

## CRITICAL READING AND ITS IMPORTANCE IN A NEW ERA

*Guzaloy Asqarovna Sobirova*

*Lecturer, Toshkent State University of Oriental Studies, Uzbekistan*

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### Abstract

This article is aimed to explore the importance of critical reading and the strategies to enhance it. Some scholars' research findings on this topic are discussed so that it can be comprehensible for a reader and compare various thoughts around this concept. In addition, differences between general reading and critical reading are defined to illustrate techniques behind it such as educational research, media literacy studies and cognitive psychology.

**Keywords:** critical reading, critical reader, annotating, previewing, summarizing, analyzing.

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**Introduction:** The propensity of engaging students in critical reading, later on, increases the pedagogical and methodological implications for the further teaching process.

Critical reading has been long studied sphere in the language field. According to Pressley (2002), there are many types of research on critical reading and thinking skills. Critical reading enhances students' problem-solving skills by experiencing difficult contexts required by life situations and reading critically helps students easily switch their skills. Additionally, critical reading encourages effective and interactive reading skills as Anderson (2003) stated. As we read mainly for meaning, constructing the correct and target meaning is very crucial to identify in critical reading strategy. According to Crystal (2007), reading is a process including activeness and fluency to get the constructive meaning conveyed by the context.

**Material and methods:** Critical reading is not just reading for pleasure or getting information, it is more likely to have deeper meaning and notion. However, whatever we read we check whether the information is reliable or not. This proves that reading is analyzing and evaluating the thing that we read. Regarding understanding, the argumentative point in the text is important to identify the evaluation for critique as we can't evaluate the things we don't comprehend. The critical reader is expected to find out the author's strengths and weaknesses along with the controversial points and proofs that the writer outlined. As Kurland (2000) mentioned that "Critical readers thus recognize not only *what* a text says, but also *how* that text portrays the subject matter" (p.1). Many experts contend, however critical reading enhances the understanding of the logic that they intake and that this evidence is not conclusive. Unfortunately, this is very rare in reading materials and textbooks.

Thus, students can't comprehend the words that have been utilized precisely or not, understandable or vaguely. This may lead to a lack of understanding logically.

This paper seeks to address previous research on the same topic and analyze the relevance and arguments among them.

There have been many discussions on critical reading strategies over the years among many scholars. Critical reading strategies are a way where students analyze the information that the author meant such as facts, opinions, inferences or author's aim, and text bias. According to Harida, S. E. (2017) in her article on

"Critical reading strategies" outlines that identifying the author's purpose is a core of the reading procedure. Writers may write for distinctive purposes such as to inform, amuse, persuade, or entertain.

In her seminal article on “Critical reading strategies”. Harida, S explained all strategies step by step providing a contextual example. Ranging from making inferences to distinguishing between fact and opinion is discussed in the article.

Likely, a recent review of the literature on this topic found that critical reading deals with less specific strategies while general stance and position at micro level response utilizing critical, conceptual, and affective utterances. Mahshad categorized reading strategies in the same way as S.Harida did. In her article, making inferences, identifying the writer’s point, and differentiating facts and opinions are clearly described as well. Mashhad’s assumptions seem to be well-grounded providing reasonable examples for each case.

Notwithstanding the fact that Ferdous, Z & Alam M.’s work divided reading strategies into the following parts: previewing, annotating, summarizing, analyzing, re-reading, and responding. In the article, the authors highlighted the importance of critical thinking in critical reading skills. Reading critically highly depends on critical thinking. Kurland (2000) stated that evaluation of the ideas mentioned in the text requires critical thinking first. The process occurs like schemata while judging the ideas. Although there are many distinctive points about critical reading between “Exploring the meaning of the critical reading” by Ferdous, Z and Alam, M. and “critical reading strategies” by Harida, there is a general agreement on “facts” and “interpretation”. Moreover, the principles and purpose of critical reading gather many researchers around the topic. Wallace, C (2003) noted that the main emphasis in critical reading is not on individual response but on social response.

