

Critical Reading Strategies In Reading Texts of Vision One

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Abstract

This article examines the importance of fostering critical reading skills in the classroom, moving beyond simply understanding the content of a coursebook text. It argues that critical reading empowers students to analyze, interpret, and engage with texts on a deeper level, becoming active participants in the learning process. The article explores various strategies and techniques that educators can implement to cultivate critical reading skills, including questioning the author's purpose and intended audience, identifying biases and assumptions, and evaluating evidence. By fostering these critical thinking abilities, students become more discerning consumers of information, capable of navigating the complexities of academic discourse and real-world texts. The article concludes by highlighting the transformative potential of critical reading for both academic success and lifelong learning.

Key word: critical reading, reading strategie, vision one

1. Introduction

As stated Harmer (2007), language is a systematic means of communicating ideas or feelings by the use of conventionalized signs, sounds, gestures, or marks having understood meanings. English language has four skills and some subskills that teachers have to pay attention to all of them and help students to master them in the process of language learning. As claimed by Dreyer (1998:18) cited in Apsari (2016) reading is the most important skill for second language learners in academic contexts. Heba (2019: 112) claimed that reading is one of the most important skills that students must achieve to be successful educationally, occupationally, and socially. It enables students not only for learning, job and pleasure but also for language acquisition. Al-Khrisheh (2008) stated that reading is an urgent skill for EFL students because it opens the gate to further information, knowledge, and improvement. AlRegeb (2009) and Alkhawaldeh (2011) also talked about the importance of reading in developing learners' vocabulary and improving their communication skills. Reading is one the important skills in teaching English, because it helps students gain their knowledge. They can also ameliorate their vocabulary and they can get more information about what they need, because a lot of books and resources use English. Carrell (1989, p.121-134) considers reading as probably the most important skill in academic contexts because most students in academic settings learn a second language especially English to acquire information through reading. Many researchers have stated that reading is a complex process which requires the combination of attention, memory and some other processes. The reading process is an interaction between what writer has written and the cognitive process of reader's minds. Several researchers have proclaimed that EFL reading as a complete grasp of meaning in a written text in which a dynamic and growing appreciation of interrelationships in the text is required (Yang, 2002).

Studies describe reading as an interactive cognitive process in which readers interact with the text using their prior knowledge and cultural background (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983; Carrell, 1987 Pritchard, 1990; McNamara & Kintsch, 1996; Huang, 1997), and the success of reading comprehension depends on factors such as types of a text, the genre of text structure, reader's language proficiency, text difficulty and task demands (Alderson, 2000). According to Grabe and Stoller (2001), reading process requires that the reader draw knowledge from a text and mix it with information and assumptions that the reader already has. It marks "the ability to draw meaning from the printed page and interpret this information appropriately" (Grabe & Stoller, 2002, p.9). Nassaji (2003) expressed reading as a multi factor process by concentrating on the main parts placed in it. In conclusion reading is a complicated and multi factor process that readers use different things like their background knowledge and strategies in it. Peirce (2006) declares that it is clear reading is a thinking process. Hence, using good strategies provides readers with a better understanding more than obtaining the main elements of text.

Therefore, readers use different tools such as strategies in order to elicit meaning from the text. From among various types of learning strategies, reading comprehension strategies have long been recognized by researchers of second/foreign language reading (Brantmeier, 2002; and Slataci & Akyel, 2002).

King (2008) believes that four factors are included in reading comprehension: the reader, the text, the strategies, and the goal. He also tries to emphasize that what actually makes the difference is the reading strategies. For king, the single most important factor in reading is the

strategies learners use. He also emphasized that what make differences between poor and good readers are reading strategies. According to literature, good readers of all ages make use of conscious, active comprehension strategies prior, during and after reading (Pressley & Wharton-McDonald, 1997).

1.1. Definition of Reading

As stated in Urquhart (1998) cited in Parmawati & Yugafiati (2017) reading means dealing with language message in written form. Harvey (1990) cited in Haryudin & Suhana (2017) argues that the aim of reading in language is to inform ourselves about something we are interested in, or challenge on certain matters. Reading is a psycholinguistic process. It demands partial use of available minimal language cues selected from perceptual input on the basis of the reader's expectation. As this partial information is processed, tentative decisions are made to be verified, rejected or refined as reading progresses (Goodman, 1970, p.260).

1.2. Reading Strategies

In the literature there have been many attempts to give a description for reading strategies. There has been always a lack of concord on the definition of reading strategies. Garner (1978) defined reading strategies as "Generally deliberate, playful activities undertaken by active learners, many times to remedy perceived cognitive failure" (p.50). Carrell (1998) also stated that "Reading strategies are of interest not only for what they reveal about the ways readers manage interactions with written text but also for how the use of strategies is related to effective comprehension" (p.97). According to Abbott (2006, p.637), reading strategies are "The mental operations for comprehension processes that readers select and apply in order to make sense of what they read". Reading strategies are those that readers use to understand the intended meaning.

