach. Lately, the works of Richard Paul, John Dewey, Robert Ennis and many others have shaped this movement through the significant contribution they made to (Lai, 2011).

This approach highlights the idea of the ideal critical thinker and the merits and qualities this person should possess, and points out that this ideal type should both best think and

perform under the best of circumstances (Lai, 2011). Along the same line, Paul (1992) accounts for critical thinking as "the perfections of thought" (p. 9). By way of illustration, he asserted that critical thinking embodies the ideal thinking standards requisite in a particular subject. This had lead Sternberg (1986) to criticize this approach arguing that the conceptualization of critical thinking is far from being authentic and does not always correspond to reality.

Over and above that, the two philosophers Ennis (1985) and Facione (2000) view the concept of critical thinking from identical angles as they affirm its prerequisite for any action one embarks or any belief one is attached to. They define critical thinking as a "reflective and reasonable thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do" (Ennis, 1985, p. 45) and as "judging in a reflective way what to do or what to believe" (Facione, 2000, p. 61). In explanation, critical thinking entails being reasonable in making decisions about our actions or beliefs. The definitions also include creative thinking, making assumptions and find possible solutions. It is concerned with reviewing things from different angles.

In addition to the foregoing, Lipman (1988) expounds critical thinking as a "skillful, responsible thinking that facilitates good judgement because it 1) relies upon criteria, 2) is self-correcting, and 3) is sensitive to context" (p. 39). To put it another way, he holds that critical thinking is the ability of thinking outside the box and even going beyond what other people have thought, as well as the ability of making sound judgements.

All in all, it cannot be denied that the philosophical approach resort to focus more on the ideal critical thinker and the qualities they need to possess such as "inquisitiveness", "flexibility", "open-mindedness" and "fair-mindedness" (Facione, 1990).

2.2.2. The Cognitive Psychological Approach

As opposed to the philosophical approach, the cognitive psychological approach varies from it in two perspectives. Primarily, the former draws attention on the ideal critical thinker standards under which the ideal critical thinker has traits to be displayed. The latter, conversely, sheds lights upon the types of actions or behaviors critical thinkers are able to perform. Secondarily, as put by Sternberg (1986), rather than focusing on how people should think, those working on the philosophical approach stress the way people could think under optimal circumstances (Lai, 2011).

Some of the definitions of critical thinking reflecting the cognitive psychological approach (as cited in Lai, 2011) are offered by Sternberg (1986) and Halpern (1998). According to Sternberg(1986), critical thinking is the "mental process, strategies and representations people use to solve problems, make decisions, and learn new concepts" (p. 3). In explanation, critical thinking skills require learners to activate their cognitive abilities to find out new ways and methods for resolving problems and making felicitous decisions. On her part, Halpern(1998) maintains that critical thinking is "the use of those cognitive skills or strategies that increase the probability of a desirable outcome" (p. 450). Upon analysis, when faced with complex situations, cognitive skills are required; mainly interpretation, inference, analysis and the like. That is, the best thinking skills are activated in situations that entail the use of the brain.

Notwithstanding the difference given in their wordings, the experts of this school view critical thinking similarly, as being the cognitive process the critical thinker applies deliberately in order to achieve good outcomes.

2.2.3. The Educational Approach

The implementation of critical thinking into the field of education took place in 1956 by a number of educationalists led by Benjamin Bloom who best represents this approach. This taxonomy known as "Bloom's Taxonomy of the Cognitive Domain" and which is deemed to be the most widely used reference in the educational field ever since, when it comes to assessing higher-order thinking skills. In this regard, the hierarchical taxonomy best exemplifies critical thinking as comprising of six main levels. The three lowest levels (Knowledge, Comprehension, and Evaluation) are Lower-Order Thinking Skills whereas the three highest levels (Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation) are Higher-Order Thinking Skills (Kennedy et al., 1991, as cited in Lai, 2011). In this respect, a concise caption is sets forth of the six levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. By way of illustration, they are elucidated as follows.

2.2.3.1. Knowledge

Knowledge is regarded as the foundational cognitive skill that deals with recalling or retrieving pieces of information from one's memory. This skill can be assessed in class through multiple ways, such as short-answer questions or multiple choice questions (Brookhart, 2010).

2.2.3.2. Comprehension

Comprehension doesn't require the learners to only recall information, but also to be able to use their prior knowledge, known as schemas, so that new information is incorporated. At this level, students are capable of paraphrasing a given context using their own words, as well as comparing and contrasting different items with other similar ones (Adams, 2015).

2.2.3.3. Application

As suggested by its appellation, application calls for the applying of prior acquired knowledge like perceptions, concepts or theories the students use in order to suit new information and experiences they encounter in their learning process (Chen, 2016).

2.2.3.4. Analysis

As put by Adams (2015), it is the gateway to critical thinking and the start of the higher levels of the taxonomy. Analysis, hence, requires students to break the information down into its constituents to determine the relationship between them. Besides, the ability to differentiate between what is fact and what his opinion is highly needed along with the claims a upon which an argument is built.

2.2.3.5. Synthesis

This skill requires the ability to combine parts together to constitute a new whole. For doing so, production and creativity are both demanded (Brookhart, 2010).

2.2.3.6. Evaluation

Evaluation is deemed as the highest level in Bloom's Taxonomy, shaping the pinnacle of it. It entails students to make judgements following a set of standards (Chen, 2016).

2.3. The Significance of Critical Thinking

Critical thinking as being the prominent 21st Century skills, has undoubtedly a vital role to play in various life domains. It would be of benefit to state the three main domains provided below.

2.3.1. Critical Thinking in the Classroom

Critical thinking skills are one of the most crucial skills that should be possessed by students. To begin with, critical thinking helps in enhancing students' autonomy in the sense that they take the ownership of their learning process, through questioning and examining the validity of any information they are exposed to. Put differently, they become able to judge and assess a given information with no reliance on their teacher. Furthermore, when it comes to arguments, they are qualified for not merely understanding others' arguments, but for critically evaluating those arguments as well. Then, as a decisive point, they better their academic performance through developing and supporting their own arguments (Bassham et al., 2011).

To back up this point, Qing et al (2013) conducted a study to explore the critical thinking importance for college English learners. In this regard, he indicates that students who think critically, tend to be more confident, self reliance and come out with rational conclusions. In addition to the foregoing, it goes without saying that EFL teachers are called upon to uphold critical thinking through pushing their learners to actively participate in their learning process.

To this end, substantially, critical thinking needs to be ingrained in EFL students alongside the teaching of core academic subjects so as to prepare students to meet the demands of highly technological and globalised world.

2.3.2. Critical Thinking in the Workplace

For the time being, employees are characterized to be critical thinkers foremost for making the best decisions, most often. In this line of thought, it is important to make decisions by carefully weighing them based on information that has been thoroughly analyzed, evaluated and searched for the most reasonable solution. Besides, using your critical thinking skills to act

reasonably will define you as a problem solver. The only thing that matters is to which extent an employee possesses critical thinking skills, and the extent to which he or she is capable to cope with different problems they encounter. Accounting for the qualities of such employees, they are likely to be set apart as leaders, because they provide their co-workers with creative ideas and the like (Bassham et al., 2011).

2.3.3. Critical Thinking in Life

According to Bassham et al (2011), as human beings, there are three different ways in our lives in which critical thinking is clearly shown up. Firstly, it keeps away people from making wrong personal decisions by critically and fairly analyzing those decisions before taking a step towards doing so. Secondly, they contend that critical thinking helps encouraging democracy arguing that misunderstandings and different issues arise from poor thinking. Thirdly, critical thinking skills are worthy of studying and developing in one's own life as most people, most of times tend to believe everything they are told without questionning its reliability. Critical thinking allows for the testing for the validity of what is both written and spoken.

2.4. Critical Thinking Developmental Stages

After discussing the significance of critical thinking, the focus shifts to the main stages for developing this skill. There emerges a necessity for investigating these stages which govern the center of critical thinking. The theory developed by Elder and Paul (2010) is based on twenty years of research. They note that most educators are not aware of the stages of critical thinking development that students have to pass through in order to become accomplished critical thinkers, arguing that critical thinking is not an innate skill humans are born with. Accordingly,

this theory approaches the human mind from an intellectual stance. The six stages of critical thinking development are briefly elucidated as follows.

2.4.1. Stage One: The Unreflective Thinker

Unreflective thinkers are mainly unaware of the vital role that critical thinking plays in their lives, they lack the ability to assess their thinking, and consequently fail to ameliorate it. Students can become University graduates and still be unreflective thinkers (Hall et al., 2011).

2.4.2. Stage Two: The Challenged Thinker

Unlike unreflective thinkers, the challenged thinkers are aware of the significant role that critical thinking plays in their lives and that deficiencies in their thinking can bring about serious obstacles. On the other hand, they become aware that reflective thinking is required to improve one's thinking. Yet, their thinking is still limited.

2.4.3. Stage Three: The Beginning Thinker

For beginning thinkers, they are able to recognize the problems they have in their own thinking, accordingly, they actively start making attempts at improving it. Notwithstanding their attempts to make their thinking in constant progress, they do, still like the ability to form a systematic plan to resolve their thinking issues.

2.4.4. Stage Four: The Practicing Thinker

Practicing thinkers generally start getting an idea of what is needed to take charge of their own thinking. They begin practicing better thinking habits regularly and analyzing their thinking process in several areas of their lives. Nevertheless, their insights into deeper levels of

thought is still limited. Along the same line, Boyle (2014) points out that this kind of thinkers develop different skills that will help in rectifying their thinking problems.

2.4.5. Stage Five: The Advanced Thinker

At this stage, advanced thinkers establish good thinking habits of thoughts and they systematically look for improvement. They also start actively and deeply analyzing their own thinking in all domains of their lives. Furthermore, their insight into deeper levels of thoughts became outgrown. They are, however, still incompetent to think at this high level permanently across all domains of their lives (Boyle, 2014).

2.4.6. Stage Six: The Accomplished Thinker

As its name suggests, accomplished thinkers are highly skilful and can systematically take charge over thinking. They are totally in control of how they rethink and process information. Moreover, accomplished thinkers constantly analyze their thinking at deep levels of thought at all areas of their lives, seeking to reach the level of conscious realization. Consequently, good habits of thought become their second nature. Being the highest stage of critical thinking development, it takes more than what extensive effort and hard work are for students to become accomplished thinkers.

Given the above, Elder and Paul (2010) state that it should be a target for all students to progress through these six stages, so as to become critical thinkers. In the same line, they urge on the responsibility of teachers to assist their students through these developmental stages, allowing them to be an active and regulated part in their way to developing critical thinking.

2.5. Universal Intellectual Standards of Critical Thinking

Paul and Elder (2013) hold that critical thinking is disciplined thinking governed by clear intellectual standards that should be applied to thinking to ensure its quality. In order to be learned, they should explicitly be taught. Among the most important of these intellectual standards are clarity, accuracy, precision, relevance, depth, breadth, logic, fairness and significance. They are discussed below in brief.

2.5.1. Clarity

Clarity is a criterion that facilitates critical thinking. It is important to clearly understand what other people are saying before evaluating. Simply, when talking, the uttered terms need to be well-defined so as the meaning can be comprehensibly grasped. However, it is not easy to comprehend others' utterances or ideas. Critical thinkers make this possible through self-understanding of thought (Bassham et al., 2011).

2.5.2. Accuracy

Accuracy is another standard of critical thinkers and is undoubtedly essential to critical thinking in the sense that critical thinkers look for accurate and valid information in order to get closer to the truth. To put it differently, a good decision can solely be generated if the information is accurate. Hence, if the accuracy standard is supposed to be attained, decisions made should always be as informed as possible (Bassham et al., 2011).

2.5.3. Precision

In regard to precision, it has something to do with the primacy of precision by carefully observing so that everything can be noticed. Being precise is to give details necessary

for someone letting them understand what you precisely meant. Precise answers must be available for precise questions (Bassham et al., 2011).

2.5.4. Relevance

As suggested by its appellation, relevance means that the information and ideas being discussed must be related to the topic discussed. It mainly deals with how an argument can be strengthened; this is possible and only by providing relevant ideas. Thus, the ability to keep your argument relevant to the topic being discussed is a proof that one is undoubtedly a critical thinker (Bassham et al., 2011).

2.5.5. Depth

Going beyond the surface and reading between the lines make the argument thorough. Complexities and interrelationships need to be figured out so as to say an argument has depth.

2.5.6. Breadth

Breadth requires taking into account the additional viewpoints, put differently, all perspectives should be considered.

2.5.7. Logic

As its name suggests, for an argument to be logical, conclusions are to be drawn from evidence. To put it differently, reasons given must be correct in the sense that they are based on accurate beliefs. This entails consistency in thinking.

2.5.8. Fairness

Fairness implies the treating of all relevant points alike with no reference to one's own interests. Objectivity is the soul of fairness as it pushes us to stay from bias and be impartial toward all sides.

2.5.9. Significance

The focus goes for the most important ideas and no crucial facts should be left out. When everything essential is taken into consideration, there is significance.

Given the aforementioned, it is worth noting that these standards must go in parallel with our thinking because to think critically require having command of these standards. Along the same line, teachers should assist students learning them by asking questions which subsequently guide them to better and better reasoning.

2.6. Approaches to Teaching Critical Thinking Skills in the EFL Classes

Many critical thinking researchers state that critical thinking skills can be taught in a stand alone subject or course. Others, however, believe that it should be developed implicitly within a given subject (Abrami et al., 2015). Accordingly, those researchers categorize four main instructional approaches for developing critical thinking and which have been long of use for many researchers in their studies. These approaches are outlined as follows.

2.6.1. General Approach

According to Ennis (1989), the general approach entails direct and explicit instruction in teaching critical thinking skills solely; as a separate course. Thinking skills are developed from subject or content and are taught separately in the class. Thinking principles are explicitly taught

separate from course contents. It is argued that this general instruction taught explicitly is the most effective way to teach him critical thinking (Prawat, 1991).

2.6.2. Infusion Approach

This approach entails critical thinking to be infused into subject area content; that is to say, critical thinking is explicitly taught within the context of the subject matter. The infusion approach requires students to have a deep understanding of the subject content. Therefore, they are encouraged to practice and develop critical thinking explicitly through well-structured distraction (Bensley & Spero, 2014).

In order to successfully achieve an infusion approach in the classroom, teachers are required to focus on making thinking significant; by providing their students with as many opportunities as possible for the sake of developing their thinking skills.

2.6.3. Immersion Approach

Similar to the infusion approach, the immersion approach also attempts at integrating critical thinking into subjects content instruction, however, critical thinking skills development is not made explicit. Subject matter instruction is said to be delivered in a thought-provoking way. Put differently, students are likely to acquire these skills naturally as a result of the engaging with the subject content (Tiruneh et al., 2014).

2.6.4. Mixed Approach

The mixed approach entails the mixture of the general approach together with either the infusion or the immersion approach. On the one hand, students are required to engage in a separate class that teaches general critical thinking. On the other hand, they should be involved in

subject specific thinking instruction with either explicit or implicit instruction of critical thinking (Eldridge, 2010).

Altogether, if teachers are to be successful in encouraging the development of critical thinking skills, explicit instruction in critical thinking should be integrated as a part of the curriculum, whether that instruction is to be stand-alone course, infused and mixed into subject matter content, or all.

2.7. Assessing Critical Thinking Skills in EFL Classroom

Longstanding, educators have always seen critical thinking as a desirable educational outcome that deemed requisite for college students. Thereupon, in order to assess higher-order thinking for EFL students particularly, various practices need to be integrated in the EFL classroom. The most important of which are stated in short.

2.7.1. Pedagogical Practices

To involve critical thinking in the classroom, pedagogical practices include three main activities, which are the analysis of complex matter into its simplest elements, adoption of a critical attitude via questioning and evaluating, and presentation of a persuasive and reasoned argument (Gunawardena & Petraki, 2014).

2.7.2. Questions

According to Şeker and Kömür (2008), questions play a crucial role in enhancing learners' critical thinking skills at all levels of education. Teachers and students use them as one of the fundamental tools to achieve pedagogical purposes. In this regard, teachers should adopt questioning techniques that increase students' motivation to analyze, inquire and solve problems.

2.7.3. Discussions and Dialogues

They have been regarded central to teaching critical thinking. Engaging students in dialogical thinking is supported by the Vygotskian perspective which holds that the development of language and thought result from social interaction. Coping with this context, pair- work and group-work are designed to make students collaborate to complete certain tasks. In these tasks, they provide assistance to each other using a variety of techniques. These techniques, therefore, enhance their critical thinking abilities (Şeker & Kömür, 2008).

2.7.4. Problem-Solving Activities

Learners need problem solving activities that can stimulate cognitive growth and development, for instance, Moral Dilemma (Şeker & Kömür, 2008).

2.7.5. Developing a Democratic Classroom Environment

In the context of teacher-student relationship, Gunawardena and Petraki (2014) point out that is should friendly so that students feel at ease to expressing their thoughts and feeling with no need for being anxious or hesitated.

2.7.6. Accommodating Students' Culture in Learning Activities

As put by Gunawardena and Petraki (2014), brainstorming is one way to activate students' critical thinking. One example of doing this is asking students about "The Independence Day". Many of them would think only about a description of it, but they should be encouraged to criticize its importance by developing their own reactions to this historical event.

2.7.7. Encouraging Reading

Accounting for the merits of reading, one cannot fail to notice that it is of paramount significance in developing students' critical thinking along with enhancing their educational outcomes.

In a nutshell, it goes without saying that the assessment of critical thinking in the EFL classroom ought to be every teacher's interest in the field of TEFL.

Conclusion

This chapter is oriented towards reviewing the literature on critical thinking through providing a clear image about the nature of its conceptualization and the significance role it plays in different domains of humans' life. It further explores the main stages students go through in their way of developing their higher-order thinking skills. Moreover, it investigates the main standards of critical thinking along with the approaches used to teaching it. In closing, the chapter attempts at offering a detailed description of the different activities used to assess critical thinking in the EFL classroom.

CHAPTER THREE: Fieldwork

Introduction

As every research paper should set out a theoretical part which provides the literature review of the topic at issue, it has to be supported with a practical one which is the fieldwork investigation through which the hypothesis is put into testing. This chapter is devoted to describe the methodology used in the practical part by gathering the information needed to answer the research questions and to reach the aims of the study. Furthermore, the current chapter aims at offering an overall description of the major elements that are relevant to the fieldwork, including putting back the prime aims of the study, the sample and the data collection tools. More importantly, this chapter accounts for the description, administration and analysis of both the students' questionnaire and the teachers' questionnaire. Moreover, based on the main findings that are obtained from this study, some major limitations besides some recommendations for both teachers and future researchers are presented.

