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**Investigating the Role of Reading Sessions in Enhancing Students'
Critical Thinking Skills:**

**The Case of Second Year Master Students of Didactics of Foreign
Languages at Abdelhamid Ibn Badis University, Mostaganem**

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Degree in Didactics of Foreign Languages

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Dedications

I dedicate this humble work to my lovely family, my dear parents, brothers and sisters for their unconditional love and support all my life.

To my sister Aicha in particular without whom I would have never reached this stage.

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Abstract

Fostering critical thinking skills in learners is the utmost goal of higher education to achieve successful learning. One potential way of encouraging students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) to use their critical thinking skills is the implementation of reading sessions. In this prospect, our foremost objective is to investigate the role of reading sessions in enhancing students' critical thinking skills. Furthermore, the present research aims at exploring the necessary reading strategies students can develop and the teacher's role in developing students' critical reading abilities during reading sessions. A mixed methods research design has been chosen to collect both quantitative and qualitative data from the selected sample in addition to the adoption of a triangulation approach to prove or disprove our hypotheses. The different data collection tools that have been chosen encompass a classroom observation, a questionnaire and interviews. The results indicate a considerable improvement in students' critical thinking skills and reading strategies. Also, the teacher played a crucial role in enhancing students' critical reading. The study reveals the importance of implementing reading sessions in developing students' critical thinking and critical reading strategies.

Key words: Critical thinking, reading sessions, reading strategies, teacher's role, critical reading.

List of Abbreviations

CT: Critical Thinking

ER: Extensive Reading

IR: Intensive Reading

PBL: Problem Based Learning

RS: Reading Sessions

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General Introduction

After adopting a learner-centered approach in teaching English as a foreign language, engaging students in the learning process becomes a challenging task for many teachers. This entails that all teaching practices should focus on the learner as the prime centerpiece of the instructional process. One way to facilitate the realisation of active learning is by fostering the critical thinking skills in all aspects of education and mainly within the reading skill. Indeed, several studies have shown that it is of great use to take a critical approach to reading as it stimulates students' active interaction with what they read. Furthermore, reading books helps students gain knowledge about different subjects which enables them to understand the world and view it through a multidimensional lens. To this end, teachers should encourage students to read critically through analysing, evaluating, and reflecting on their readings to develop their critical thinking skills and abilities for effective learning.

Given the fact that education at university requires students to do research and seek information from different sources such as books and internet, teachers do encourage students to develop their critical thinking abilities to be able to judge the credibility of sources and take what is relevant to them instead of taking any information for granted. Yet, it was observed that most students at Mostaganem University are still passive learners; they lack the skills of interacting actively with what they read in books or on the internet as they face difficulties in answering indirect and complex questions which require profound reflection during exams. For this reason, teachers should work hard on promoting critical thinking skills and encouraging students to be active learners.

The source of motivation for this work is the attendance of a number of reading sessions proposed by Dr. Boudjelal, a lecturer in Applied Linguistics at Mostaganem University, with master students in the branch of Civilisation and Literature in the Discourse Analysis module. Along these sessions, it was observed that students were required to read certain chapters of books in discourse. In each session, one group presented and discussed the assigned chapters while the other students followed, asked questions, reflected and shared ideas. Most importantly, the teacher guided the discussion and engaged students to interact and analyse their readings. Those reading sessions evoked a series of inquiries that were formulated into the following questions:

- 1- To what extent are reading sessions helpful in developing students' critical thinking skills?
- 2- What reading strategies can students develop to read critically?
- 3- What is the teacher's role in developing students' critical reading during the reading sessions?

As tentative answers to these questions, we suggest the following hypotheses:

1. Reading sessions can help students gain certain critical thinking skills.
2. Students may develop some reading strategies that enable them to interact with what they read more critically.

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3. The teacher can serve as a facilitator who guides students, corrects them, motivates them to think about their readings and provides them with the necessary reading strategies to read critically.

The general aim behind this study is to raise teachers' awareness of the importance of implementing the technique of reading sessions to promote critical thinking among students at Mostaganem University. Specifically, the main objective of this research is to investigate the role of reading sessions in developing students' critical thinking skills. It aims also to explore the necessary reading strategies students can develop to be able to read books critically. The final attempt is to explore what role the teacher plays in enhancing students' critical reading through reading sessions.