**Result and Discussion:** Another noticeable term in critical reading brings many scholars to the same position and decision self-regulated learning skill. Alshaye, S. (2021) in her article “Digital storytelling for improving critical reading skills, critical thinking skills, and self-regulated learning skills” explained how self-regulation helps students to improve their reading and thinking skills. According to the author, self-regulation is part of learning procedure which results from cognitive control of the students in their success. It implies aimed activities that enable students to engage in practices than passive participation. One of the important point is to apply to Digital Storytelling approach (DST) in which pupils can retell a story in an appealing way by creating animated videos based on the text that is considered as an intriguing method. Namely, they can create their own story with the help of intelligence programs even with audio records differing from traditional ways with its performance. It can help to enhance reflecting, analyzing, self-regulation and critical thinking skills. As Jeffries, L and Beatrice S. Mikulecky claimed that self-regulation shows the motivational and meta-cognitive process as a successful educational achievement. Similar research also addressed selfcontrol, management, and meta-cognition as a core of the study. (Martin & McLellan, 2007). However, lack of the research studies causes to have no clear definitions of metacognition and self-regulated learning. According to Brookfield (1986.), self-regulation helps students to look from different perspectives which is more critical and comprehensible. Similar research “Critical reading, critical thinking: delicate scaffolding in English for Academic Purposes” by Wilson, K outlines some similar notions as Alshaye’s. In her article, K.Wilson, approached the criticality perspective via critical reading. It is encouraged to improve learners’ critical thinking capacity. Thus, self-regulation and self-reflection play a crucial role in criticality as students are expected to become dependent seekers of meaning. (Barnet, 2015). But he described that self-regulation is not just a way of understanding something, it is the way of acting. These researchers have proposed that criticality in reading pedagogy is the attempt of constructive theorists. They claimed that rather than a passive reading procedure, constructive pedagogy enhances the teaching of reading skills.

Nevertheless, there have been many types of research that proposed to identify the main role of critical reading through different approaches, but there are still some questionable and controversial concepts among scholars. In the research paper namely “Critical reading, its key concepts and importance in foreign language education” by Demiroz, H raised some questions about the pedagogical aspect of the topic. “Who is the audience for the critical reading?” is the core of his study. According to the author, being a low-level language user is not a disadvantage but it may arise a problem when they read some complicated reading pieces which are designed for native speakers. However, L2 learners have an

advantage in some situations as they have meta language in which they acquire language by categorizing.

#### *Importance of background knowledge*

On the other hand, another article by Tobias, R., Schroeder, S., & Wohrmann, B. (2009) "You don't have to believe everything you read: Background knowledge permits fast and efficient validation of information" focuses on a totally different aspect of the critical reading which doesn't have similarities with previous studies mentioned in this literature review. The core of the article is validation. Primary ideas of the acceptance of the information refer to Gilbert (1991). Validation can be understood as various persuasive effects and other concepts like rejecting incorrect information as (Chen & Blanchard-Fields, 2000) mentioned. However, the findings in the core assumption of Gilbert's study (1991) released as a special case, linked strong relevance between comprehension and validation which is very essential in the critical reading process to get the target meaning.

#### *Areas for agreement.*

Despite some differences among scholars' research mentioned above, there exist areas for general agreement. For instance, studies on critical reading ability approve the special skills, which include

- ✓ Recognizing assumptions, implications (Tasnimi, M, 2017).
- ✓ Determining the purpose (Jeffries, L and Beatrice S. Mikuulecky cited as in Harida, S. E. 2017).
- ✓ Strategies of the critical reading (Ferdous, Z and Alam, M. 2022).
- ✓ Self-regulated reading (Alshaye, 2021).
- ✓ Self-control (Martin & McLellan, 2007).
- ✓ Enhancing critical thinking (Lea & Street, 2006).

#### *Areas for disagreement.*

However, the majority of the studies share similar thoughts and information on critical reading, there is still a small number of researchers who have argued about the principles of critical reading.

It has been becoming a hot controversial discussion through the years. According to

- ✓ Individual response (Wallace, C, 2003),
- ✓ Critical and non-critical readers (Kurland, 2000).

**Conclusion:** Considering every single aspect of the current topic, we can conclude that majority of the research papers approve that critical thinking happens within critical reading process which enables students to identify the logical message in the text, find out the author's purpose, and enhance their decision making, problem solving skills. This study shows new attempts to comprehend teachers' critical reading implementations in ESL and EFL classrooms. Particularly, critical reading enhances higher-thinking order, reading instruction and improves students' academic performance. There are some pedagogical implications that can be found in this current research analysis paper. Furthermore, some effective ways to promote critical reading skills are provided such as Digital Storytelling approach (Alshaye, 2021) that gives a way to achieve learning objectives as a successful and active learner.

First and foremost, English teachers may use critical reading to motivate their students to get higher thinking order and to get a deep understanding of the text. This, in turn may result in increasing learners' comprehensive skills and contribute to be everlasting what they read and learn.

Additionally, ESL teachers should consider possible problems which may arise in decision-making during critical reading strategies. Awareness of alternative ways or modification of the approaches gives teachers access to a thought-provoking learning atmosphere. Although there have been many researches on critical reading and its aspects, there are some points need to be studied more in further researches.

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