3.1. Aims of the Research

The present study attempts to investigate the effect of critical reading on critical thinking skills in the EFL context. It displays to examine whether both critical reading and critical thinking are taken into account in EFL classrooms. Likewise, this research endeavors to explore the impact of critical reading on boosting EFL learners' critical thinking skills.

3.2. Sample

The present research is carried out at the University of Mila, Institute of Letters and Languages, Department of Foreign Languages. The population with which the current study is concerned involves students of English and EFL teachers. As far as students are concerned, they

are third year LMD students in the academic year "2021/2022". The reason behind deciding on working with third year students is their familiarity with foreign language learning at university and the likelihood of their having been exposed to all modules which require thinking critically in order to achieve satisfactory academic outcomes, and their awareness of the importance of reading in general and critical reading in particular in developing their higher thinking abilities. Out of a population that consists of 211 students who are distributed on 8 groups; among these, 80 students were randomly selected as representatives of the population. Regarding teachers, six of them were selected from the whole population. These teachers have been teaching a variety of modules (Oral Expression, Written Expression, TEFL, Psycho-pedagogy, ESP, Methodology, Grammar, Civilization ...etc.) during their EFL teaching experience at university.

3.3.   Data Collection Tools

In an attempt to investigate the role of critical reading in developing EFL students' critical thinking, two questionnaires are used as a data gathering tool, administered to both teachers and students so as to obtain the necessary data. Both informants, teachers and students, were expected to share their attitudes about reading as skill in the EFL classroom and its contribution to improving students' critical thinking skills.

3.4.   The Students' Questionnaire

3.4.1.   Description of the Students' Questionnaire

The students' questionnaire endeavors to explore the contribution of critical reading to the promotion of critical thinking skills among EFL students. Hence, the questionnaire was addressed to 80 third year EFL students at Mila University. Of note, third year EFL students were intentionally selected to be our sample as it is assumed that they are exposed to some type of

reading knowledge implicitly in the module of Written Expression as well as Literature, in which they get to read novels and discuss them. The respondents are informed about the significance of their answers in the progress of the research, and that their responses are intended to be utilized in study purposes merely. Furthermore, students are also informed that filling in the questionnaire remains anonymous so that they provide truthful answers and express their opinions freely.

The questionnaire is split up into 4 main sections made of 25 questions ranging from open-ended questions, close-ended and multiple choice questions.

The first section is entitled "Background information"; it contains three questions aiming at discovering some aspects of students' background information such as the time spent in learning English, whether they are motivated to learn this language or no and their English level estimate.

Subsequently, the second section, Critical Reading, is made up of 10 questions in an attempt to investigate the students' perceptions about reading, and the significance of critical reading particularly. The first two questions seek to determine whether students are interested in the reading skill and their frequency in doing so. The third one is meant to discover the type of literature they mostly prefer to read. The fourth question attempts to investigate students' purpose behind reading. As for the fifth one, it is intended to know how often do teachers support their students to read. Further, the sixth question is set to know whether students face difficulties while reading in English, followed by a seventh one which is devised to bring into play the most prominent difficulties that students encounter when reading in English. The eighth question endeavors to examine the reasons for students' difficulties in their reading process. Finally, the last two questions are designed to highlight students' views regarding the development of the

reading skill and the significance of critical reading.

Following that, the third section entitled "Critical Thinking" comprises seven questions attempting to emphasize the second variable in the present study. Initially, this section begins with the first question that aims at exploring whether students are familiar with the concept of critical thinking; students who reply approvingly are asked to define it in brief. The third question invites students to rate their own level in terms of thinking critically. The fourth question is concerned with whether teachers draw their students' attention to such skill. The fifth question is meant to examine students' perceptions when they are given an idea. As regards the sixth question, it seeks to know students' attitudes towards studying critical thinking as explicit as the other four skills. Bringing the third section into its close, the seventh question sheds light on students' viewpoints about the qualities any critical thinker should own.

The last section "Critical Reading and Critical Thinking" is regarded as the major section in the students' questionnaire. It is composed of five questions in order to investigate the students' awareness of the impact of critical reading on the promotion of critical thinking. To begin with, students are asked to appraise the extent to which critical reading affects critical thinking. The second question aims at exploring whether or not reading contributes in improving students' critical thinking. Next, the third question seeks to acquaint students' opinions about critical reading in developing their critical thinking skills. Then, the fourth question is concerned with examining the skills used by students whenever they are exposed to reading a given material. Ultimately, in the eighth question, the informants are required to provide their views regarding their thinking process; revealing its activity when associated with the four skills.

3.4.2. Administration of the Students' Questionnaire

Most of the questionnaires were distributed to the students inside the classroom and in the presence of their teachers, whereas a few others were administered outside the classroom as some students were in a rush to attend their next class. Despite the fact that the questionnaires were administered during the month of Ramadan, most of the participants took their time to answer the questions showing their interest even more by asking for more clarification concerning certain questions that seemed unclear the, so that to provide reliable data. The process of gathering data from the informants was successfully completed in only three days in a row thanks to the much appreciated cooperation of our participants.

3.4.3. Analysis of the Students' Questionnaire

Section One: Background Information

Q1: How long have you been studying English?
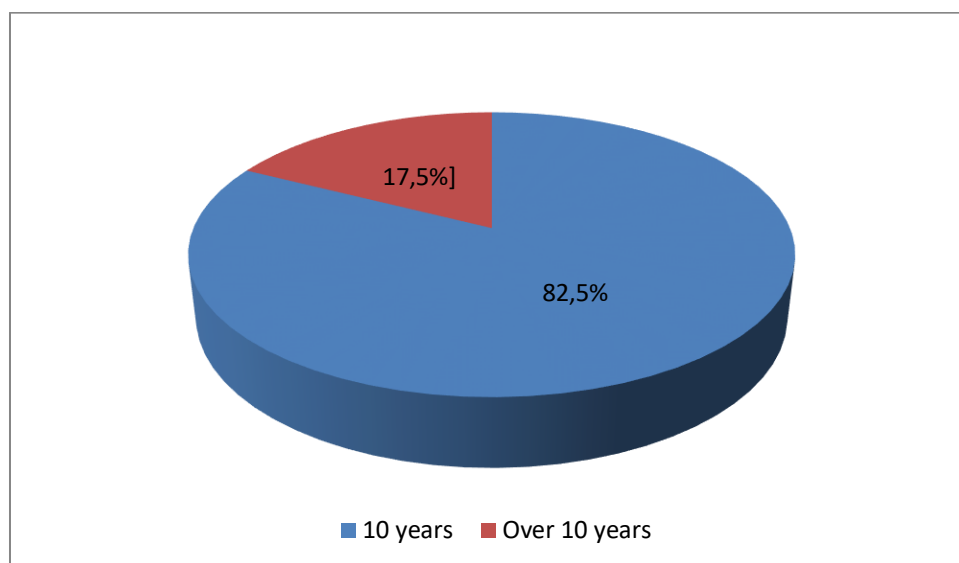
Figure 3.1. Students' Experience with Learning English

In an attempt to discover some aspects of students' background, this introductory question is inserted to give us an idea about the students' amount of time spent in learning English. As shown in Figure 1.1, the majority of students, comprising a number of sixty-six (82.5%), have been learning English for ten years. This means that they have spent four years in the middle school, three years in the high school and another three years at university. The rest fourteen participants (17.5%) stated that they have spent over ten years in the process of learning English. This indicated that almost all of them either have blocked or repeated a year or more.

Q2: *Are you motivated to learn English?*
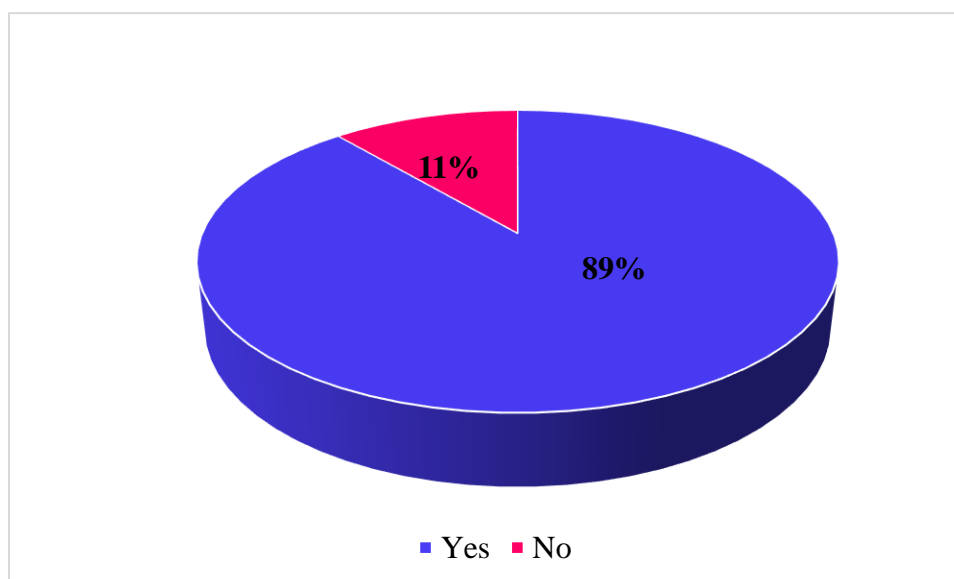
Figure 3.2. Students' Motivation to Learn English

The purpose behind raising this question is to investigate whether EFL learners are catalyzed to learn English. According to the obtained data above, the vast majority of respondents, being seventy-one (89%) answered "yes" revealing that they are keen on learning English. This is because they love both the language and its culture in addition to having the

desire to improve their speaking and fluency. Further, they mentioned that they are motivated to learn it because it was their first choice back in high school. So, they were not obliged by either their parents or the ministry to pursue this major, rather, it was by choice. To back up this point, it is evident that having the willingness to do something blows up motivation in humans and compulsion kills it. This goes in harmony with what Shan(2020) ensured:"Understanding how to maintain and develop language learners' motivation and sustain impetus toward learning seems crucial to achieving learning success" (p. 533). Another reason for their motivation to learn English is because they consider it to be of paramount significance since it is a high status language that's spoken everywhere. As opposed to them, nine respondents out of eighty (11%) chose "no" putting blame on the educational system at university, reporting that it was that major factor that demotivated them while learning English.

Q3*: How do you perceive your level in English?*
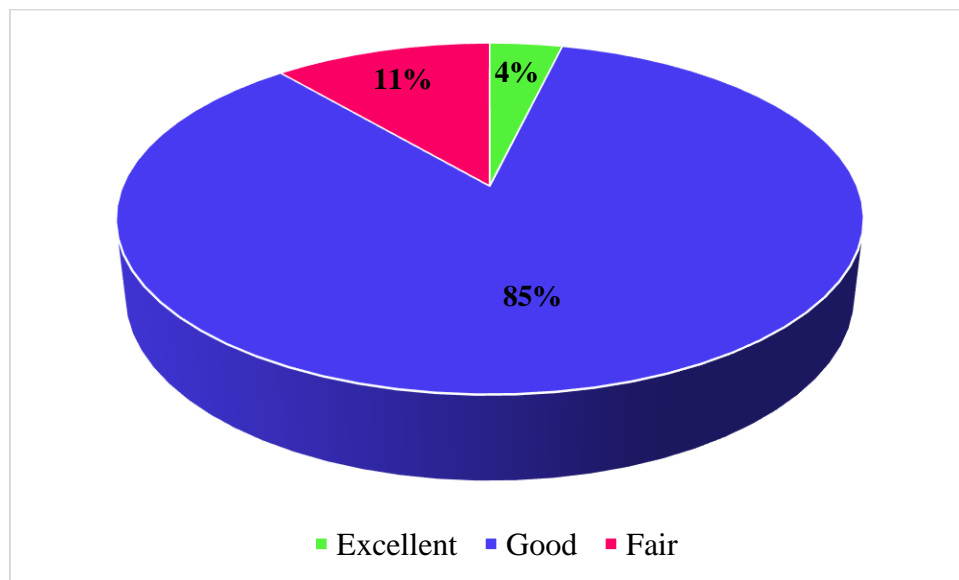
Figure 3.3. Students' Estimate of their Level in English

By raising this question, this aim is to know how students appraise themselves and how they rate their current level in English. The data above showed that the minority of participants, constituting only three of them (4%) assured that they have reached excellence and they outperformed their classmates .Since there are a few, they are regarded as the exception of the sample. By way of explanation, they are thought to be high-achievers and they think so on the basis of their competence, performance and their outcomes. Contrariwise, there is a possibility that they might be showing off since they were asked to answer anonymously. On the other hand, the vast majority of participants, constituting a number of sixty-eight (85%), considered their level to be good in English. It is reckoned that these participants hold enough self-confidence for stating they have attained a good level in English. Nine respondents (11%) thought their level in English is fair. These participants might a bit competent, yet they are not exerting enough efforts. In light of the above discussed statistics, it is concluded that EFL students are of different levels swinging from good to fair, but most of them still did not get to the highest level of adequacy.

Section Two: Critical Reading

Q1*: Do you like reading?*
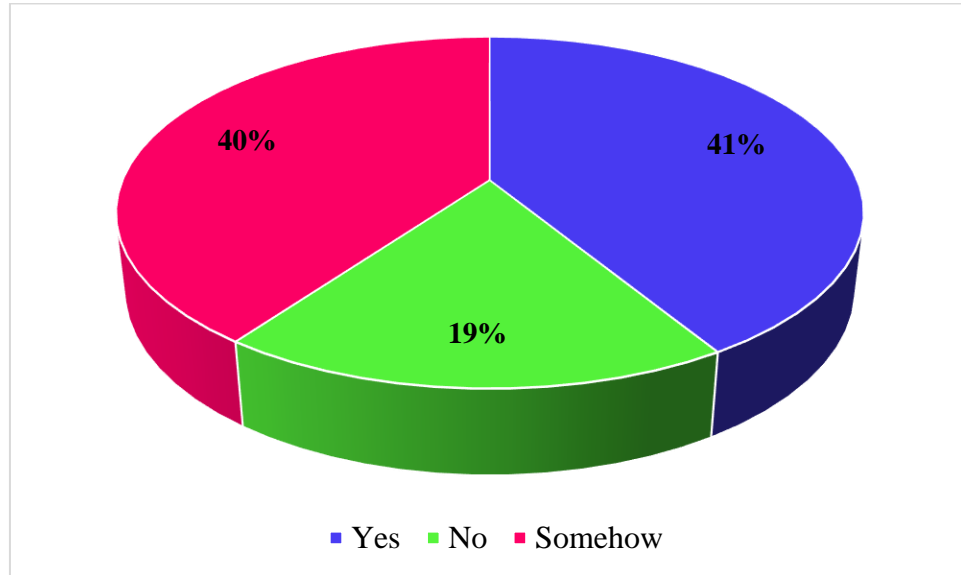
Figure 3.4. Students Interest in Reading in English

In order to investigate students' passion and attitudes towards reading, they were asked if they like to read. In response to this question, thirty three (41%) of the participants declared that they like reading in English. Similarly, thirty-two (40%) stated that they somehow like to read. This entails that EFL students are passionate about reading. As opposed to them, only fifteen (19%) participants responded that they do not like reading in English. Therefore, reading as a skill is not among their interests.

Q2: How often do you read in English?
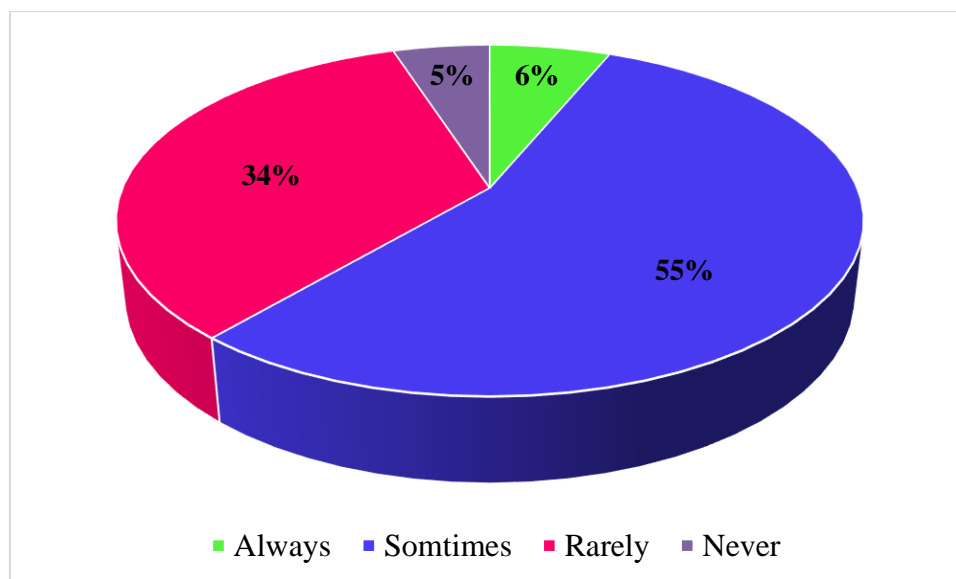
Figure 3.5. Students' Frequency of Reading in English

This question is devised to figure out the frequency of reading by EFL students. Five informants (6%) declared that they always read in English and almost half of them, comprising forty-four students (55%), practiced reading sometimes. However, twenty-seven (34%) of the informants reported that they rarely read in English and no more than four students (5%) revealed that they never read in English. The statistics indicated that reading doesn't hold an essential part in EFL classrooms since it's not commonly practices among EFL students, that is, there is a lack of reading.

Q3: *What do you like to read the most?*

a) Novels   b) Short stories   c) Academic books and articles   d) Newspapers   e) Magazines

f) Others
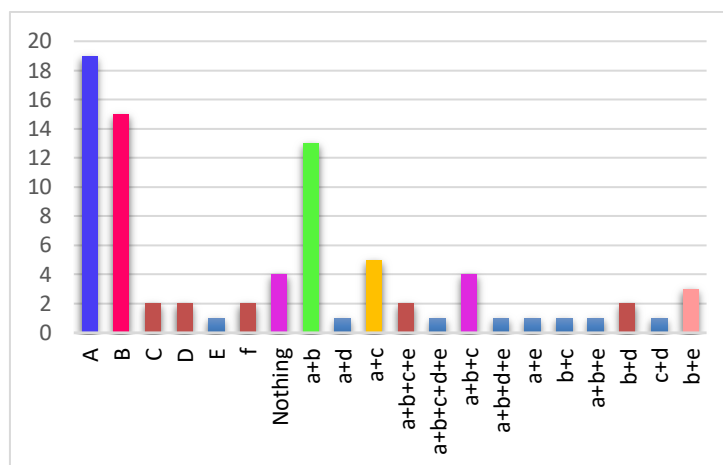
Figure 3.6. Students' Preferences in Reading

When asked this question, students were given the freedom to select more than one of the options that represent the items preferable for them in reading; because there are those who prefer to read more than one item. This item is meant to find out the type of literature students prefer to read the most. A majority of nineteen (23.75%) out of eighty students opted for novels. Fifteen students (18.75%) reported that they like to read short stories. Cotemporally, academic books and articles and newspapers are chosen only by two students each, making up the percentage of (5%). As for Manga, two students (2.5%) picked it out as an additional suggestion. Only one student (1.25%) went for magazines. It is worth mentioning, though, that there are students constituting the number of thirty-five (43.75%) who liked to read more than one thing jointly. Conversely, four students (5%) claimed that they don't like to read anything .Given the above data, one cannot fail to notice that novels and short stories receive much attention from EFL students.