Theoretically, the present research topic relies on three fundamental theories: philosophical, psychological, and educational. First, the philosophical theories are associated with Aristotle, Socrates, and Plato as the very first leaders in the conceptualisation of critical thinking. Recent philosophical theories of critical thinking are established mainly by Robert Ennis, Matthew Lipman, and Richard Paul. Second, the psychological theories are guided by prominent figures including Robert Sternberg, Diane Halpern, and Daniel Willingham. Finally, educational theories are attributed to John Dewey as the father founder of critical thinking in addition to Benjamin Bloom and his famous taxonomy of learning theories.

To undertake this research, the selected population includes second year master students of Didactics of Foreign Languages since they were newly introduced to the technique of reading sessions in addition to their teacher of Intercultural Studies and Didactics at the department of English at Abdelhamid Ibn Badis University. Concerning the research methodology, a mixed methods research design is adopted to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. For the purpose of increasing credibility to this research, a triangulation approach is opted for by using three data collection instruments. The first tool to be used is a classroom observation to have deep insights into the students and teacher's practices during the reading sessions. In order to obtain students' views regarding reading sessions, a questionnaire is submitted to them after a few reading sessions. After finishing all sessions, an interview is conducted with students to check whether or not they maintain the same attitudes. Finally, it is important to reveal the teacher's perceptions towards the implementation of reading sessions and students' performances through a qualitative investigation.

This dissertation is divided into three chapters. The first chapter provides an overview of the examined topic. First, it gives an insight into critical thinking including its definitions from different perspectives, the main components and its benefits in education. Then, it tackles the reading skill and its importance in developing critical thinking skills. The second chapter is devoted to provide an insightful description of research methodology, the methods and approaches followed in undertaking this research in addition to the different data collection tools used to investigate the role of reading sessions in developing students' critical thinking skills. The last chapter is concerned with the analysis and the discussion of the

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obtained results followed by a set of recommendations and suggestions that may enhance the adoption of reading sessions.

Chapter One

Overview

1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide a three-dimensional overview of this work. First, it sheds light on the theoretical background of critical thinking. It explores its salient definitions under diverse traditions of thought, its main features, and its broader frameworks. Moreover, it highlights its benefits in education and gives insight into the concept of creativity in language teaching. The second part is devoted to the reading skill and its chief types, strategies, and advantages. Finally, the last part tackles the importance of reading in developing critical thinking skills.

1.1. Definition of Critical Thinking

Critical thinking (henceforth CT) is commonly defined as the mental ability to understand the world around and ask questions to solve problems. It is also known as the type of thinking that refrains from taking any information for granted. In fact, critical thinking is one of the complex concepts that polarised researchers for its multidimensional nature. However, Paul, Binker, Martin, and Adamson (1989) assert that there is no one particular definition of CT but it is crucial to consider the different definitions to cover its various aspects. A plethora of definitions was given to it by scholars according to three main understandings: philosophy, psychology, and education.

1.1.1. The Philosophical Understanding

In more recent times, the prominent leaders of this tradition of thought are mainly: Paul, Lipman, and Ennis. The focal point of the philosophical understanding is to investigate what features critical thinkers possess instead of what actions they perform (Lewis & Smith, 1993; Thayer-Bacon, 2000 as cited in Lai, 2011). In other words, philosophers working on CT focused on the qualities that make people critical thinkers. Ennis (1985) defines critical thinking as "reflective and reasonable thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do" (p. 45). He conceptualises CT as a mental activity that entails the use of logic while pondering and reflecting upon one's own thinking aiming at making decisions and shaping beliefs. In a similar vein, Dewey (1909) defines reflective thinking as "the active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends" (as cited in Fisher, 2001, p. 2). For Dewey, critical thinking is an active process in which one should have reasons for believing in certain ideas rather than making decisions impulsively. Reeder (1984) also supports this notion of reflection in thinking, claiming that making decisions requires assessing beliefs and situations in a reflective way.

On the other hand, Lipman (1988a) adds other dimensions of critical thinking stating that "critical thinking is skillful, responsible thinking that facilitates good judgment because it relies upon criteria, is self-correcting, and is sensitive to context" (p. 39). In this definition, Lipman relates CT to judgment, pointing out that a fair judgment results from a process of thinking that is responsible which requires particular abilities. He further identifies specific principles and instruments that a critical thinker employs when making decisions or judgments including reliable reasons and relevant arguments in addition to considering the

exceptional conditions and circumstances which may occur during the thinking process. Moreover, critical thinking denotes that there is a persistent discovery of one's weaknesses and strengths. In this respect, Bailin, Case, Coombs, and Daniels (1999) argued that not any act of thinking which is meant for making decisions is considered as critical, but it should meet certain relevant standards and criteria.