1.3. Critical reading

To be critical means "a higher order thinking which brings in more rigorous analysis to problem solving of textual understanding and a way of developing more critical distance from the writer" (Pennycook:2001 :4). Many researchers have defined critical reading but, most of them have considered only some special parts of that. "a thinking process improved as a result of individuals learning to use language more constructively through skillful questioning" (Hafner, 1974 : 40), Critical reading is known as an active reading which requires an activity on the part of the learner (Schwegler, 2004), Critical reading suggests something more than the ability to understand the explicit meaning of a text, It includes application, analysis, evaluating and imagination (Philips & Sotiriou, 1992) and a critical reader is able to distinguish fact from opinion recognize intent, attitude and tone, and draw inferences and conclusion (Adams, 1989).

1.4. Critical reading strategies

According to Axelrod and Cooper (2002), annotate, preview, contextualize, outline, analyze opposition, summarize, paraphrase, synthesize, question, and reflect are the most remarkable strategies for critical reading.

Tovani (2000), claimed that critical readers need to analyze, to understand the text and then to explore it. So, Tovani (2000) proposed some critical reading strategies to assist the reading comprehension process on the part of students; they are the following:

Previewing is to get an overview of the structure of the text, cues, pictures, and personal experience prior to reading a text.

Analyzing the features of the text is examining and analyzing a textbook and determining how the features help them to find and use the information for learning.

Comparing and contrasting means helping students draw conclusions and expand their thinking about the importance of key similarities and differences.

Annotating that means describing and asking questions about the text.

Scanning and skimming means finding out the key features of the reading and getting the summary of the passage.

Facts versus opinions strategy refers to how facts can be stated and have concrete evidence whereas opinions refer to beliefs and values and can be argued.

Drawing conclusions means searching for signs in the text, considering what those clues elicit from prior knowledge, and making predictions.

Summarizing means presenting the main ideas of the text using learners' own words.

Classifying or categorizing information means putting items into one or more categories based on certain distinguishing features.

Generating questions is writing questions while reading the text for the first time, understanding will be increased if learners write a question for every paragraph.

It is important to draw the attention to the fact that merely reading words does not mean that the reader has achieved the goal of reading. That is, reading is an active process and requires that learners be instructed on several critical reading strategies to be able to comprehend and process the reading text. Combs (1992) viewed critical reading as an interactive process that uses several levels of thought simultaneously and stated that critical readers ask deep questions.

2. Literature review

It was so hard to find content analysis studies on the inclusion of critical reading strategies in textbooks. This is because the analysis of critical reading strategies in text books has not received the deserved attention and may be a new and recent topic.

Al husband (2019) investigated the inclusion of critical reading strategies in Jordanian EFL textbooks. The researcher designed a checklist that included ten critical reading strategies and she examined Action pack 9 book in order to see if the reading texts have included the strategies or not. The investigation demonstrated that seven of those ten strategies were included in the text book. Unlike the comparing and contrasting strategy and classifying and categorizing strategies which were limitedly included in the textbook, the generating questions strategy had a zero frequency and opinions strategy, scan and skimming strategy, and previewing strategy were heavily included.

Zabihi and Pordel (2011) examined the existence of critical reading strategies within reading textbooks based on a checklist that contained indicators of if a particular text promoted critical reading or not. Three reading textbooks were chosen to be analyzed according to three levels: critical thinking items, the use of appropriate tasks, and strategic instruction. The results showed that the textbooks met the first criterion to some extent, but they did not have the last two. The researchers emphasized the importance of examining the appropriateness of other reading textbooks in terms of employing critical reading strategies.

Takami (2009) analyzed textbooks to identify and categorize the reading strategies included in the textbooks used in some schools in the state of Washington. Content analysis was used to investigate six teachers' editions of textbooks to find included reading strategies. Results declared that very few reading strategies were integrated in the target textbooks. The researcher recommended revising the textbooks and using recent effective reading strategies to improve the teaching of reading and any other topic as reading is an important skill in any subject and necessary to be learned.

2.1. The importance of study

Many studies show the importance of critical reading strategies and a few studies show that critical reading strategies concentrate on higher levels of thinking in the textbooks. In Iran students start learning English late at school, so it is very important to provide them with good textbooks. On the other hand, after finishing high school students have to take an entrance exam for going to university and this requires higher levels of thinking. Therefore, the current study tries to recognize the included critical reading strategies in the vision one tenth grade textbooks used in Iran and whether they embed critical reading strategies or not.

3. Statement of the problem

It has been noticed by many researchers in Iran that EFL teachers mostly teach reading by using some traditional methods which mainly include the process of reading the text silently, answering some questions and finding meaning of some words by dictionary. This study tries to show whether readings of Iranian books include critical reading strategies or not. It also tries to help teachers to teach reading better by considering the existence of critical reading strategies and helping students to reach a higher level of thinking. So this study tries to answer this question: what extent readings in vision one book contain critical reading strategies?