Q4: For what purpose do you usually read?

a)   Pleasure   b) To better understand the content of the difficult lessons   c) To improve other skills   d) To enrich your vocabulary and knowledge   e) Others
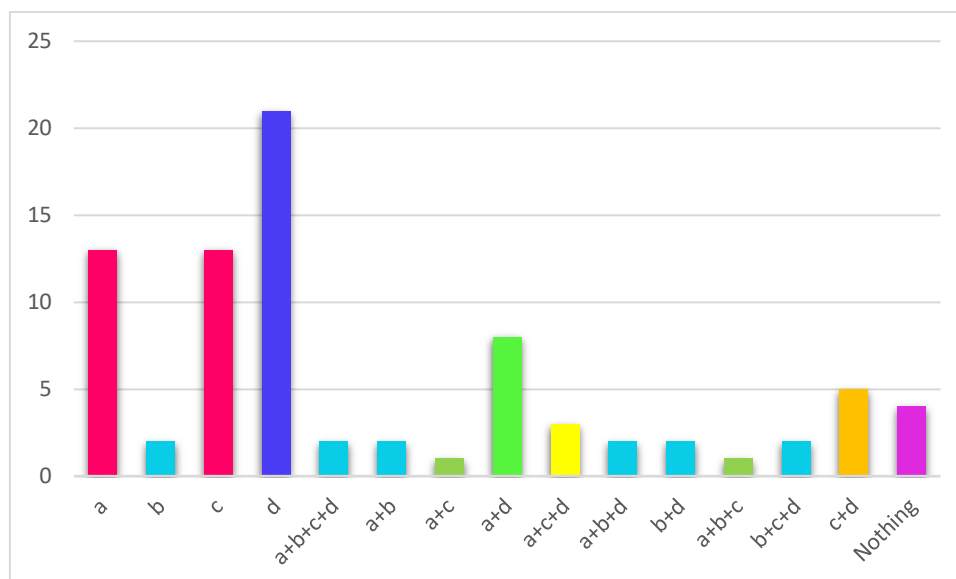
Figure 3.7. Students' Purpose behind Reading

The aim behind devising this question is to discover the drive that pushes students to read. Of note, this question is designed specifically for the students who reported that they like reading in English I the previous two questions. Therefore, the total number of respondents concerned with this question is seventy six rather than eighty. Upon analysis, thirteen respondents (17%) stated that they read in English for the sake of pleasure. Equally, another thirteen informants (17%) ensured that they read to improve other skills. Thereupon, reading plays a great part in developing students writing and even speaking skills and might be a key to a better and advanced level in the FL. Along the same line, reading fosters students thinking abilities in the sense that they become skillful of how to think critically about others' views. To push further, twenty-one informants (28%) read to enrich their vocabulary and knowledge, while the minority (3%) of a number of two informants claimed that they read to better understand the content of the difficult lessons. In this regard, reading helps students to being exposed to the culture of the FL and can recognize some of its aspects and the like. Besides, twenty-seven (35%) informants picked out more than one purpose for which they read. Interestingly enough, four informants (5%) chose

nothing. It is assumed that they are faced with difficulties when reading, or they are not interested in the task itself since that they don't have the full awareness towards its abundant benefits. Depending on the obtained results, most of the students practiced reading to either enrich their vocabulary baggage or just for pleasure.

Q5*: Do your teachers encourage you to read?*

a)   Always   b) Sometimes   c) Rarely   d) Never
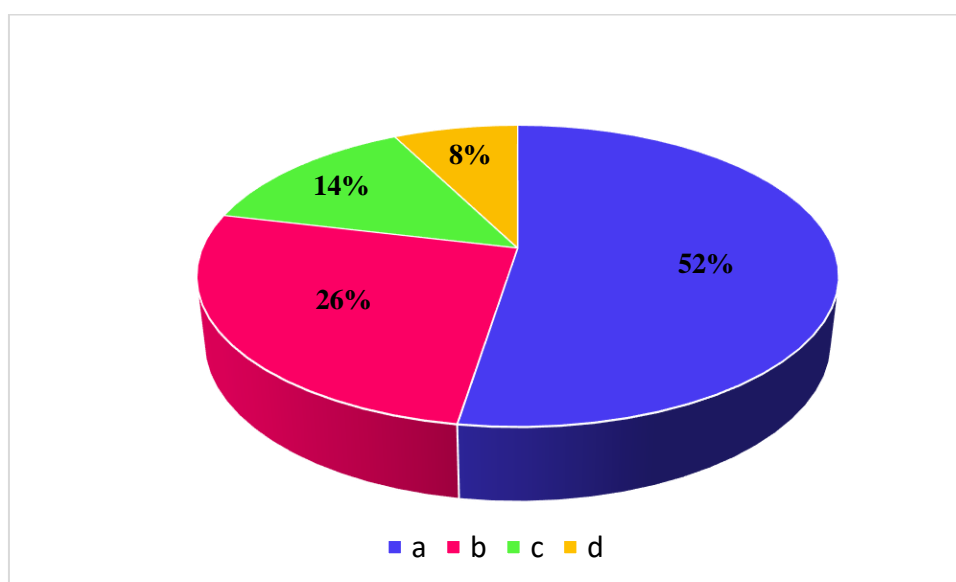
Figure 3.8. Frequency of Teachers for Encouraging Reading

This question endeavors to explore teachers' frequency of motivating their students to read in EFL classrooms. The data above indicated that the majority of forty-two students (52.5%) consider that their teachers support regarding reading takes place always. Another twenty-one students (26.25%) reported that their teachers encourage them to read sometimes; that is from time to time but not always. On the contrary, eleven subjects (13.75%) added that their teachers rarely support them to read while only six (7.5%) of them claimed that their teachers never do so.

According to the students' responses, it is quite noticeable that the overwhelming majority of teachers are doing their best by pushing their students to read as well as well as sensitizing them towards the significant role of reading. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to point out that there is a scary percentage of teachers who are not quite aware of the vital role that reading plays among EFL students.

Q6: Do you have difficulties in reading in English?
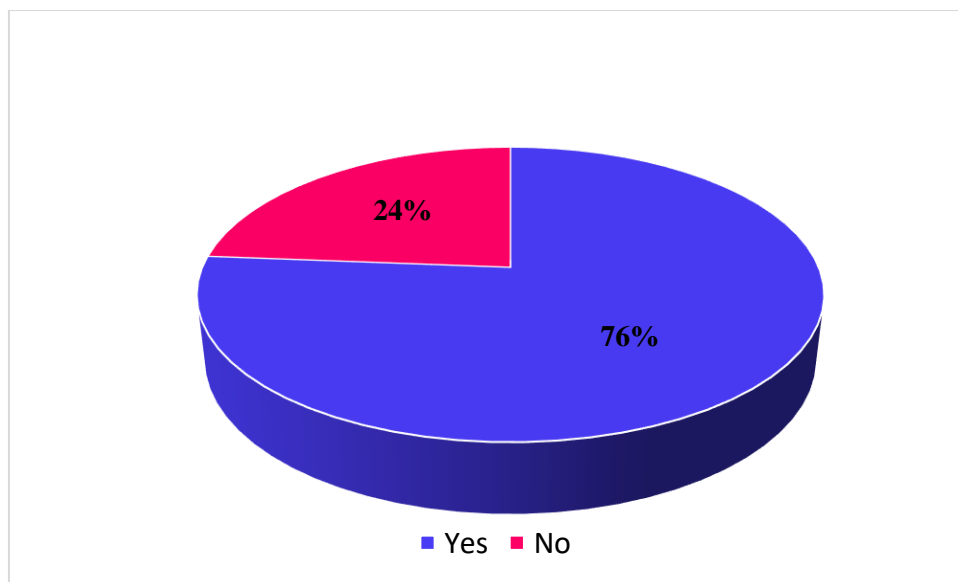
Figure 3.9. Students' Responses to Whether they Encounter Reading Difficulties

In order to investigate whether or not students encounter difficulties while reading in English, this question was raised. The results suggest that the overwhelming majority of sixty-one students (76%) declared that when reading English, they are faced with some difficulties .Nevertheless, the rest of them, being nineteen (24%) had an opposing view regarding this matter; they denied that they confront any difficulties when reading in English. As a matter of fact, most

of those students might be showing of since the percentage of students who read in English on a regular rate doesn't exceed (6%). Reflecting on the majority of the participants' responses, it is obvious that EFL students are faced with reading obstacles.

Q7: If so, which kind of difficulties do you encounter when you read in English?

a)   Vocabulary   b) Grammar   c) Comprehension   d) Analysis   e) All of them

f) Nothing
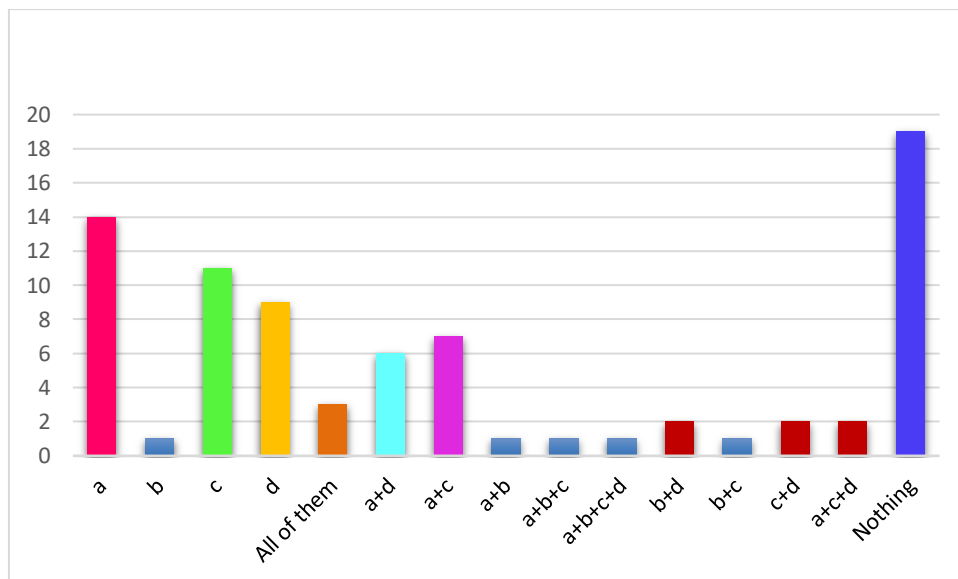
Figure 3.10. Students' Difficulties When Reading in English

This item is devised particularly for the respondents who confessed that they encounter difficulties in reading in the previous question. Thus, among the total of eighty, only sixty-one students are concerned with this question. The data displayed revealed that students have different views regarding the difficulties they encounter when reading in English. Fourteen respondents (23%) considered that vocabulary constitutes their major problem in reading in English .This is mainly resultant of the lack of reading practice. Only one student (1.63%) stated

that grammar is one of his obstacles; that is, he might not distinguish between tenses and rules of phrases and words. Eleven of the respondents, representing (18.01), complained about comprehension while nine respondents (14.75%) reported that they encounter analysis difficulties when reading in English. Further, three students (4.91%) believed that all the options provided are equally regarded as difficulties faced in reading in English. On the other hand, twenty-three students (37.70%) declared that the difficulties they are faced with while reading vary from either vocabulary and grammar, or comprehension and analysis. Looking into the obtained data, the second major struggle students run into when reading is comprehending the material they are exposed to, along with its content that they might not be always familiar with.

Q8: Which one of the following do you consider the main reason for the difficulties?
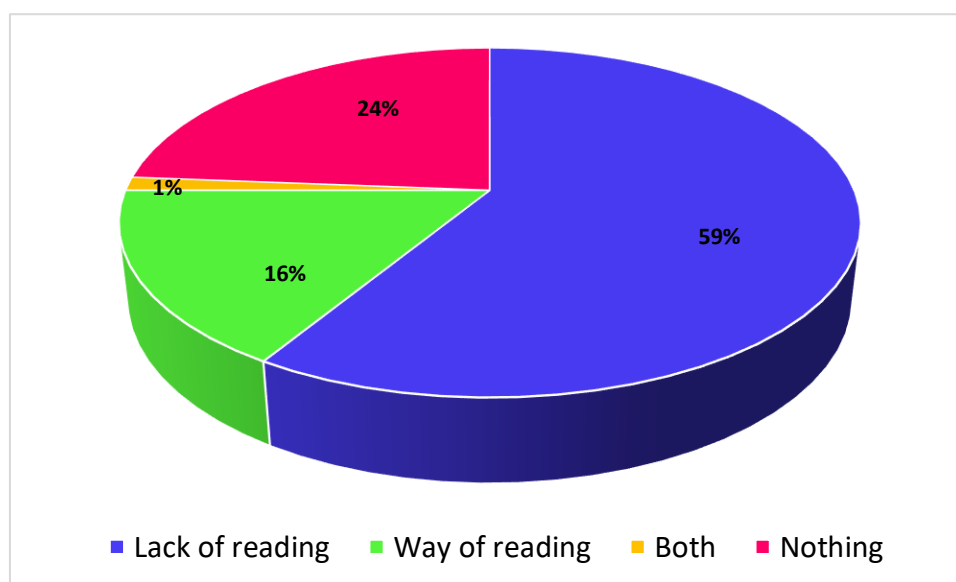
Figure 3.11. Students' Main Reasons for Reading Difficulties

As for this question, it is also designed specifically for the participants who have difficulties while reading in English. Ergo, instead of eighty students, only sixty-one of them are involved in responding to the present question. De facto, this question is set out to better

understand the reasons on students' difficulties encounters while reading English. Upon analysis, lack of reading is regarded as the major reason for students' difficulties, because forty-seven (77%) of them do not read as much. Whereas thirteen of the participants (21%) claimed that they bump into problems in reading because they do not know how to read; that is, they lack the necessary strategies that help them to read correctly. Only one (2%) respondent stated both lack of reading and way of reading as being the reasons for the difficulties confronted while reading. Hence, it is noteworthy that having lack of reading and ignoring the required strategies and methods of reading lead to having reading problems.

Q9: Do you think that reading is a necessary skill for you to develop?
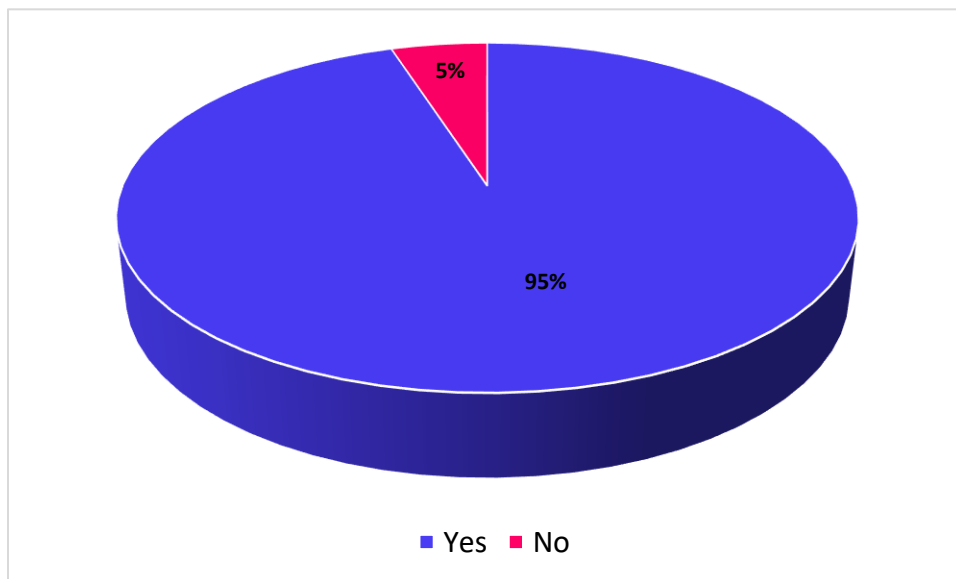
Figure 3.12. Students' Attitudes towards the importance of Developing the Reading Skill

This item is meant to explore whether or not students are aware of developing the reading skill. When asked whether reading is a necessary skill that should be developed, the greater part of the informants, being seventy-six (95%) answered approvingly. They stated that reading aid

them to acquiring more vocabulary in addition to prompting their speaking and writing skills. They further mentioned that developing reading skills betters their level in the language and improves their thinking abilities. As opposed to them, a minority of four out of eighty participants (5%) reported that reading does not hold an essential place for them. By way of explanation, they demonstrated that in comparison to other skills, reading is the least important one that is worthy of developing. In other words, they don't give much attention to it. In light of the above shown results, it is quite noticeable that the overwhelming majority of students are aware of the necessity of developing the reading skill since it reinforces them to learn effectively and develops their academic level. This is what Benttayeb(2010) goes to show "reading is the most important activity in any language class, not only as a source of information and a pleasurable activity ,but as a means of consolidating and extending one's knowledge of the language and its related aspects" (p. 21).