Sternberg (1986) noted that philosophers viewed the critical thinker as the ideal model where the focus is on how people perform under perfect circumstances. To account for this, Paul (1992) described critical thinking as a purposeful and organised thinking that reflects perfect thoughts (as cited in Thayer-Bacon, 1992). Additionally, Facione (1990) and Ennis (1991) profiled the ideal critical thinker with a set of dispositions and abilities. They claimed that effective critical thinking does not only require the mental abilities of reasoning, but certain dispositions such as open-mindedness and inquisitiveness are important as well. However, Sternberg (1986) argued that there are some limitations of time, information, working memory capacity and motivation which constraint the perfect use of one's capacities. This is one of the limitations of the philosophical approach for stressing the notion of the ideal critical thinker while people's social reality is full of constraints and exceptions.

1.1.2. The Psychological Understanding

In contrast with the philosophical tradition of thought, Sternberg (1986) stated that cognitive psychologists devoted their attention to how critical thinkers can perform under their personal and environmental constraints. According to him, "critical thinking comprises the mental processes, strategies, and representations people use to solve problems, make decisions, and learn new concepts" (1986, p. 3). This shows what cognitive abilities a critical thinker applies when dealing with difficult situations, forming new ideas or making judgments. Sternberg accounts for his definition by providing three types of skills for critical thinking: metacomponents, performance components, and knowledge-acquisition components. First, the metacomponents are the processes that help identify the nature of the problem encountered, monitor the steps followed in solving that problem and assess it at the end. Second, performance components refer to the processes of providing feedback to the metacomponents in various ways such as comparing and giving reasons for responses. Third, knowledge-acquisition components include the processes of forming new concepts and bringing together the relevant ideas to construct new knowledge.

For most psychologists, CT involves a mastery of discrete skills and cognitive operations that can be applicable in various situations. Halpern (1998) adopts a similar view by defining CT as "the use of those cognitive skills or strategies that increase the probability of a desirable outcome" (p. 450). That is to say, CT is the purposeful use of one's mental abilities and skills in specific contexts for useful results. He also asserts that critical thinkers should be aware of their effortful cognitive processes. However, Bailin et al. (1999) argue that defining critical thinking as the mere use of mental processes is a misconception because thinking can be determined as critical by the quality of thinking not the set of processes. Also, educators may view their role in teaching students CT as simply targeting those discrete skills

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and abilities. By the same token, Van Gelder (2005) maintains that CT is greater than its mere skills and the mastery of those skills cannot be sufficient without having them combined correctly. Similarly, Cohen (2015) argues that "a study skill makes sure that you have pen and paper during lectures; critical thinking is about what to jot down" (p. 20). This shows that CT is a skillful activity that requires profound reflection not just a matter of a set of skills to be taught. For instance, one's success in following all the processes of CT does not necessarily give a guarantee of effective thinking.

For Willingham (2007), CT is the ability to view issues from different perspectives, accept criticisms, provide evidence and logical arguments, draw conclusions based on relevant reasons, and find solutions for difficult situations. In addition to these abilities, Bailin et al. (1999) stressed the essential role of deep knowledge and understanding of a particular discipline in critical thinking. Undeniably, effective critical thinking relies on having prior knowledge and experience because people cannot reflect on topics they have no background knowledge about. However, Bailin and Siegel (2003) identified three main issues concerning the psychological approach in defining CT. First, matching those specific mental processes to certain cases of useful CT is unfeasible. Second, CT is not necessarily determined by a set of specific procedures. Third, skills of analysis and interpretation proposed by psychologists are only activities that involve thinking not essentially mental processes (as cited in Abrami et al., 2008). Furthermore, Sternberg (1986) highlighted two limitations of the psychological procedures in assessing and testing individuals' performances in laboratories. First, psychologists failed to bridge the gap between the performance of individuals in laboratories and in their real life situations. Second, the analysis of critical thinking lacks exactness and it is usually distorted.

1.1.3. The Educational Understanding

In addition to philosophy and psychology, critical thinking has been the concern of those working in the field of education as well. One of the leading figures who contributed to this scope is Benjamin Bloom by his famous taxonomy of learning domains in 1956. This hierarchical taxonomy is one of the most popular educational theories that aimed at promoting higher-order thinking skills in education including synthesising, analysing, reasoning, comprehending, application, and evaluation rather than merely memorising information. In this vein, Halpern (1998) defines higher-order thinking skills as "relatively complex; require judgment, analysis, and synthesis; and are not applied in a rote or mechanical manner" (p. 451). That is, higher order thinking skills require deep understanding and analysis of information instead of the mere memorisation of facts.