4. Methodology

This is a content analysis study that tries to identify the degree to which reading texts in vision one book include critical reading strategies. The population of the study is the target textbook "Vision" series written by the Ministry of Education in Iran from the tenth grade to the twelfth grade. The sample of the study was Vision one for tenth grade. It is chosen because the grade tenth is the first year that students start studying English with new course books after three years studying English at school.

4.1. The instrument of the study

It was mentioned in previous parts that annotating, previewing, scanning and skimming, facts versus opinions, drawing conclusions, analyzing features of the text, summarizing,

comparing and contrasting, classifying and categorizing information, and generating questions were the most evidence based critical reading strategies. All the reading texts in vision one were checked to recognize the incorporation of the ten critical reading strategies. The analysis was implemented based on the presence of these strategies in the reading texts in the textbook and it was done by using a list of strategies. The unit of analysis was each exercise in the reading text in the four units of the textbook and the category of analysis was the type of critical reading strategy in each reading part of vision one. Different exercises after each text somewhat show what critical reading strategies readers may use to do the exercises. Teacher's guide is also another book that has been designed by education ministry to give teachers some piece of advice on teaching different parts of the book which somehow show the goal of different parts of the book. Many teachers read these instructions before going to class and tips about post reading part and exercises might lead teachers to ask students to use some special strategies.

5. Result and discussion

CRT	UNIT	ANNOTATING	PREVIEWING	SCANNING AND SKIMMING	FACTS VERSUS OPINIONS	DRAWING CONCLUSIONS	ANALYZING FEATURES	SUMMARIZING	COMPARING AND CONTRASTING	CLASSIFYING OR CATEGORIZING	GENERATING QUESTIONS
Unit 1	0	1	2	0	3	0	0	1	1	0	
Unit 2	0	1	2	0	3	0	0	1	1	0	

Unit 3	0	1	2	0	3	0	0	1	1	0
Unit 4	0	1	2	0	3	0	0	1	1	0

In this study researcher is looking to find the answer of the question, to what extent reading texts in Iranian EFL textbooks include critical reading strategies and the question is answered by a content analysis which is done by the researcher. Researcher analyzed the teacher guide and student book of vision one with a list of critical reading strategies and the analysis demonstrated that critical reading strategies have not received the due attention in vision one book. Vision one has four units and each unit has only one reading part and there are three types of exercises after each reading. Each reading includes three multiple choice questions, three true false questions and one matching halves questions and this is the same for all four units. There is also an exercise in units one and three after the grammar part and students are supposed to read the text, underline the grammatical structures they have learned in the unit and select the correct answers and in units two and four students read the conversation rather than a text. Students are also provided with an exercise after each unit and they are supposed to read a text and underline or circle a specific structure. They are also provided with a conversation that they answer some questions after that and make explanations.

In this study the researcher mentioned ten critical reading strategies which were annotating, previewing, scanning and skimming, facts versus opinions, drawing conclusions, analyzing information, summarizing, comparing and contrasting, classifying and categorizing information. After checking different exercises related to reading and analysis of vision one the researcher found out that only some of those critical reading strategies were considered in reading parts of vision one and the others had not received any attention in readings of the book. Generally, all of critical reading strategies were somehow used in the book and they were considered in different parts of a unit but not in readings. It was found out that some critical reading strategies like comparing and contrast, previewing, scanning and skimming, drawing conclusion, and classifying and categorizing information were considered by authors while working on reading parts of the course book. It is clear that education ministry and authors have considered some of these critical reading strategies in readings and almost all of them in vision one but it is not adequate and this study tries to work as a feedback for education ministry and group of authors and hope critical reading strategies specially in readings in vision one receive the attention they deserve in next issues. One of the most important critical reading strategies which had not received any attention in reading parts was generating question which can be so helpful for better understanding.

Hervey (2006) highlighted the significance of encouraging learners to pose their own questions, which helps them to focus on their reading skills, delve deeper into the text, clarify meaning, and reflect critically on what they have read. Furthermore, Hervey (2006) stated that research shows that learners who have been shown how to generate questions as they read outperform those who have not. Generating questions helps learners think

profoundly about the topic of reading, how it is presented, whose opinions and values are expressed, the authors' purpose for writing, and their reactions to the text.

Another strategy which was not widely used in the book was comparing and contrasting. It has been stated that Comparing different things and identifying their similarities and differences can help students to reach a high level of thinking and boost their learning. According to Marzano et al. (2001), the cognitive research shows that textbooks should challenge learners to link, connect, and integrate ideas; consequently, they will boost student achievement.

6. Conclusion

This shows all of ten critical reading strategies are important and they should be used in readings of a book. On the other hand, different types of exercises can challenge students and help them to achieve a higher level of thinking and one of the things which can improve this shortcoming is using different types of exercises for post reading part while in vision one only three types of exercises have been used and they are the same for all the units of the books. As a result, the usage of critical reading strategies in vision one is not satisfying and organized and it needs more attention and more content analysis and studies related to content, parts and different exercises of vision books to reform the content and using different types of exercises in reading of different units can solve this problem.

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