Q10: In your opinion, what does critical reading require?

a) Reading that involves understanding the writer's point of view

b) Reading that involves asking questions

c) Reading that leads to better writing

d) Others
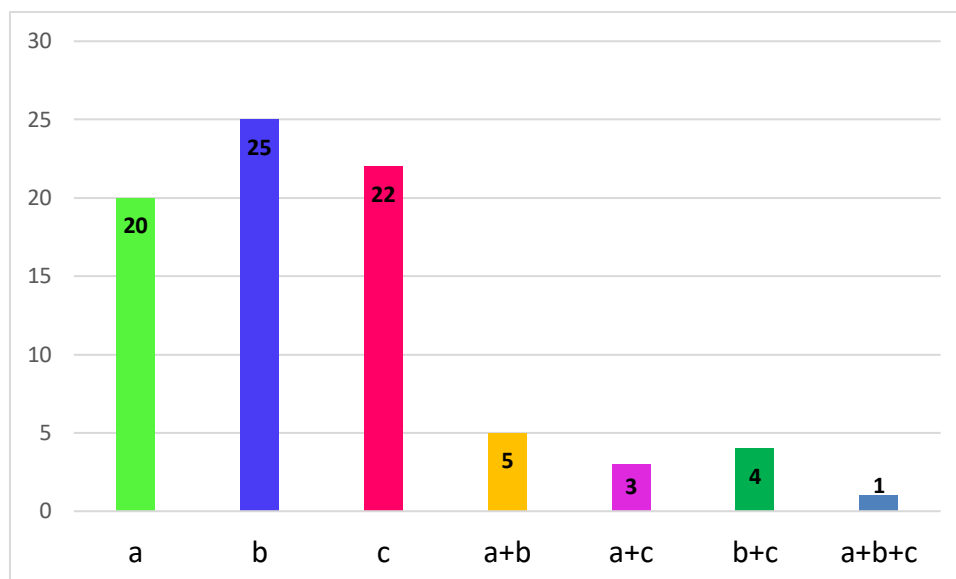
Figure 3.13. Students' Views about Critical Reading Conceptualization

In an attempt to investigate students' knowledge about critical reading, this question is set. The above stated results showed that the greater part of the informants, representing a number of twenty-five students (31.25%) claimed that critical reading is reading that involves asking questions .This means that critical readers have the ability to come up with different ways of thinking since they know how to question, analyze and interpret the piece of information they encounter .Another category of twenty-two participants (27.5%) assured that critical reading is reading that leads to better writing. Upon critical analysis, critical reading helps them to avoid spelling mistakes every time they acquire new vocabulary through which their writing would be enhanced .Moreover, twenty participants (25%) reported that critical reading means understanding the writer's point of view .To put it another way, through reading critically, students come to experience new ideas, concepts and views and learn how to think about other ideas and their own ones, by either defending or contradicting them. The remaining thirteen participants (17%) opted for more than one single option. From the above discussion, it is assumed that EFL learners are somehow aware of what the concept of critical reading is all about.

Section Three: Critical Thinking

Q1: Are you aware of the existence of critical thinking skills?
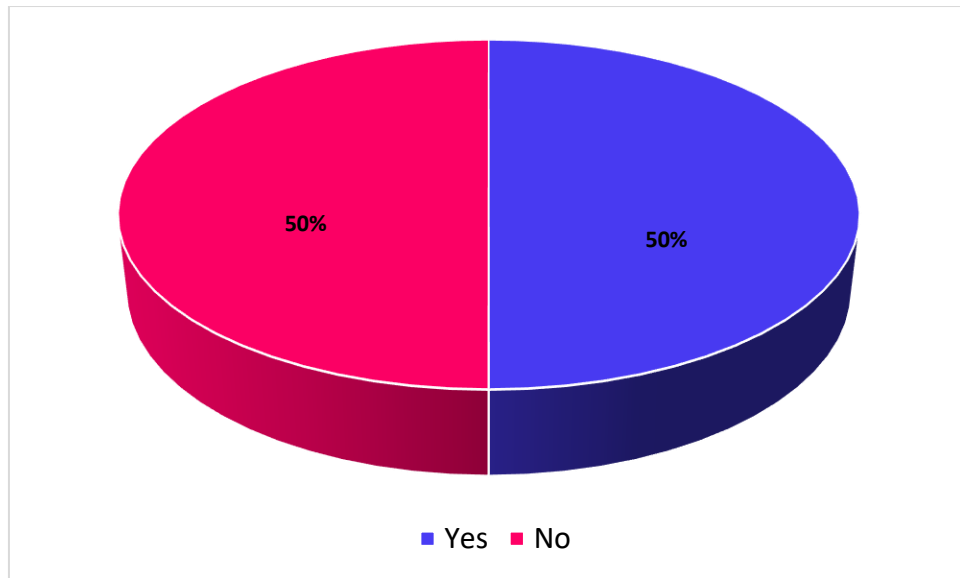
Figure 3.14. Students' Awareness of Critical Thinking Skills

This introductory question attempts to shed light and test students' familiarity with the concept of critical thinking in the EFL context. Surprisingly enough, forty participants (50%) reported that they are aware of the existence of critical thinking skills. Conversely, the other forty of them (50%) responded negatively to this matter; declaring that critical thinking is not among their knowledge.

Q2: If so, define it in a few lines.

In this question, the total number of students is the same number of the participants who declare in the previous question that they are aware of critical thinking existence (forty students). Truthfully speaking, it was expected from the forty participants to define critical thinking in short since they claim that they are aware of it. However, only seven students managed to give it a brief definition. This indicated that even the participants who think they are acquainted with critical thinking, in fact, are merely familiar with the concept. As a matter of fact, they might have heard people around talk about it but they do have no clue about its accurate significance. With reference to the few respondents' definitions, critical thinking is analyzing things objectively and from different angles. A few others defined it as the ability to ask questions and analyze what is hidden; that is, reading between the lines. By way of explanation, critical thinking enables EFL learners to see what other people cannot see and makes their brain more active in the sense that they gradually practice their thinking by generating different ideas. Some others elucidated it as making interpretations in order to solve problems. Besides, when thinking critically, students don't accept everything they receive; instead, they should state their own opinions clearly. The latter assists them to be autonomous learners and perform better in their learning process. Given the aforesaid results, it is noteworthy that a few students know what critical thinking really is. Thus, it is deduced that there is little familiarity with critical thinking among EFL students.

Q3: How would you rate your level in terms of thinking critically?
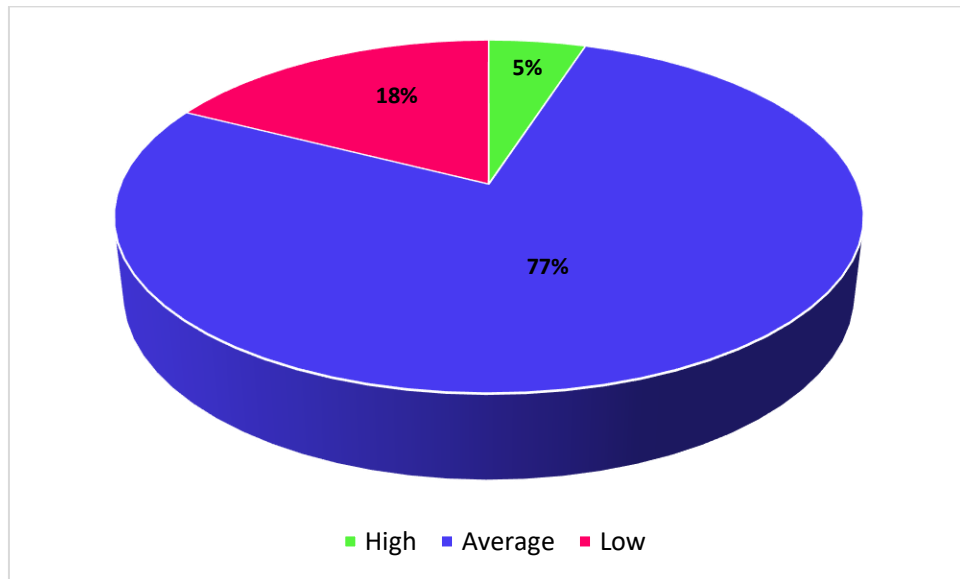
Figure 3.15. Students' Level of Thinking Critically

In this question, students are asked to evaluate their level in terms of thinking critically. The overwhelming majority of informants, constituting a number of sixty-two (77.5%) described their level as being average. Fourteen of them (17.5%) considered their ability to think critically as low while the remaining four students (5%) claimed that their level of thinking critically is high. The results indicated that the majority of the informants' critical thinking level is average.

Q4: Do your teachers draw your attention to the existence of such skills?
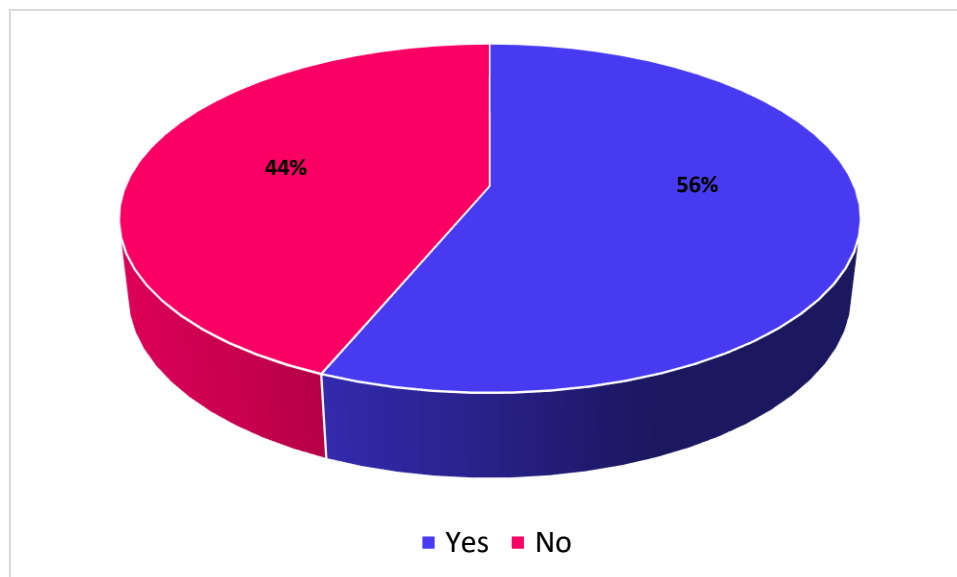
Figure3.16. Teachers' Attempts to Draw their Students' Attention to Critical Thinking Skills

In order to investigate the teachers' contribution to directing students' attention towards critical thinking, this question is devised. The data presented showed that forty-five (56%) of the respondents reported that their teachers draw their attention to critical thinking. Conversely, thirty-five respondents (44%) claimed that their teachers don't bother giving prominence to this skill. To put it another way, both percentages are approximate; there is a greater part of teachers who encourage their students to familiarize themselves with critical thinking and its significance. Yet, the other category of teachers seemed indifferent. This is basically due to time limitations inside the classroom and the syllabus they are obliged to finish.

Q5: When your teacher gives you an idea, how do you perceive it?
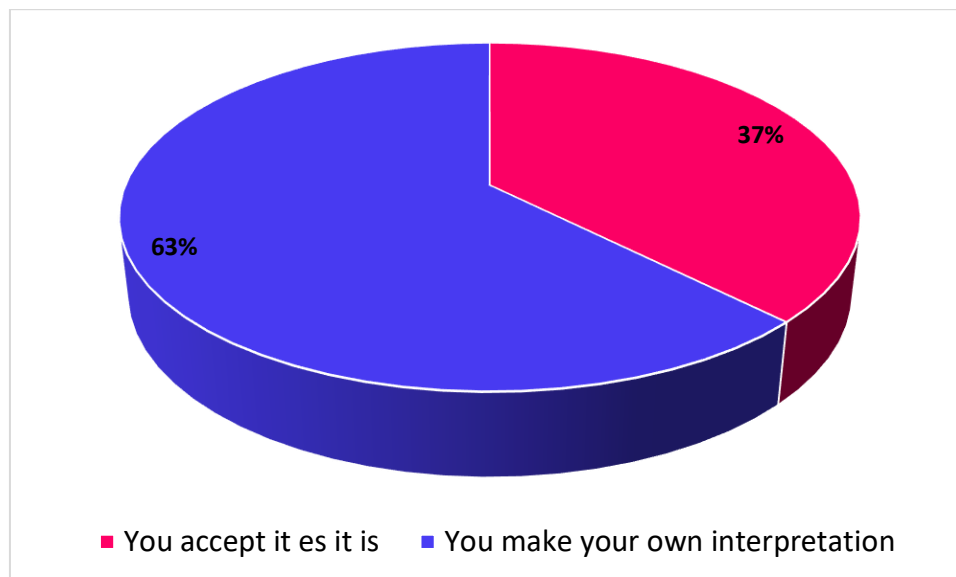
Figure 3.17. Students' Attitudes towards Teachers' Ideas

Aiming at investigating how students approach their teachers' ideas and information in general, it is decided on raising this question. Based on the displayed data, fifty subjects (62.5%) assured that they make their own interpretations whenever given an idea; coming up with a good guess. In explanation, since students don't accept everything they receive, they become autonomous learners and good researchers because they resort to stating their own explications through analyzing what is hidden and between the lines. This proves that students are gradually directing their attention towards approaching information with an active critical mind. As opposed to them, thirty subjects (37.5%) responded negatively to this question declaring that they accept their teacher's idea as it is; that is, they exert no effort for analyzing, interpreting and making their own analysis. Instead, they hold the habit of being passive receivers of information.

Q6: Do you think that critical thinking as a skill should be studied explicitly as much like reading, writing, listening and speaking? Whatever your answer, please justify
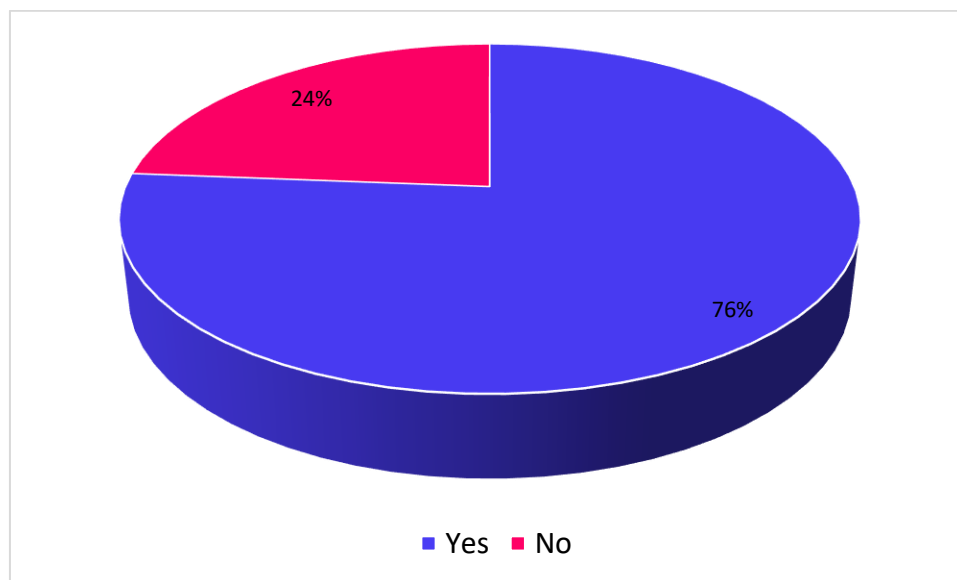
Figure 3.18. Students' Attitudes towards the Explicit Teaching of Critical thinking

This item is designed to help explore the students take on studying critical thinking skills equally as the other four skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) in EFL classrooms. According to what is revealed in the above obtained data, sixty-one respondents (76%) selected "yes" as their option; that is, more than half of the participants agreed on the idea of studying critical thinking explicitly revealing that doing so in addition to the other four skills offers a multiplicity of merits. When asked why, some students asserted that studying critical thinking explicitly helps in building one's character and confidence as well. In the same line, some mentioned that it upgrades one's way of thinking and improves their writing skill in which they think in a creative way. Others maintained that studying critical thinking allows for the learners to improve their personal ideas through making their own interpretations, as well as expressing

their viewpoints from different perspectives. In the same vein, they learn how to analyze and criticize others' ideas; that is to say, setting reasonable arguments that lead to enhancing their higher levels of thinking.

Nineteen students (24%) opted for "no" showing their refusal concerning the study of critical thinking skills. According to most of them, critical thinking is already accompanied with the four skills, mainly reading. To back up this point, this is a proof that reading critically has a major role in boosting students' higher ability of thinking. Along the same line, a few students assumed that compared with other skills, critical thinking is the least important one; in other words, they don't give much value and interest to it. For some, critical thinking is not gifted to everybody, rather to particular people as thinkers, writers and the like. They believed that they can by no means have higher levels of thinking in the foreign language especially; since they are neither competent enough nor natives. With reference to the aforementioned, the results seemed very positive because the vast majority of students showed their approval regarding the explicitness of studying critical thinking skills.

Q7: In your opinion, what qualities should a critical thinker possess?

a) Questioning every given information   b) Analysing ideas and interpreting the hidden meaning   c) Evaluating the evidence for alternative points of view   d) Finding solutions and making logical decisions   e) Drawing conclusions based on evidence and feasible assumptions f) All of the above   g) Others
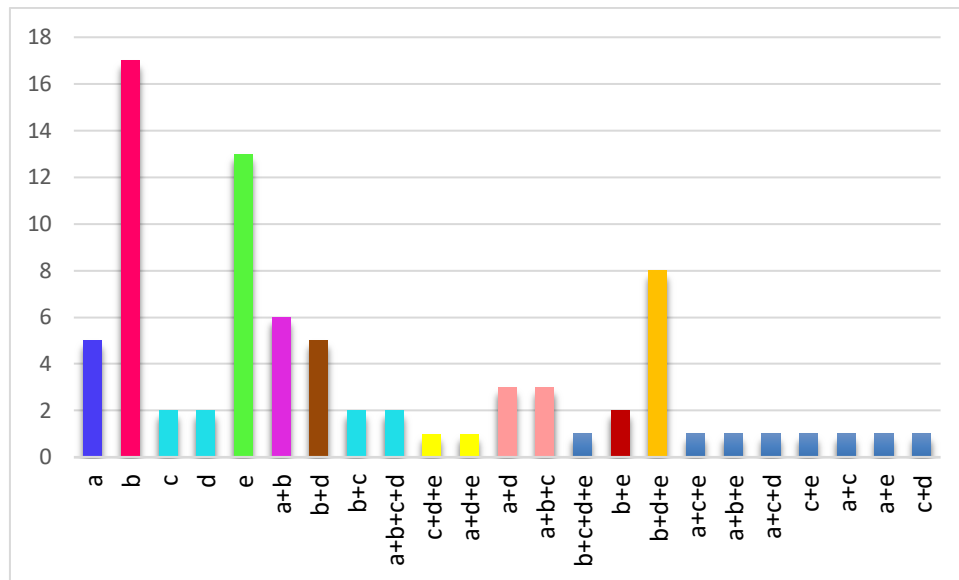
Figure 3.19. Students' Views about the Qualities of a Critical Thinker

Through setting this item, attention is oriented towards the traits a critical thinker hold. Herein, students were given the freedom to pick out more than one answer. In response to this question, seventeen respondents (21.25%) reported that a critical thinker should be able to analyze ideas and interpret the hidden meaning. Five of them (6.25%) believed that being a critical thinker entails questioning every given information. As for the option of evaluating evidence for alternative points of view, it was opted for by only two participants (2.5%). Likewise, another two of them (2.5%) stated that in order to be a critical thinker, one must find solutions and make logical decisions. The vast majority of respondents, constituting a number of forty-one (51.25%) out of eighty selected more than one answer from the five listed qualities. Whereas, thirteen respondents (16.25%) opted for all the above options denoting that all the characteristics help in shaping competent critical thinkers. It cannot be denied that these various answers proved that a critical thinker ought to own different merits because they all contribute to the effectiveness of being a critical thinker.