Sternberg (1986) confirmed that Bloom's taxonomy was implemented in textbooks as it was applied by many teachers in classrooms. He also noted that educational theories resulted from the need to provide children with the necessary critical thinking skills in the classroom. However, Ennis (1985) argued that the concept of higher order thinking skills is much vague and does not really guide the development of education, and the only valuable

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issue which this taxonomy stressed is that the objectives of schools transcend the notion of memorising information. Bloom's taxonomy helped recognise the need to encourage students to understand and analyse facts rather than remembering them, but it was not that exact in providing the essential critical thinking skills. Similarly, Sternberg (1986) noted that educational theories lacked clarity and consistency for two reasons. First, since educators failed to provide clear use and evaluation for their theories, they remained vague to some extent. Second, testing those theories has not been that vigorous or consistent as the theories developed by philosophers and psychologists.

Nevertheless, Paul, Elder, and Bartell (1997) believe that "given the complexity of critical thinking-its rootedness in 2500 years of intellectual history as well as the wide range of its application- it is unwise to put too much weight on any one "definition" of critical thinking" (p. 4). That is, critical thinking is a multi-dimensional concept that no single definition could cover its exact meaning because each scholar defines CT highlighting one main dimension of it. Eventually, although theorists failed to reach any agreement upon one definition, they could reach a consensus that CT is of paramount importance in all diverse fields

1.2. Origins of Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is not a new term or notion. Its origins date back to centuries ago, mainly by the contributions of Aristotle, Socrates, and Plato. Hughs (2014) noted that the basic understanding of CT was the ability to decide upon facts as true or irrelevant, and that this idea emerged from Socratic Questioning. In this respect, Paul and Elder (2007) defined Socratic questioning as "disciplined questioning that can be used to pursue thought in many directions and for many purposes" (p. 2), such as analysing complex concepts and problems, identifying assumptions, and seeking truth. Teachers realised the importance of adopting Socratic questioning by helping students ask thoughtful questions and draw conclusions based on logical reasons (Paul and Elder, 2007). Accordingly, Paul et al. (1997) claimed that Socrates has emphasised the vital role of the act of thinking and questioning facts before accepting any idea as true. Later, critical thinking was developed more by Plato (student of Socrates), Aristotle, and other Greek philosophers who stressed the influence of the critical mind in understanding the deep realities of life (Paul et al., 1997).

Paul et al. (1997) noted that in the Middle Ages thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas introduced CT in their writings and teachings; Aquinas stressed the importance of reasoning in rejecting beliefs based on poor evidence. While in the Renaissance ages, many European scholars started to think critically through analysing certain issues in relation to religion, arts, and society (Paul et al., 1997). Noticeably, in each period of time, researchers defined a new dimension of CT. Recently, it is extended in all domains of human social life and it has become crucial, particularly, in education. Undoubtedly, the previous contributions of Socrates and other researchers were of great use for the current educational theories which gave much importance to fostering critical thinking in language teaching and learning.

1.3. Prominent Features of Critical Thinking

All people habitually think, but not all of them think critically. There are some prominent features that distinguish critical thinking from ordinary one.

1.3.1. Reflection

Reflection is one of the significant traits that characterise strong critical thinkers (Ennis, 1985 & Reeder, 1984). Nosich (2011) claims that critical thinking entails awareness and analysis of one's own thinking. This means that critical thinkers do reflect on their thinking by asking frequent questions, evaluating, and analysing their own thinking about any issue. Within the same line of thought, Chaffee (n.d) notes that "the heart of thinking critically is developing a reflective orientation toward our minds" (as cited in Paul et al., 1997). For him, reflection is an essential part of CT that does not only refer to questioning our way of thinking but others' ways of thinking as well. Indeed, CT involves a profound thinking about what to decide or believe by asking several questions and assessing different perspectives. Most importantly, thinking about one's thinking is the starting point of improving it (Paul and Elder, 2006).

1.3.2. Having Standards

While uncritical thinkers impulsively draw conclusions, critical thinkers base their judgments on certain standards and criteria including accuracy, relevance and depth (Bailin et al., 1999; Lipman, 1988; Nosich, 2011). These standards and others are the basis of determining the quality of thinking for making logical judgments. However, Bailin et al. (1999) point out that a critical thinker should be aware of making effortful thinking that aims at fulfilling those standards.

According to Paul and Elder (2013b), there are at least nine intellectual standards essential to think critically and rationally.

Clarity: is the key standard which gives insight to the other ones. Being clear involves the understandability of statements without causing any confusion or vagueness.

Precision: to give the exact information with specific details.

Accuracy: entails being correct without mistakes or distortions.

Relevance: there should be a logical relationship with the considered issue.

Depth: dealing with complexities and considering the deepest issues.

Breadth: thinking in a variety of perspectives.

Logic: thoughts are combined and related correctly to make sense.

Significance: giving importance to the prominent concepts and ideas.

Fairness: objective treatment of information based on justice.

1.3.3. Authenticity

According to Nosich (2011), the primary goal of critical thinking is to solve problems and answer questions that are related to real life rather than artificial ones. Likewise, Cohen (2015) asserts that CT is the ability to consider issues and problems in real life and try to find workable solutions for them. Thus, the importance of critical thinking lies in forming fair

judgments for authentic issues encountered in everyday situations. He supports his view stating that "real problems are often messy. They have loose ends. They are usually unclear: clarifying and refining them are part of thinking through them" (2015, p. 4). Since real problems are much complicated and more worthy to reason out, it is the role of CT to solve those complexities by providing the right decisions. Most importantly, thinking critically about puzzles and games becomes valuable when transferring those skills required in solving these puzzles to real life problems (Cohen, 2015).

1.3.4. Reasoning

A successful critical thinker is a reasonable person, intellectual person who thinks, analyses, and evaluates reasons before simply believing in conclusions and results (Paul et al., 1989). Critical thinkers can decide upon arguments and evidence as weak or strong and recognise different perspectives. Nosich (2011) argued that CT must be based on relevant reasons through a consideration of the context of issues to be thought of, purposes, and the encountered limitations. Therefore, to qualify any thinking as critical, it should be reasonable and self correcting (Ennis, 1985; Lipman, 1988a). In a similar vein, Cottrell (2005) claims that CT is associated with reasoning which entails being able to make judgments based on relevant reasons.

According to Chaffee (n.d), CT has another set of qualities. For him, critical thinking is contrasted with the passive and careless type of thinking and rather involves asking questions continuously while examining situations or making decisions, generating new points of view based on evidence as well as participating in discussions with others to exchange ideas and view the world in a variety of perspectives (as cited in Paul et al., 1997). This model shows that critical thinking is compatible with creativity because thinking critically requires seeing both sides of any problem to find out alternative solutions and generate new ideas that are relevant to the issue.

1.4. Abilities and Dispositions of Critical Thinking

In addition to the different views concerning the definition of critical thinking, what abilities and dispositions a successful critical thinker should have was another area of disagreement. In this vein, Perkins & Grotzer (1997) noted that it is important to know the difference between CT abilities and dispositions; a disposition is what an individual is used to do in given circumstances, while the ability is what an individual can perform (as cited in Rhee Bonney & Sternberg, 2011).

1.4.1. Abilities of Critical Thinking

Effective critical thinking results from having particular abilities (Perkins, Jan & Tishman, 1993). Supporting this view, Glaser (1941) claimed that critical thinkers should have the ability to: identify problems and discover the tools to deal with them, gather the appropriate information and organise them, identify the implicit assumptions, use language accurately, examine and evaluate evidence, examine the logical relationship between ideas, make relevant conclusions and test them, form new beliefs based on experience, and generate

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fair judgments about various issues (as cited in Fisher, 2001). Additionally, Ennis (1985) stressed other abilities including: asking and answering questions for clarification, analysing arguments, making inferences, defining terms, identifying assumptions, questioning the authority of sources, and form possible solutions for problems.

Other abilities provided by different scholars include:

- Making decisions and solving problems (Ennis, 1985; Halpern, 1998; Willingham, 2007).
- Seeing both sides of an issue (Willingham, 2007).
- Reading between the lines, questioning conclusions and assumptions, and distinguishing between facts and subjective opinions (Cohen, 2015).
- Judging and evaluating reasons (Ennis, 1985; Facione, 1990; Fisher, 2001; Lipman, 1988a)
- Interpreting ideas and conceptions (Fisher, 2001).

While some researchers identified the different abilities CT involves, others devoted their attention to the skills that should be learned to be better critical thinkers. In this respect, Halpern (1998) emphasises the importance of teaching students CT skills such as: understanding how causes are determined, recognising and criticising assumptions, giving reasons to support a conclusion, assessing possibilities and uncertainty, broadening data, and solving problems after analysing them. These skills are crucial for students to engage in decision making and problem solving. Similarly, Facione (1990) argues that CT involves six cognitive skills: interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation. For him, skillful critical thinkers can interpret and understand information, beliefs, and situations; explore the intention of any form of a message transferred through questions and statements and analyse arguments; evaluate arguments and their credibility; examine the reasons on which conclusions are formed; justify reasons, opinions, and present arguments; and control one's thoughts, and correct judgments and reasons.