Section Four: Critical Reading and Critical Thinking

Q1: To what extent do you think critical reading affects critical thinking?
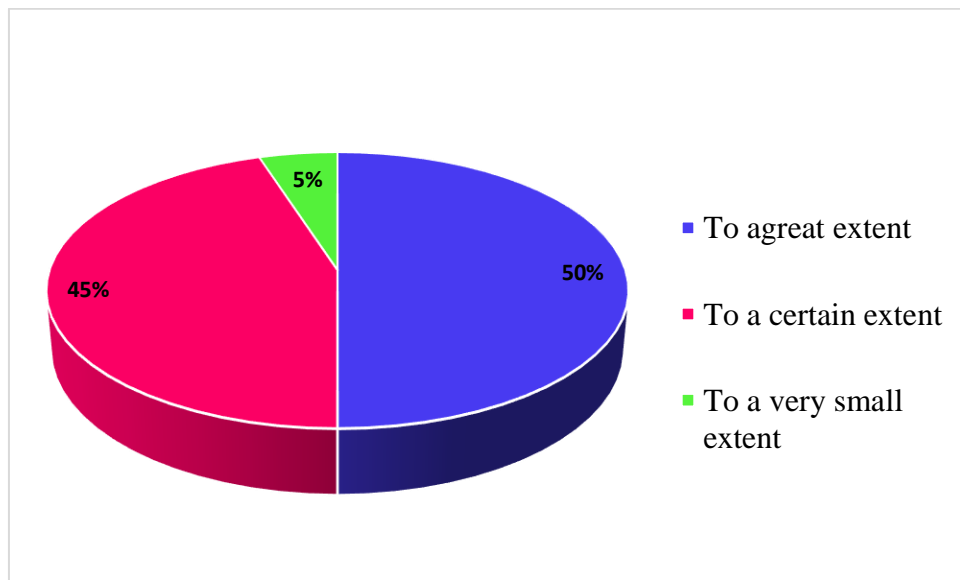
Figure 3.20. Students' Attitudes towards the Relationship between Critical Reading and Critical Thinking

This question is asked in order to know to which extent learners think that critical reading affects critical thinking. Among a total of eighty, forty participants (50%); that is to say, half of the sample assured that critical reading has a positive influence on critical thinking to a great extent. Thirty-six of them (45%) stated that critical reading affects critical thinking to a certain extent. As for the minority, merely four students (5%) had a negative view regarding this matter;

claiming that critical reading has little impact on critical thinking. From the above stated results, it is evident that EFL students have a positive attitude towards the close relationship between critical reading and critical thinking since the overwhelming majority of students are aware of the vital role critical reading plays in building higher levels of thinking.

Q2: Has your critical thinking really improved through reading?
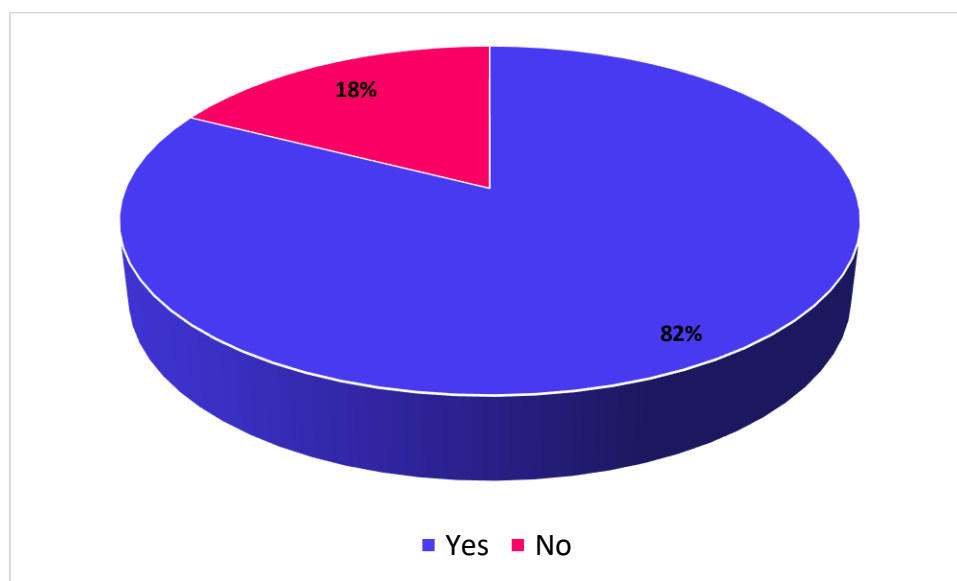
Figure 3.21. Contribution of Reading to Students' Improvement of Critical Thinking

In an attempt to explore students' personal experience with critical reading and get some of their testimonials after their reading experience, this question is opted for to be raised. The overwhelming majority of sixty-six students (82.5%) opted for "yes" revealing that their critical thinking has significantly improved through reading. By way of explanation, through reading various books, articles, novels and short stories they come to know new concepts, and learn how

to think critically about certain ideas, by supporting or contradicting them, in addition to positing their own viewpoints. Contrariwise, a minority of fourteen students (17.5%) had a different view concerning this issue; they claimed that reading has not ameliorated their critical thinking. This is mainly attributed to their lack of reading since it is shown formerly in the already stated data that most of the students don't read. Put differently, they ignore the benefits of reading. Considering the aforementioned percentages, it is deduced that the majority of EFL students are aware of the importance of reading in developing their critical thinking.

Q3: Do you agree that critical reading is a way of developing one's critical thinking?
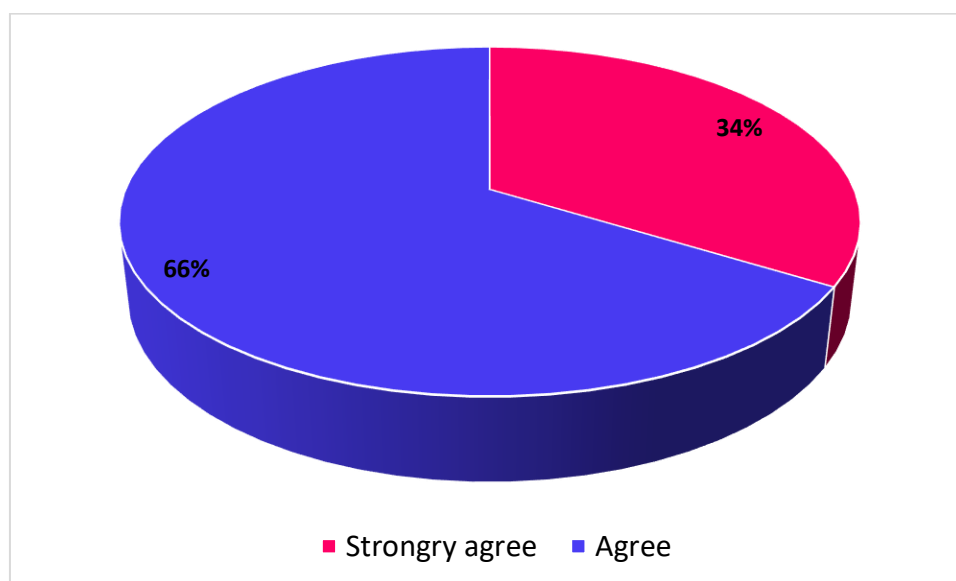
Figure3. 22. Students' Regarding Critical Reading for Developing their Critical Thinking

This item is designed to highlight students' views concerning the attribution of critical reading in developing their critical thinking. In response to this question, all of them responded approvingly. The obtained data revealed that the majority of the informants, comprising a number

of fifty-three (66%), agreed that critical reading is a way of developing one's critical thinking, and twenty-seven (34%) strongly agreed on that as well. From this, it is believed that EFL learners are completely aware that critical reading is significant and relevant in reinforcing their critical thinking skills.

Q4: When you read a material, you tend to?

a)   Infer meaning using your background knowledge   b) Analyse and synthesize its content

c) Evaluate the of its content   d) Criticize its author's ideas, view…etc

e)   Absorb the content without questioning its validity
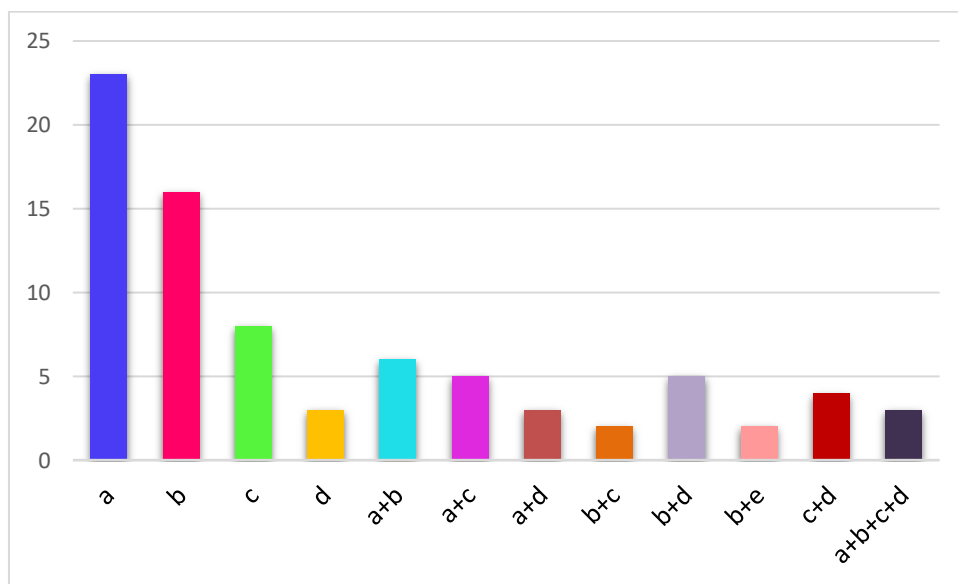
Figure 3.23. Students' Reading Strategies when they Read

By raising this question, it is aimed at testing out if students make use of their critical thinking skills when reading a given material. Just like the formerly stated multiple choices' questions, students were free to choose more than one option whenever needed. From the

obtained data, twenty-three participants (28.75%) stated that when reading an item, they infer meaning using their background knowledge. Sixteen of them (20%) reported that they analyze and synthesize the content they read. As for the option of evaluating the value of the content they are reading, it is opted for by eight students (10%). Three respondents (3.75%) went for criticizing the author's ideas and views whenever reading a given item. On the other hand, the rest thirty participants (37.5%) revealed that when reading a material, they tend to infer meaning, analyze, synthesize, evaluate and even criticize both the content and the author, choosing between these different options. In this regard, Zhou et al(2013) ensure: "Critical thinking skills are essential to any educated individual, and it is particularly necessary that they could be used and developed by students" (p. 41).

Q5: Your thinking process is more active while?
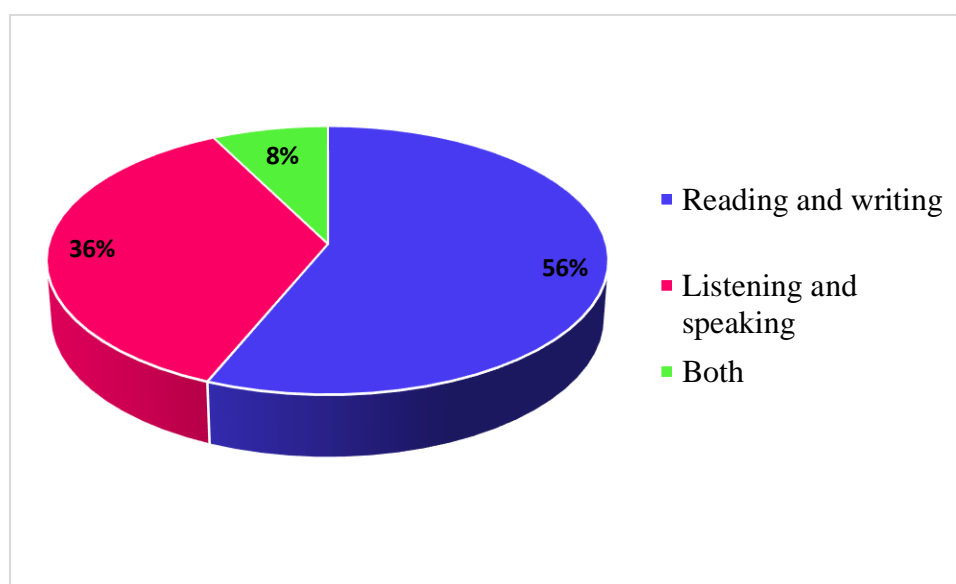
Figure 3.24. Students' Views about their Thinking Process

This question attempts to spotlight students' standpoints while thinking as regards the four skills. As shown in the displayed results, forty-five students (56.25%) declared that their thinking process is more active while reading and writing. Conversely, twenty-nine students (36.25%) revealed that listening and speaking are the two main skills through which their thinking process becomes more active. Exceptionally, six students (7.5%) chose both options; that is, they are equally regarded as important in activating their thinking process. This denoted that the process of thinking by itself is not associated with reading, solely. De facto, it is related to the four skills since students give credit to them altogether. Anjaniputra (2013) affirm that: "To promote students' thinking when they are performing such skills, critical thinking is required (p. 18).

3.4.4.   Discussion   of   the   Main   Findings   of   the   Students'   Questionnaire

The findings obtained from the analysis of the students' questionnaire reveal that the overwhelming majority of third year EFL students (95%), as stated in question nine in the second section, are aware of the importance of developing the reading skill. They report that reading helps them in developing writing and speaking in addition to acquiring more vocabulary. They further mention that developing reading betters their level in the language and most importantly, improves their way of thinking. Additionally, most of the students admit that they confront many difficulties when reading in English particularly in vocabulary and comprehension. Besides, it was apparent from the students' answers that their teachers are doing their best in motivating them to read. In the context of the current study, it is worth highlighting that a positive correlation between critical reading and critical thinking is found; as stated in the hypothesis since (82.5%)

of the students reveal that their critical thinking has really improved through reading. The latter strengthens our hypothesis to a great extent. 3.5.1.

3.5. The Teachers' Questionnaire

3.5.1 Description of the Teachers' Questionnaire

The teachers' questionnaire goes in accordance with the students' questionnaire, striving to attain the teachers' perceptions about the role of critical reading in promoting critical thinking skills among EFL students. It covers different types of questions varying from open-ended questions, close-ended questions and multiple choice questions. The questionnaire is made up of seventeen questions that are divided into two sections, and is administered to six teachers at Mila University Center.

The first section is comprised of three introductory questions regarding teachers' background. The first question concerns their professional degree. The second one is devised to spotlight the period of time that they have spent teaching at university. As for the third question, it aims at eliciting the various modules teachers have been exposed to teach during their teaching experience.

The second section, which is the prime section of the questionnaire, encompasses fourteen questions that are all about critical reading's contribution in developing students' critical thinking skills. It is initiated by inviting teachers to elucidate whether critical reading is significant for developing students' critical thinking, provided with justifications. The second question seeks to determine teachers' perceptions about their students' in terms of being critical thinkers. Following that, the third question is associated with the previous one; in which teachers are asked to give an appraisal regarding students' critical thinking level. As for the fourth question, it asks teachers whether they encourage their students to read. In this regard, the fifth question is specifically devised to those teachers who answer the previous question positively; it sheds light on teachers'

aims behind supporting students to read. Item six is concerned with the types of reading materials suggested from teachers to students.

The seventh question attempts to explore teachers' views on whether EFL students lack both critical reading and critical thinking skills. Subsequently, the eighth question is addressed those teachers who answer the previous question approvingly; it entails them to expound the reasons behind students' deficiencies of critical reading and critical thinking skills. Subsequently, the ninth question is meant to find out the various types of activities that teachers opt for doing in their classes. Furthermore, question number ten is directed to teachers in order for them to review the strategies that seem effective to be recommended to their students. Moreover, the eleventh question concerns itself with the extent to which the development of critical thinking skills is relevant in enhancing students' academic achievements. Along the same line, the twelfth item attempts to explore teachers' viewpoints regarding the explicitness of teaching critical thinking separately as the other four skills. Last but not least, in the thirteenth question, it is expected from teachers to provide their standpoints concerning the strategies that attribute in reinforcing students' critical thinking skills. At last, the whole questionnaire is brought to its end through inviting teachers to add further comments and suggestions.

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3.5.2. Administration of the Teachers' Questionnaire

The teachers' questionnaire is administered to five teachers at university and only one questionnaire was sent via email. The process of gathering data from teachers has taken no more than three days. It is worth mentioning that teachers were so cooperative and managed to fill in the questionnaire on the same days we administered them.

3.5.3. Analysis of the Teachers' Questionnaire

Section One: Background Information

Q1: what is your professional degree?
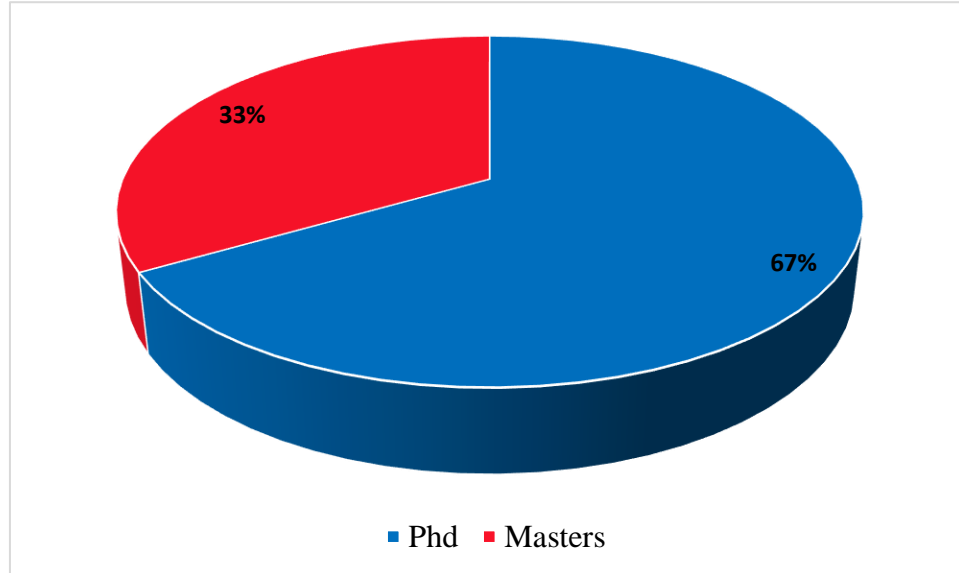
Figure 3.25. Teachers' Professional Degree

This introductory question is meant to obtain some valuable contributions concerning the

teachers' degrees and qualifications. As displayed in figure 3.26, more than half of the informants (67%), constituting four teachers out of six, are PhD holders, while two teachers (33%) hold a Master degree. The teachers in this sample hold high degrees which do not only show their qualifications as teachers, but also their insights and testimonies reliability for this study to be successful.