However, Perkins et al. (1993) assert that mere abilities are insufficient to think critically without dispositions, claiming that individuals might have the appropriate thinking skills but they lack the disposition to use them.

1.4.2. Dispositions of Critical Thinking

Halpern (1998) assumed that CT is not merely about having the skills but also the disposition and willingness to use those skills in the appropriate settings. In this respect, most researchers define a disposition as the tendency or willingness to do something, and sometimes they refer to it as habits or traits of mind. According to Ennis (1996), critical thinkers have the disposition to: seek clarity and reasons, be well-informed, use credible sources, consider the whole situation, be relevant, look for alternatives, be open-minded, be flexible, be precised, organised, and care about others' feelings. Sharing the same view, Facione (1990, p. 3) presented a similar list of dispositions stating that:

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The ideal critical thinker is habitually inquisitive, well-informed, trustful of reason, open-minded, flexible, fair-minded in evaluation, honest in facing personal biases, prudent in making judgments, willing to reconsider, clear about issues, orderly in complex matters, diligent in seeking relevant information, reasonable in the selection of criteria, focused in inquiry, and persistent in seeking results which are as precise as the subject and the circumstances of inquiry permit.

For him, a powerful critical thinker should be continuously asking and answering questions, showing knowledge about different subjects, using reasoned inquiry, open-minded to various perspectives, flexible in considering alternatives, fair-minded in assessing reasons, honest and objective, careful when making judgments, willing to change a position when necessary, forming clear statements, organised in complexities, careful in selecting relevant information, judging reasons based on criteria, attentive to issues, showing persistence and precision when drawing conclusions. He further avers that individuals who master the skills of CT without being disposed to use them correctly are not successful critical thinkers. However, Ennis (1985) argued that Facione's list of dispositions remains vague for lacking clarity. According to Paul & Elder (2014), there are eight important traits of mind that characterise successful critical thinkers:

1. **Intellectual fairmindedness:** to consider the different perspectives without being influenced by one's own emotions.
2. **Intellectual humility:** to be aware of one's own limitations of knowledge.
3. **Intellectual courage:** to be disposed to evaluate beliefs and reasons with consideration of truths and fallacies of perspectives.
4. **Intellectual empathy:** to imagine oneself in others' situations to understand them and accept their viewpoints.
5. **Intellectual integrity:** to be honest and practise what one believes in rather than showing the opposite.
6. **Intellectual perserverance:** to challenge the difficulties and complexities of ideas to understand them.
7. **Intellectual confidence in reason:** to form judgments based on relevant reasons.
8. **Intellectual autonomy:** to be independent and responsible for one's own thoughts.

In essence, as it is insufficient to have the abilities without having the disposition to use them appropriately, dispositions, on the other hand, cannot be effective in the absence of abilities (Ennis, 1996). It is noteworthy to make a difference between CT dispositions and its abilities or skills. People might have the necessary skills and abilities to think critically but do not have the willingness to use them (Ennis, 1996; Facione, 1990; Fisher, 2001; Halpern, 1998). Trying to emphasise the importance of dispositions, Fisher (2001) argued that "it is hard to understand someone who develops those thinking skills and then does not bother to use them quite generally" (p. 13). Undoubtedly, the mastery of skills remains meaningless in the absence of willingness to execute them. Within the same line of thought, Facione (1990) asserts that individuals who have the appropriate CT skills and choose not to use them are not

effective critical thinkers. For this reason, the spirit of critical thinking is composed of both the abilities and dispositions (Siegel, 1980).

1.5. Critical Thinking in Broader Frameworks

Studies show that most researchers defined critical thinking in relation to other concepts such as: metacognition, motivation, and creativity.

1.5.1. Metacognition

Hennessey (1999) defines metacognition as "an awareness of one's own thinking, an awareness of the content of one's conceptions, an active monitoring of one's cognitive processes" (p. 3). That is, metacognition is the knowledge people have about their own thinking and the ability to control that thinking process. In this sense, it is also defined as management and monitoring of one's own thoughts (Kuhn & Dean, 2004; Martinez, 2006). Hence, CT is closely related to metacognition in the sense that powerful critical thinkers do evaluate their own thoughts and knowledge. In this concern, Martinez (2006) claimed that CT correlates with many cognitive activities. He further explains that CT and problem solving are among the main categories of metacognition, because trying to solve problems leads us to think about our thinking by asking endless questions. While thinking critically to find solutions to problems, the act of asking several questions to analyse and evaluate our own thinking is one of the cognitive operations. Similarly, Flavell (1979) argues that CT is part of metacognition since critical evaluation of ideas may lead to the making of wise decisions. He also maintains his view claiming that reflecting on one's own thinking requires metacognitive experiences in the sense that one needs to remember similar situations or problems that happened in the past. Moreover, Paul & Elder (2014) confirm that effective critical thinkers observe and evaluate their own thinking.

Metacognition plays an important role in improving students' critical thinking skills and vice versa (Halpern, 1998; Kuhn & Dean, 2004; Paul & Elder, 2006). That is, encouraging students to reflect on their thoughts and decisions and evaluate them develops their metacognitive strategies. On the other hand, students develop their CT skills when applying metacognitive operations by analysing and reflecting on their own thinking. In addition to that, critical thinking requires meta-thinking because it helps knowing when to use new learning strategies in the right context (Cohen, 2015). However, although one should think about his own thinking, metacognition is solely part of CT not synonymous to it (Lipman, 1988b).

1.5.2. Motivation

Slavin (2018) defines motivation as "what gets you going, keeps you going, and determines where you are trying to go" (p. 248). Motivation is the power that guides, directs, and determines our behaviours and actions. In a similar way, Dörnyei & Ushioda (2011) define it as "the potential range of influences on human behaviour" (p. 4). In this sense, motivation is an essential part of human beings' lives, for it influences all their behaviours and decisions. As previously pointed out, people cannot excute their critical thinking skills

without having the disposition to do that. In this regard, Facione (2000) defines the disposition towards CT as one's motivation to make decisions and solve problems. Thus, motivation is closely related to critical thinking. Similarly, Halonen (1995) stresses the importance of dispositions in developing critical thinking skills claiming that positive feelings lead to effective critical thinking.

Additionally, Rhee Bonney & Sternberg (2011) highlighted the fact that students' motivation affect their willingness and ability to execute their CT skills claiming that "it is important to note that even if students have all the necessary dispositions and abilities to think critically, it is irrelevant if the student is not motivated or interested in using those skills" (p. 178). Undoubtedly, students' skills are useless in the absence of the motivation to practise them. On the other hand, difficult tasks that require CT skills such as problem solving are more motivational for students (Turner, 1995). Besides, students may refuse to learn CT skills if they feel afraid of failure or making mistakes, thus, they will think of CT as a harmful activity (Rhee Bonney & Sternberg, 2011). To think critically, students need to have the courage to ask questions and evaluate assumptions.

1.5.3. Creativity

Walsh (2014) defines creativity as "being exposed to diverse influences and recreating your own unique interpretations of existing ideas" (p. 6). That is, creativity refers to the construction of innovative ideas based on previous ones. According to Gerlovina (2011), creativity is about producing novel, appropriate, generative, and influential ideas or solutions. Creative people are those who bring new suggestions and ideas that fit certain situations and lead to more novel and useful ideas. Therefore, creativity and CT share a common feature which is the creativity of ideas and problem solving.

Indeed, there are several situations in life that require individuals to think about their problems creatively (Slavin, 2018). For this reason, creativity is an important component of CT because it entails thinking of alternative solutions for problems (Bailin et al., 1999; Gerlovina, 2011; Halpern, 1998; Maley, 2015; Read, 2015). In connection with this, Richards (2013) describes the relationship between CT and creativity stating that "creativity depends upon the ability to analyse and evaluate situations and to identify novel ways of responding to them" (p. 23). Cremin (2009) adopts a similar view claiming that creativity is about analysing alternative solutions in a critical way.

Essentially, CT is usually referred to as "critico-creative thinking", because judging arguments may require alternative ideas (Fisher, 2001). In this respect, Lau (2009) argued that separating creativity from CT is a misconception due to the fact that creativity does not only mean generating new ideas, but it is more valuable in the sense that creative people know how to produce novel ideas to fit particular situations. Effective critical thinkers are skillful in selecting the appropriate alternative ideas that are relevant to the situation. Likewise, Bailin et al. (1999), unlike many theorists, argued that creativity is a crucial element in the process of CT claiming that scientific inventions and artistic activities require CT. In terms of education, taking a creative approach to teaching develops learners' CT skills (Tomlinson, 2015). On the

other hand, Walsh (2014) stresses the importance of understanding how to think critically in improving one's creativity.