Q2: How long have you been teaching at university?
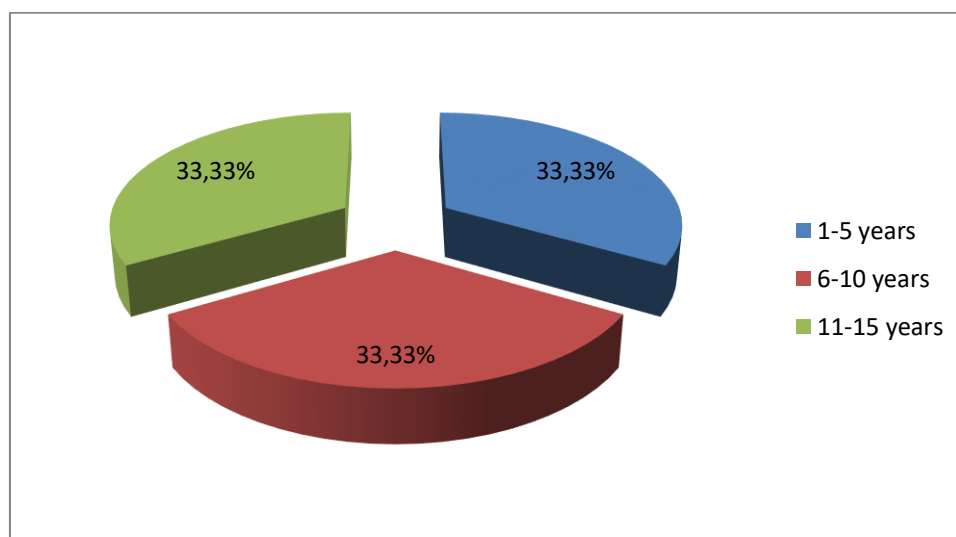
Figure 3.26. Teachers' Years of Experience in Teaching at University

This question aims at revealing university teachers' experience in teaching EFL. As teachers were asked to give the number of years spent teaching at university, it is indicated that two teachers (33.33%) have been teaching at university for less than five years. Likewise, another two teachers (33.33%) stated that the period they have spent teaching at university varies from six to ten years. Interestingly, the remaining two teachers (33.33%) happened to have a longer teaching experience compared to their colleagues ranging from eleven to fifteen years. From this,

teachers' contribution to this study is considered dependable as the majority of them have a long experience in exerting teaching. Besides, it is expected that throughout their teaching experience at university, teachers have become familiar with the difficulties encountered by EFL students in many skills, particularly reading which is a focal point of the current study.

Q3: During your teaching experience at university, what are the modules you have been teaching?
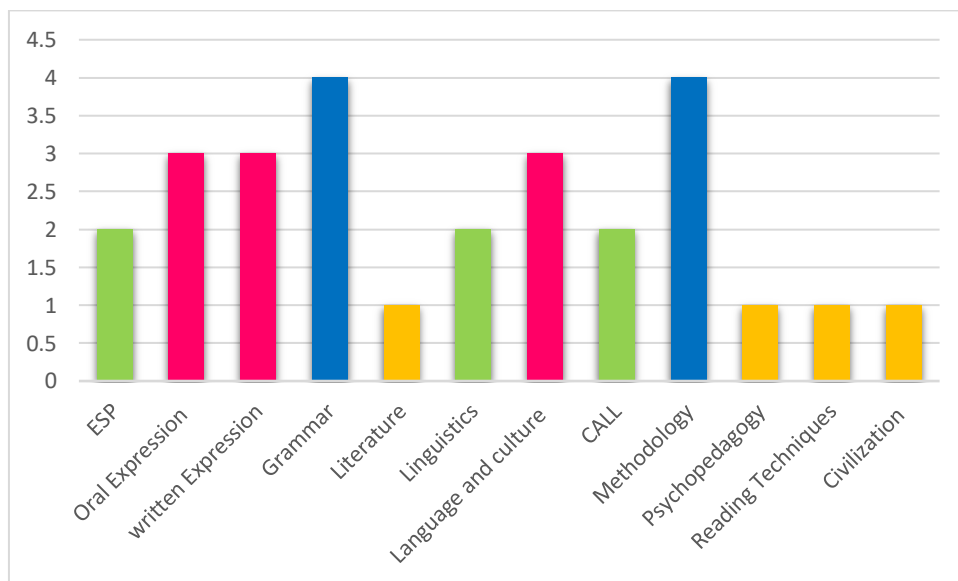
Figure 3.27. Modules Taught by Teachers

In an attempt to shed light on the various modules teachers got to teach at university, this question was raised. According to the obtained information above, most of the involved teachers taught at least more than one module at university; including Oral Expression, ESP, Methodology, Written Expression, Grammar, Literature, Reading Techniques, Psychopedagogy,

Linguistics and many more. As a matter of fact, having the ability to teach more than one module confirms again how competent the teachers of this sample are.

Section Two: Critical Reading and Critical Thinking Skills

Q1: Do you think that critical reading is significant for the development of critical thinking?

100%

■ Yes ■ No
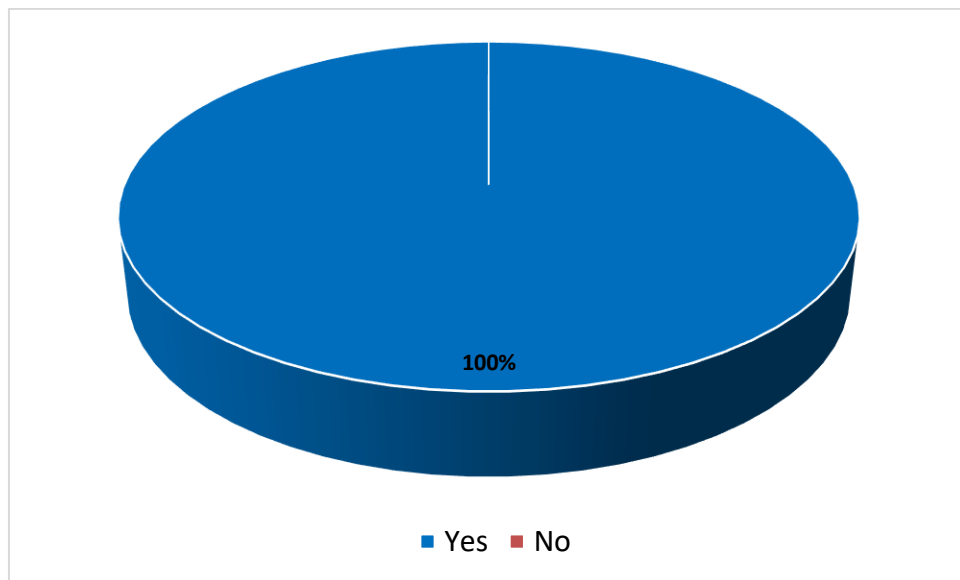
Figure 3.28. Teachers' Attitudes towards the Importance of Critical Reading on the Development of Critical Thinking Skills

When asked about whether critical reading is important for developing critical thinking, there was a consensus among all of the subjects. Differently put, six teachers (100%) out of a total of six professed that critical reading is a contributing factor in promoting critical thinking. Upon analysis, they contended that reading is instrumental in developing higher-order thinking skills since it is coupled with critical analysis; that is, during reading, the reader has time to read

again, to link, to analyze and to ask for supporting ideas. Expressing it differently, critical thinking is not something we are born with, rather a skill that is acquired through raising questions and responding critically to different academic situations. They further point out that critical reading allows for the learners to utilize their critical thinking skills that tend to be dormant. Therefore, the more critical reading is conducted, the more critical thinking is activated.

Q2: Do you consider your students to be critical thinkers?
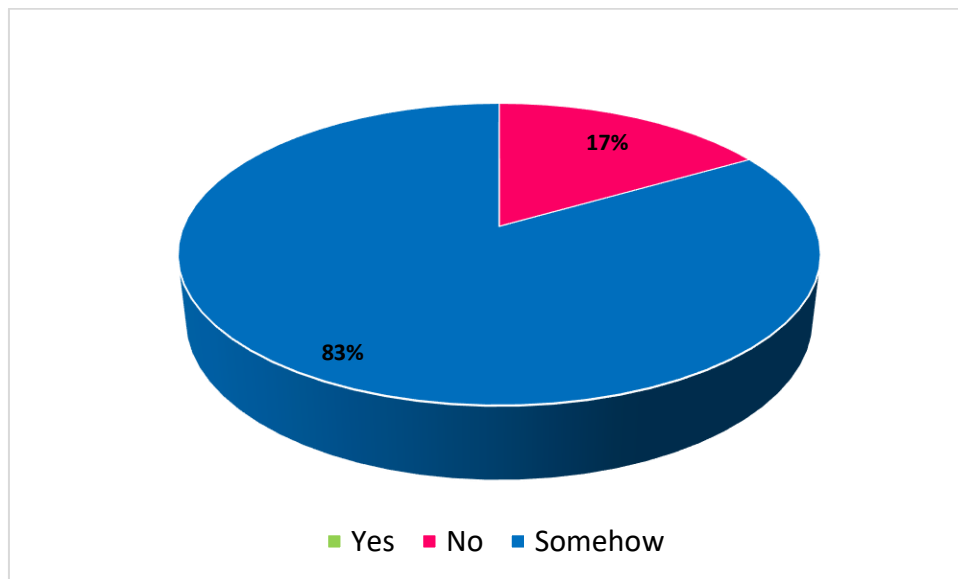
Figure3.29. Teachers' Perceptions about their Students' Thinking Abilities

The purpose behind raising this question is to investigate the teachers' perceptions about their students in terms of whether being critical thinkers or not. Based on displayed data above, no teacher out of the six teachers picked out the "yes" answer; implying that their students are not absolutely critical thinkers. Conversely, one teacher (17%) merely selected the "no" option revealing that students are by no means regarded as critical thinkers. However, the majority of

teachers, constituting a number of five (83%) deemed their students to be somehow able to think critically. Reflecting on the majority of the subjects' responses, one cannot fail to notice that there is a deficiency of critical thinking skills among EFL students.

Q3: If yes, how would you grade your students' level in terms of thinking critically?
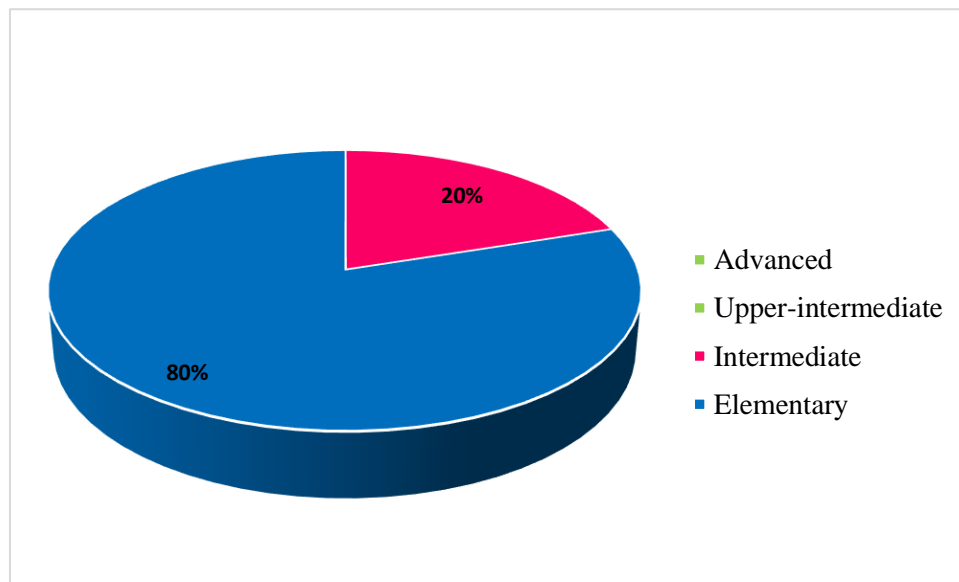
Figure 3.30. Teachers' Estimate of their Students' Critical Thinking Level

Having said in the previous question that there is a deficiency in critical thinking skills among students, this item is devised in order for teachers to further rate their students' critical thinking level. Thus, among a total of six, only five teachers were expected to take part in responding to this question. Options "a" and "b", referring to advanced and upper-intermediate levels, were not opted for by any of the five teachers in the sample. This denoted that students don't possess higher-order thinking levels. Besides, one teacher (20%) out of five selected the option "c"; considering their students to have an intermediate level in terms of thinking critically.

The rest of the teachers (80%), representing four teachers, went for the last option "d", revealing their students' critical thinking level to be elementary.

Q4: Do you encourage your students to read?
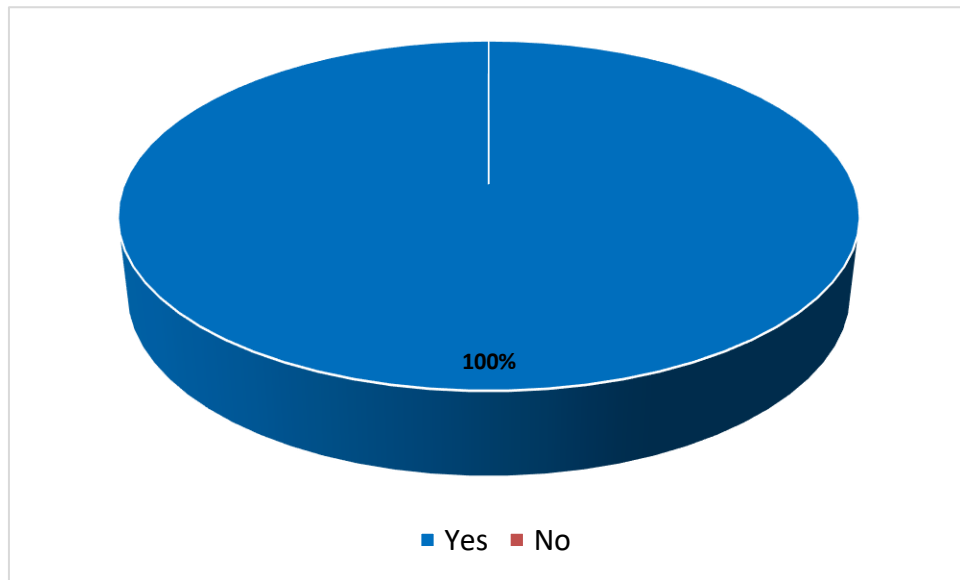
Figure 3.31. Teachers' Encouragement for their Students' to Read

When asked whether or not teachers encourage their students to read, all of the subjects (100%) agreed that they do. Put differently, six teachers out of a total of six do catalyze their students to read. In this regard, teachers are completely aware of the importance of reading, and that successful learners are first and foremost readers. Once again, this showed the teachers' interest in promoting reading among their students and their remarkable contribution to creating a generation full of intellectually competent individuals.

Q5: If so, you encourage them for the sake of?
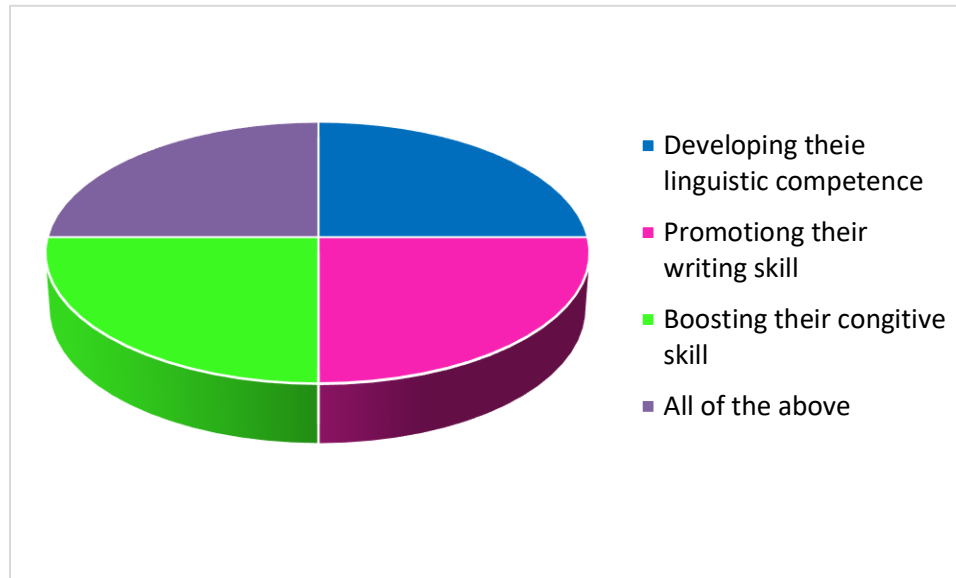
Figure 3.32. Teachers' Purpose behind Encouraging their Students to Read

This complementary question is intentionally designed to investigate the aims that teachers pursue through encouraging their students to read. Interestingly enough, all the six teachers (100%) revealed that all the provided options (a+b+c) are indeed goals they try to achieve when catalyzing their students to read. In other words, all teachers indicated that students' reading encouragement aims at developing their linguistic competence, promoting their writing skill and boosting their cognitive skill. Only one teacher added another option besides all the provided ones; claiming that reading is central to the honing of lifelong learning skills.

Q6: What do you suggest them to read?

a) Novels   b) Short stories   c) Academic books and articles   d) Magazines

e) Encyclopedias   f) All of the above   g) Others
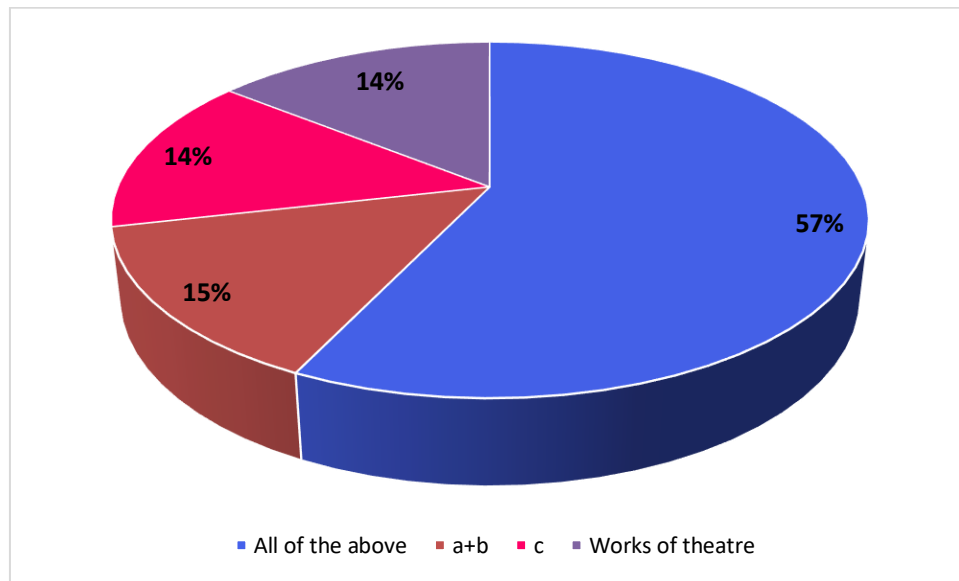
Figure3.33. Type of Literature Teachers Suggest to Read

In response to this question, the reason behind asking it is the need to know the type of literature that teachers suggest their students to read. The above obtained results indicated that the one teacher (17%) out of six teachers suggested both novels and short stories. As for academic books and articles, another teacher (17%) picked it out. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that one teacher, besides choosing all the provided options, selected others; adding works of theatre to the already stated options. Fortunately, the majority of teachers, comprising a number of four (66%), reported that they would suggest all of the above options; including novels, short stories, academic books and articles, magazines and encyclopedia. By way of illustration, suggesting

different types of literature to students and not sticking to only one thing shows that every type of it holds a specific significance that is different than the other one.

Q7: Do you think that EFL students lack critical reading and critical thinking skills?
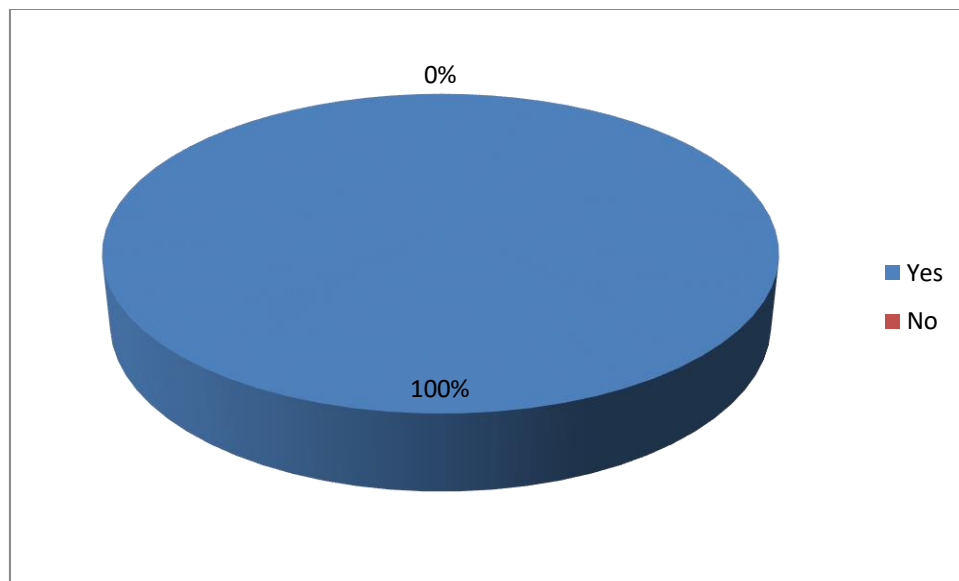
Figure 3.34. Teachers' Attitudes towards Lacking Critical Reading and Critical Thinking Skills

This item is devised to figure out teachers' perceptions about the ability to detect their students' critical reading and critical thinking skills' deficiencies. A quick glance on the represented data above reveal that all of the six respondents opted for "yes" in answer to the this question; a hundred percent of the subjects underscored that EFL students do lack both critical reading and thinking skills.

Q8: If yes, why do they lack these skills?

This item is an open-ended question which teachers may answer in different ways. It can be synthesized that all teachers agreed upon the same idea; that is, their views points were identical. It is reported that most of the students don't read, they however, had the habit to learn through memorization not deep learning. Differently put, students' lack of critical reading and critical thinking skills is mainly resultant of the absence of motivation to read critically and the lack of exposure to cognitive skills, and to reading at first place. Pushing further, lack of awareness is said to be one of the major causes which plays a part in bringing about deficiencies in critical reading and critical thinking skills. Over and above that, two respondents throw blame on the instructional system; claiming that it doesn't provide a room for teaching these skills. They declared that it doesn't encourage students to raise questions, instead they are accustomed to being spoon fed.

Q9: Which of the following activities do you give your students to do in class?

a) Analyzing and interpreting   b) Putting in order c) Categorizing d) Synthesizing

e) Speculating f) Sharing general information   g) Sharing personal information   h) Creative projects i) Role plays   j) Presentations and debates k) Other activities
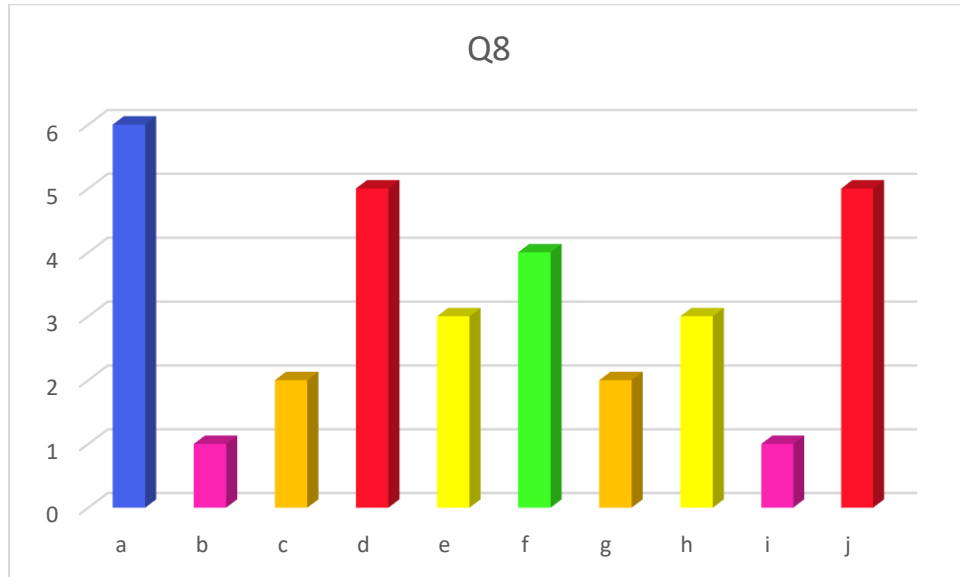
Figure 3.35. Teachers' Activities Given to Students

In an attempt to discover the activities given by the teachers to their students to accomplish in class, this question was set out. It is worth professing that all of the six respondents' activities given to be fulfilled in their instruction are not limited to merely one type. Instead, they offered a multiplicity of activities to be carried out; namely analyzing, synthesizing, speculating, creative projects, role plays and many more. By way of illustration, the reason behind raising all of these activities is to enhance students' understanding, skills and effectiveness of their learning. Pushing further, each activity provided in the options allows for the students to

deepen their learning in the sense that each one approaches multiple styles of learning. In this regard, understanding their different learning styles is of a great help for students in knowing how to learn. Thereby, learners become more autonomous and accountable for their own learning.

Q10: As a teacher, what are the most effective reading strategies that you would recommend to your students?
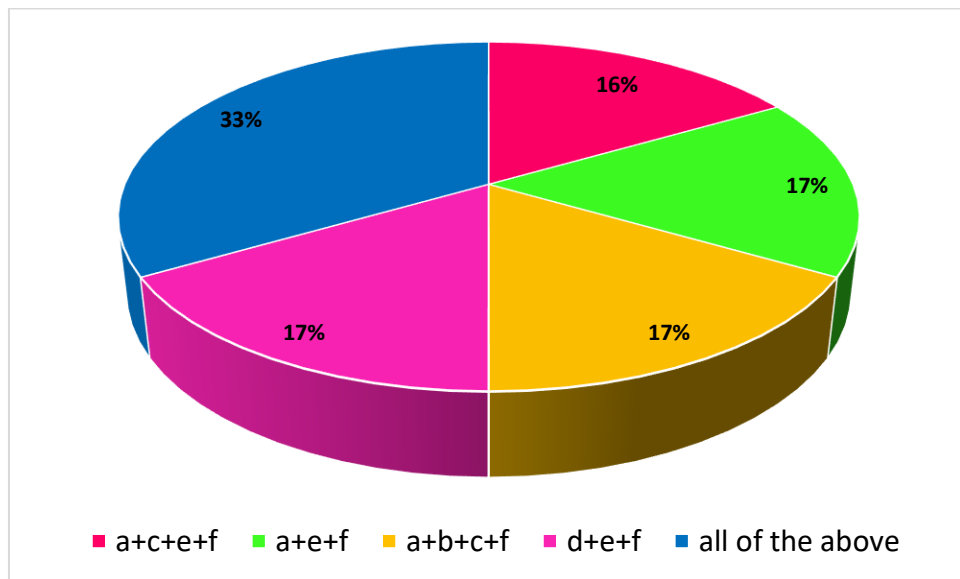
Figure 3.36. Teachers' Effective Strategies Recommended to Students

Attempting to discover the teachers' most effective reading strategies recommended to their students, this item was set. As indicated in the displayed data, four (67%) informants picked out multiple options. Options (a+c+e+f); referring to previewing and predicting, scanning, paraphrasing and inferring were selected by one teacher. Moreover, options (a+e+f) implying previewing and predicting, paraphrasing and inferring were also opted for by one teacher. Also,

another teacher chose options (a+b+c+f); relating to previewing and predicting, skimming, scanning and inferring. The last teacher went for options (d+e+f); being summarizing, paraphrasing and inferring. As opposed to them, the remaining two teachers (33%) revealed that all the provided options above are equally effective reading strategies in developing students' critical thinking skills. Basically, these various answers proved that critical reading is of a great deal that is why those respondents chose all the options to refer to its effectiveness. This goes in harmony with what Nur'azizah et al (2021) assert: "The critical thinking skills are needed because with the critical thinking skills if students encounter difficult questions, they can think in-depth and careful in making decisions and answers to the questions" (p. 5). Put another way, if learners are to be critical thinkers, they should preview and predict, skim, scan, summarize, paraphrase and infer any piece of information given to them.

Q11: To what extent do you agree that developing students' critical thinking skills is very needed in terms of enhancing their academic achievements?

100%

■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Not sure ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree
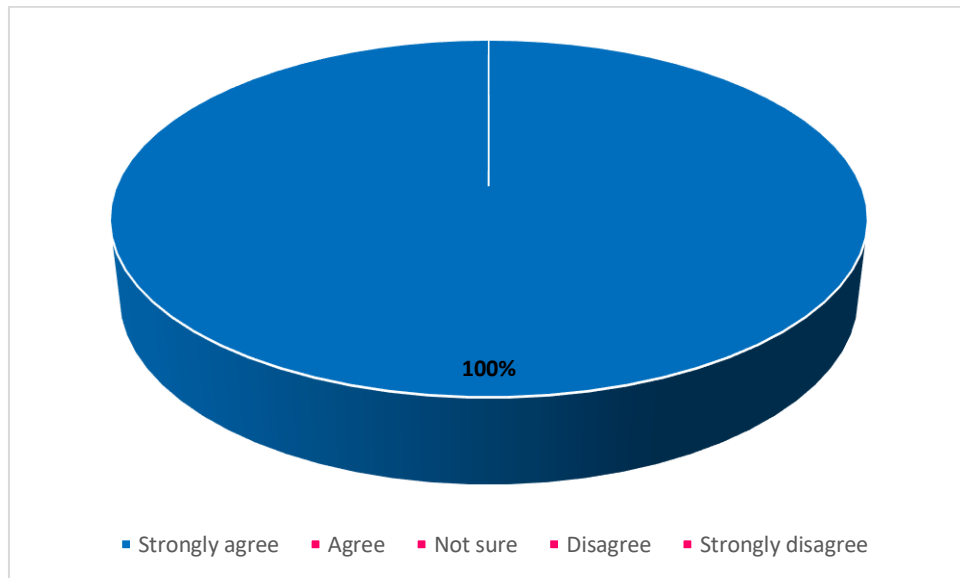
Figure 3.37. Teachers' Perceptions about the contribution of Critical Thinking in Enhancing Students' Academic Achievements

This item is devised to investigate the teachers' views towards the effectiveness of the development of critical thinking skills as a way of enhancing students' academic achievements. When invited to respond to this question, the whole sample (100%) reacted positively. To express it differently, six teachers strongly agreed that developing students' critical thinking skills is very needed to enhance their academic achievements. It is further underscored that in the context of higher education, critical thinking is inherently linked to students' ability to analyze and synthesize. These two practices are, fairly and squarely, contingent on critical thinking. Put in other words, critical thinking encourages students to be actively involved in different academic areas; for doing so, students are required to perform better and pass to more advanced levels by

working with tasks that are more complicated and entail critical thinking. By way of an alternative, developing critical thinking skills helps students not only in their academic achievements but also in real life situations; knowing what and how to do in the right way, how to act and react are all arrived at by thinking critically. Thereby, it is the way for creating well-rounded citizens, besides intellectually competent individuals. This goes in accordance with what Taghva et al (2021) confirm: "critical thinking is one of the important effective factors on the academic achievement. Indeed, learners with critical thinking learn many abilities and competences which improve their effectiveness" (p. 19).

Q12: To what extent do you think that critical thinking as a skill can be taught explicitly in a separate module as much as the other four skills?
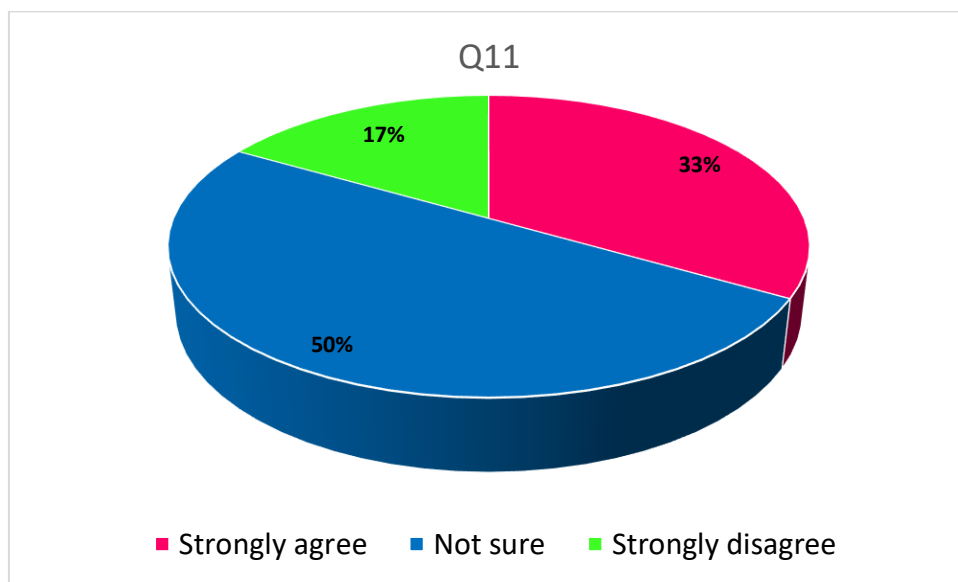
Figure 3.38. Teachers' Perceptions about the Explicit Teaching of Critical Thinking

Having said that critical thinking enhances students' academic achievements, it is aimed

through this item to pick the teachers' brain to see if they show approval to the explicit teaching of critical thinking as a separate module. Unexpectedly, only two teachers (33%) showed strong approval to teaching critical thinking as a separate module, three teachers (50%) exhibited uncertainty; being not sure of doing so. As opposed to them, one respondent (17%) raised objection; by strongly disagreeing on the explicit teaching of critical thinking skills. Although there was consensus among teachers about the countless benefits of critical thinking on students' academic achievements and even in real life, yet some teachers prefer sitting on the fence. There is some type of hesitation as to integrating the teaching of critical thinking into the educational system. This hesitation might stem from the fear of the students' negative reaction towards the teaching of such skills or maybe this step should be planned ahead of time.

Q13: Which among these practical strategies do you think will better foster students' critical thinking skills?

a) Testing for conceptual independence b) Looking for counter arguments c) Asking open-ended questions   d) Identifying dependent problems   e) All of the above   f) Others
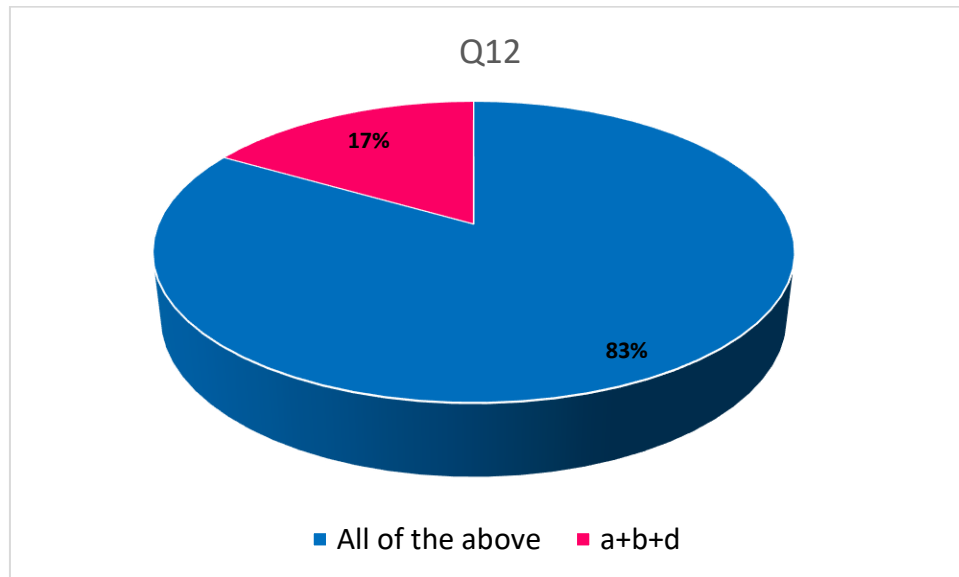
Figure 3.39. Strategies that foster Students' Critical Thinking Skills According to the teachers

Responding to this question, it is meant to know some useful strategies teachers make use of to boost students' critical thinking skills. As shown in the stated above data, the overwhelming majority of five informants (83%) out of six opted for all the provided options; that is, testing for conceptual independence, looking for counter arguments, asking open-ended questions and identifying dependent reasons are equally regarded as practical in fostering students' critical thinking skills. A minority of one teacher (17%) excluded asking open-ended questions from the list; maintaining for only testing for conceptual independence, looking for counter arguments and identifying dependent reasons.

Q14: Additional comments and suggestions.

In this question, teachers were given the total freedom to add any suggestions regarding the issue of critical reading and critical thinking skills. Only three teachers, however, happened to contribute some further comments. They emphasized that critical reading is the key to a critical thinking mind, and the latter is the doorway to a successful academic writing. What's more, they asserted that even when the system doesn't devote space for critical reading and critical thinking, teachers can create that sphere for themselves and by themselves. Thereupon, they further pointed out that being aware of the paramount importance accorded to critical thinking, the stakeholders are called upon to emphasize it in teaching curricula and practices.

3.5.4. Discussion of the Main Findings of the Teachers' Questionnaire

Upon careful analysis, the answers provided by teachers prove, again, that critical reading is undoubtedly significant for the development of critical thinking. By considering the answers provided by the participants, a positive correlation is found between their answers and the stated hypothesis, revealing that critical reading helps in developing EFL students' critical thinking skills and enhancing their academic achievements. Additionally, just like the students' questionnaire, the answers of the teachers' questionnaire prove that teachers are doing their best to sensitize about the role of reading in developing critical thinking. Furthermore, all the teachers admit that EFL students lack both critical reading and critical thinking skills. Situating the discussion on a pedagogical context, this lack is noticeable by dint of the instructional system that

does not encourage students to raise questions, instead it programs them to being spoon fed all the way.

In light of the analysis of the data gathered from the teachers' questionnaire, which have provided interesting and reliable responses, one is allowed to investigate the significant role of critical reading in developing critical thinking.

3.6. limitations and Reccommendations

3.6.1. Limitations of the study

There were some limitations confronted in the course of carrying out this study. The first limitation this research has encountered is time constraints. We would have utilized an experiment to conduct this study for more reliable results. By dint of time limitation, it was decided on using questionnaires instead. The second prominent difficulty that was encountered during the accomplishment of this research is the size of the sample. As mentioned formerly, the questionnaire was addressed merely to 80 third year EFL students; because for some reasons, most third years students were not attending, on the days we were distributing the questionnaires. Therefore, we would have enlarged our sample to at least 100 participants for more results generalizability.

3.6.2. Recommendations for Pedagogy and Research

Considering what have been covered in the theoretical part and the obtained data from both the students' questionnaire and teachers' questionnaire in the practical part, and in light of the limitations of the study discussed above, of crucial significance is the account for a variety of

recommendations that are proposed to students, teachers and future researchers. This enables students and teachers to gain much awareness regarding the attribution of critical reading in developing critical thinking skills and giving them much attention by devoting more space in teaching them. Along the same line, future researchers whom might share the same interest with the current study are concerned with some stated recommendations for further research.

3.6.2.1. Recommendations for Students

● Students should incorporate reading into their lifestyle.

● They should exert efforts to free up some of their time to read at least twice a week. In this regard, they should be encouraged to borrow books from the university library so that their reading habits would be inculcated.

● They are required to learn more about critical reading and its significance.

● As regards the prominent strategies of critical reading, students should make use of them in order to boost their reading skills.

● Students should learn how to analyze and criticize what they are reading.

● When being introduced to any type of information, students are called for raising as many questions as possible.

● Students must be aware of the significance of critical reading on the development of critical thinking.

3.6.2.2. Recommendations for Teachers

● Teachers should motivate their students to read either inside or outside the classroom.

● They should devote more time inside the classroom for practicing reading.

● In the course of their teaching, teachers are required to teach their students some reading strategies that help in developing their thinking skills.

● Within their course objectives, teachers should shed light on familiarizing their students with the concept of critical thinking skills.

● Being aware of the importance accorded to critical thinking, teachers should urge their students to ask questions continuously.

● Instead of spoon feeding students, teachers are rather asked to catalyze them seeking information on their own.

● Last but not least, teachers should ask the ministry to allow integrating reading as a separate module in the educational system.

3.6.2.3. Recommendations for Future Researchers

The current study revolves around the bearings of critical reading in developing critical thinking skills in the EFL context. It is conducted as a descriptive and exploratory investigation of the significance of critical reading in promoting critical thinking skills to third year students of English at Mila University, Department of Foreign Languages. Thus, it is resolved as a requisite step which might smooth the way for other research works to be fulfilled with the purpose to examine the current issue in depth, even more. By way of explanation, using an experiment along with questionnaire would better consolidate the obtained results since the experiment can profoundly measure and analyze the progress of the students' level of critical thinking skills after

being exposed to reading. Therefore, this would make the obtained results more reliable and solid.

Conclusion

The correlation between critical reading and critical thinking has always peaked the interest of reading researchers. Admittedly, many of them anticipated that critical reading leads to critical thinking down the road. They claim that people who read continuously, their abilities to think critically increases significantly. Thereupon, this separate chapter was devised to find out how true that claim is.

By way of conclusion, this chapter is devoted to the practical part of the current study which revolves around the role of critical reading in the development of critical thinking skills among EFL students. Aims of the research, sample and data collection tools are dealt with in this current chapter. Furthermore, the chapter covers a profound description, administration and analysis of both the students' questionnaire and the teachers' questionnaire in addition to the discussion of the main findings. By considering the answers provided from both students and teachers, it could be noted that teachers, from their part, highly stimulate their students to read in general, and critically in particular. What is more, and regarding the perspectives shown by both students and teachers, one can say that critical reading has a positive influence on ameliorating students' critical thinking skills which strongly confirms the hypothesis of the current research. Ultimately, this chapter also offers some of the encountered limitations during the accomplishment of this work as well as some recommendations for both students, teachers and future researchers.

General Conclusion

As a matter of fact, being a critical thinker can open many closed doors to people who want to pursue a successful career in their life. Hence, much attention was directed towards finding ways to promote critical thinking skills. The aim behind conducting this study is to investigate the important role of critical reading in promoting critical thinking skills among EFL students.

The first chapter is concerned with the first variable of our study "critical reading". To begin with, many definitions are given to define both the concept of reading and critical reading. Stepwise, discussion is shifted towards the distinction made between active and passive reading. Furthermore, the prominent types of reading being; extensive and intensive reading are touched upon. Next, some common reading strategies are covered including: predicting and previewing, skimming, scanning and summarizing. This is followed by the significance of reading as well as the difference between reading in L1 and L2. Last but not least, there is a brief account for some helpful techniques used by EFL teachers to teach and assess reading in EFL classrooms.

The second chapter, however, deals with "critical thinking" which is the second variable of the study. It sets out to offer a historical background on the notion of critical thinking, then raising this issue by defining it from three main approaches; the philosophical, the cognitive psychological and the educational approach. Besides, it accounts for the significance of critical thinking; being in the classroom, in the workplace and in life in general. Further, focus shifts towards the six developmental stages of critical thinking, followed by nine universal intellectual standards of it. Subsequently, some common approaches are elucidated in order for critical

thinking to be taught in EFL classes. In closing, some activities are provided for the assessment of critical thinking in EFL classrooms.

As for the third chapter, it is mainly devoted to the field work wherein data is gathered and carefully analyzed. In search of gathering data, both a students' questionnaire and a teachers' questionnaire were made use of. The students' questionnaire was distributed to eighty third year EFL students at Mila University, and the teachers' questionnaire was administered to six teachers at the department of Foreign Languages, University of Mila. The major findings of the current study indicate that critical reading does really help in promoting critical thinking skills based on the students' and teachers' answers. Thus, it is announced that the stated hypothesis that claims that there is a positive relationship between critical reading and critical thinking is accepted.

For reminder purposes and with reference to the obtained results, students are recommended to orient their attention towards critical reading in order to level up their critical thinking skills. Besides, it is noteworthy that this current research is of a limited scope and its results are not the absolute truth, so they are open to debate and critique. At the end, future researchers are encouraged to consider conducting further research in the same area to either consolidate the obtained data in this dissertation or perhaps discover different results that don't match what has been found in this study.

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Appendix A

The Students' Questionnaire:

Dear student,

This questionnaire serves as a data gathering tool of research work for the Master's Degree in Didactics at Mila University. Through this piece of research, entitled "The Bearings of Critical Reading on the Development of Critical Thinking Skills in the EFL Context", we aim at investigating the impact of reading on the development of critical thinking.

We are kindly asking for your help to fill out this questionnaire because your answers will be of a great help. We would like to inform you that all of your answers will be kept confidential and anonymous and only used for study purposes.

Please put a tick (✓) in the box corresponding to your answer, and note that more than one answer is possible in some questions.

Section One: Background Information

1. How long have you been studying English?

....

2. Are you motivated to learn English?

Yes ☐   No ☐

- Explain...

....

3. How do you perceive your level in English?

a) Excellent ☐

b) Good ☐

c) Fair ☐

d) Not sufficient ☐

Section Two: Critical Reading

1. Do you like reading in English?

Yes ☐   Somehow ☐   No ☐

2. How often do you read in English?

    a) Always ☐

    b) Sometimes ☐

    c) Rarely ☐

    d) Never ☐

3. What do you like to read the most?

    a) Novels ☐

    b) Short stories ☐

    c) Academic books and articles ☐

    d) Newspapers ☐

    e) Magazines ☐

    f) Others...

4. For what purpose do you usually read?

    a) Pleasure ☐

    b) To better understand the content of the difficult lessons ☐

c) To improve other skills ☐

d) To enrich your vocabulary and knowledge ☐

e) Others...

....

5. Do your teachers encourage you to read?

a) Always ☐

b) Sometimes ☐

c) Rarely ☐

d) Never ☐

6. Do you have difficulties in reading in English?

Yes ☐ No ☐

7. If so, which kind of difficulties do encounter when reading in English?

a) Vocabulary ☐

b) Grammar ☐

c) Comprehension ☐

d) Analysis ☐

e) All of them ☐

f) Nothing ☐

8. Which of the following do you consider the main reason for these difficulties?

a) Lack of reading ☐

b) Way of reading (don't know how to read) ☐

c) Others

(precise)…..……………

………………………………………………………………..

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

Yes ☐ No ☐

-Whatever your answer, please justify………………………………………………...

....

10. In your opinion, what does critical reading require?

a) Reading that involves understanding the writer's point of view ☐

b) Reading that involves asking questions ☐

c) Reading that leads to better writing ☐

d) Others...

Section Three: Critical Thinking

1. Are you aware of the existence of critical thinking skill?

Yes ☐ No ☐

2. If so, define it in a few lines…………………………………………………….

....

....

3. How would you rate your level in terms of thinking critically?

a) High ☐

b) Average ☐

c) Low □

4. Do your teachers draw your attention to the existence of such skill?

Yes □   No □

5. When your teacher gives you an idea, how would you perceive it?

    a) You accept it as it is   □

    b) You make your own interpretation   □

6. Do you think that critical thinking as a skill should be studied explicitly as much like reading, writing, listening and speaking?

Yes □   No □

Whatever your answer, please justify……………………………………………………..

....

....

7. In your opinion, what qualities should a critical thinker possess?

    a) Questioning every given information   □

    b) Analysing ideas and interpreting the hidden meaning   □

    c) Evaluating the evidence for alternative points of view   □

    d) Finding solutions and making logical decisions   □

    e) Drawing conclusions based on evidence and feasible assumptions   □

    f) All of the above   □

    g) Others……………………………………………………………………………...

    …………………………………………………………………………………….

Section Four: Critical Reading and Critical Thinking

1. To what extent do you think critical reading affects critical thinking?

   a) To a great extent ☐

   b) To a certain extent ☐

   c) To a very small extent ☐

2. Has your critical thinking really improved through reading?

Yes ☐   No ☐

3. Do you agree that critical reading is a way of developing one's critical thinking?

   a) Strongly agree ☐

   b) Agree ☐

   c) Disagree ☐

   d) Strongly disagree ☐

4. When you read a particular material, you tend to?

   a) Infer meaning using your background knowledge ☐

   b) Analyze and synthesize its content ☐

   c) Evaluate the value of its content ☐

   d) Criticize its author's ideas, views, etc. ☐

   e) Absorb the content without questioning its validity ☐

5. Your thinking process is more active while

   a) Reading and writing ☐

   b) Listening and speaking ☐

Thank you very much for your collaboration

Appendix B

The Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear teachers,

   This questionnaire is a major part of the accomplishment of our Master's Degree dissertation in Didactics at Mila University that revolves around the Bearings of Critical Reading on the Development of Critical Thinking Skills in the EFL Context. Hence, you are kindly requested to devote some of your valuable time to respond to our questionnaire that attempts to investigate the impact of critical reading on the development of critical thinking skills.

    We would be very grateful if you could help us complete our research because your contribution is of paramount significance. Please read each statement carefully then put a tick (✔) in the box corresponding to your answer. Your personal view is our concern.

Section One: Background Information

   1. What is your professional degree?

   ....

   2. How long have you been teaching at university?

   ....

   3. During your teaching experience at university, what are the modules you have been teaching?

....

....

Section Two: Critical Reading and Critical Thinking

1. Do you think that critical reading is significant for the development of critical thinking?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If 'yes', please justify?

....

....

....

2. Do you consider your students to be critical thinkers?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Somehow ☐

3. If yes, how would you grade your students' level in terms of thinking critically?

    a) Advanced ☐

    b) Upper-intermediate ☐

    c) Intermediate ☐

    d) Elementary ☐

4. Do you encourage your students to read?

Yes ☐ No ☐

5. If so, you encourage them for the sake of

     a) Developing their linguistic competence ☐

     b) Promoting their writing skill ☐

     c) Boosting their cognitive skill ☐

     d) All of the above ☐

     e) Others...

6. What do you suggest them to read?

     a) Novels ☐

     b) Short stories ☐

     c) Academic books and articles ☐

     d) Magazines ☐

     e) Encyclopedias ☐

     f) All of the above ☐

     g) Others...

7. Do you think that EFL students lack critical reading and critical thinking skills?

Yes ☐   No ☐

8. If 'yes', why do they lack these skills?

....

....

9. What of the following activities do you give your students to do in class? (You can opt for more than one answer)

a) Analyzing and interpreting ☐

b) Putting in order ☐

c) Categorizing ☐

d) Synthesizing ☐

e) Speculating ☐

f) Sharing general information ☐

g) Sharing personal information ☐

h) Creative projects (Project Based Learning) ☐

i) Role plays ☐

j) Presentations and debates ☐

k) Other activities...

10. As a teacher what are the most effective reading strategies that you would recommend to your students?

a) Previewing and predicting ☐

b) Skimming ☐

c) Scanning ☐

d) Summarizing ☐

e) Paraphrasing ☐

f) Inferring ☐

i) All of the above ☐

11. To what extent do you think that developing students' critical thinking skills is very needed in terms of enhancing their academic achievements?

a) Strongly agree ☐

b) Agree ☐

c) Not sure ☐

d) Disagree ☐

e) Strongly disagree ☐

Whatever your answer, please justify………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………...…

…………………………………………………………………………………………….

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

a) Strongly agree ☐

b) Agree ☐

c) Not sure ☐

d) Disagree ☐

e) Strongly disagree ☐

13. Which among these practical strategies do you think will better foster students' critical thinking skills?

a) Testing for conceptual independence (To create an answer rather than recall something) ☐

b) Looking for counter arguments ☐

c) Asking open-ended questions ☐

e) Identifying dependent reasons ☐

f) All of the above ☐

i)Others...

....

14. Additional comments and suggestions, if any, you are welcome.

....

....

....

....

....

....

Thank you for your collaboration

ملخص

تعتبر مهارة التفكير النقدي إحدى المهارات التي يجب على طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية اكتسابها لأنها تحمل عددًا كبيرًا من المزايا للطلاب ، داخل وخارج الفصل الدراسي. في الواقع ، يُقال أن القراءة النقدية تساعد في تعزيز مهارات التفكير النقدي. وللتعامل مع هذا السياق ، تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى تحديد ما إذا كان المعلمون والطلاب على دراية بأهمية القراءة وما إذا كانت تساهم في تطوير مهارات التفكير النقدي. في الواقع ، يُفترض في هذا البحث أن الطلاب الذين يتبنون القراءة النقدية كعادة ستحسن مهاراتهم في التفكير النقدي في المستقبل. في محاولة لاختبار هذه الفرضية ، تم اختيار طريقة وصفية ؛ باستخدام كل من استبيان الطلاب واستبيان المعلمين من أجل التحقيق في دور القراءة النقدية في تعزيز التفكير النقدي بالإضافة إلى معرفة إلى أي مدى يدرك كل من معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية والطلاب أهمية القراءة. يتم توزيع استبيان الطلاب على ثمانين طالبًا في السنة الثالثة والثمانين من طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في قسم اللغات الأجنبية بجامعة ميلا ، بينما يتم إدارة استبيان المعلمين على ستة مدرسين يقومون بالتدريس في جامعة ميلا أيضًا. في ضوء النتائج الرئيسية لهذا البحث ، تم الكشف عن أن طلاب ومعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية يدركون الفوائد اللامحدودة للقراءة وأن القراءة النقدية تساعد في تعزيز مهارات التفكير النقدي بين طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. في الختام ، يقدم العمل البحثي العديد من التوصيات المفيدة المقترحة لكل من علم أصول التدريس والبحث المستقبلي من أجل الخوض في دور القراءة النقدية في تعزيز مهارات التفكير النقدي لدى المتعلمين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: القراءة النقدية ، التفكير النقدي ، طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية ، اللغات الأجنبية ، تعزيز التفكير.

Résumé

La pensée critique est l'une des compétences incontournables que les étudiants d'EFL devraient acquérir, car elle présente une pléthore de mérites pour les étudiants, tant à l'intérieur qu'à l'extérieur de la salle de classe. En fait, on dit que la lecture critique aide à promouvoir la pensée critique. Face à ce contexte, la présente étude vise à déterminer si les enseignants et les élèves sont conscients de l'importance de la lecture et si elle contribue au développement de la pensée critique. De fait, il est hypothétique dans cette recherche que les étudiants qui adoptent la lecture critique comme une habitude améliorerait leurs compétences de pensée critique en bout de ligne. Pour tenter de tester cette hypothèse, on a opté pour une méthode descriptive; utiliser à la fois un questionnaire destiné aux élèves et un questionnaire destiné aux enseignants afin d'étudier le rôle de la lecture critique dans la promotion de la pensée critique, en plus de déterminer dans quelle mesure les enseignants et les étudiants d'EFL sont conscients de l'importance de la lecture. Le questionnaire destiné aux étudiants est distribué à quatre-vingt-troisième année d'EFL au Département des langues étrangères de l'Université de Mila, tandis que le questionnaire destiné aux enseignants est également adressé à six enseignants de l'Université de Mila. À la lumière des principales conclusions de cette recherche, il est révélé que les étudiants et les enseignants d'EFL sont conscients des avantages infinis de la lecture et que la lecture critique contribue à promouvoir les compétences de pensée critique chez les étudiants d'EFL. En conclusion, les travaux de recherche proposent une multiplicité de recommandations utiles à la pédagogie et à la recherche future dans le but d'approfondir le rôle de la lecture critique dans l'amélioration des compétences de pensée critique des apprenants.

Mots clés: lecture critique, pensée critique, étudiants EFL, langues étrangères, promotion de la pensée.