1.6. Benefits of Critical Thinking in Education

Developing critical thinking skills has become the primary goal of education in the 21st century especially in foreign language teaching (Willingham, 2007). This means that it brings several advantages to learners. Thus, the most important element that should be well-instilled in students is the CT skills, because CT is their guide for their future both in personal and professional life (Paul et al., 1989). Similarly, Siegel (1980) views CT as an educational ideal and a major skill that educators need to develop in students. There are several benefits of teaching CT skills to students that can be listed below:

- The use of CT skills to improve one's own decision making builds a more self-confident person (Brown & Keeley, 2007).
- Critical thinking is the essence of all different subject matters and fields (Paul et al., 1997).
- Teaching students CT skills shapes their independent judgments and self-sufficiency (Siegel, 1980).
- The integration of CT in the curriculum guarantees a strong career for students (Lipman, 1988b).
- For better education, it is crucial to teach students CT skills to make use of them in new situations (Halpern, 1998).
- It is important to teach CT to students because the current methods of teaching require skills of solving problems and reflection (Hughs, 2014).
- Critical thinking develops students' autonomy because passing exams at university requires students to think critically and reflect on questions (Hughs, 2014).
- "Critical thinkers see themselves as competent learners. They have a "can do" vision of their own learning" (Paul & Elder, 2014, p. 123).
- Critical thinkers are active learners who seek improvement in each level of their lives (Paul & Elder, 2014).
- Teaching students CT skills creates a critical spirit that motivates students to question and evaluate their own thinking and others' thoughts as well (Slavin, 2018).
- Developing CT skills helps students evaluate and analyse their different subjects critically (Cottrell, 2005).

1.7. Creativity in Teaching English as a Foreign Language

Unsurprisingly, seeking creativity in English teaching classrooms is the primary goal of higher education. Creativity is about teaching in a creative way as well as developing learners' creativity. This means that teachers should adopt innovative ways in their English teaching (Cremin, 2009). Likewise, Rosenberg (2015) defines creativity in teaching as "using one's imagination, changing existing ideas, being unique, original and innovative, having a vision, or simply having the freedom to come up with new and unusual ways to carry out tasks" (p. 123). Creative teachers should continuously update their teaching methods and

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strategies to foster learners' motivation and autonomy. In this respect, Maley (2015) asserts that creativity in teaching increases students' motivation and self-esteem, as a result, students will be encouraged to work hard to succeed.

Ideally, Richards (2013) acknowledged that one of the salient features of effective and successful teachers is the ability to adopt a creative approach to teaching. In other words, creative teaching is essentially based on having creative teachers (Cimermanova, 2014; Maley, 2015; Tomlinson, 2015). In this regard, Richards (2013) noted that creative teachers are qualified to: be knowledgeable and master what they are teaching; personalise one's own classroom by creating personal touch; adapt and renew their ways of teaching that suit their learners; vary the tasks and relate them to real life situations that are familiar and interesting for learners; reflect on their own teaching styles and give importance to students' feedback upon the lessons; be flexible and meet the learners' needs using a variety of methods and techniques; integrate different skills and use technology appropriately; encourage collaborative work and engage students in learning to foster their motivation; and develop CT skills and problem solving tasks.

Maley (2015) reinforces the above ideas claiming that it is important to create a safe environment that strengthen students' self-confidence where mistakes are tolerated and encourage them to study outside the classroom by reading books and using internet. Rosenberg (2015) accounts for the former stating that "creativity is encouraged when we provide input but allow a wide variety of output from our learners" (p.124). Indeed, teachers should place the learner as the centre of the learning process. He further emphasises the importance of encouraging students to be risk-takers. Moreover, teachers should allow students to decide about their activities to increase their motivation and encourage them to be more creative and autonomous (Cimermanova, 2014). To make it clearer, making students air their thoughts and opinions about their learning creates responsible learners.

Creativity, on the other hand, is to engage students in critical thinking activities and problem solving tasks. In this vein, Paul et al. (1989) indicate that successful education should be based on cultivating critical thinking in students by making them think about their learning, believe in the power of their minds, and engage in collaborative work. Cremin (2009) and Cottrell (2005) share the same view by insisting on the fact that criticising articles and texts is an important task that teachers seek to develop in their students at university. Accordingly, Costa (2008) argues that one way of teaching CT skills is to engage students in everyday life situations to build a culture of thinking critically (as cited in Slavin, 2018).

Along the same vein, Problem-based learning (PBL) is another way of promoting creative thinking to students. It is to set problem solving tasks which require students to think of alternative solutions, cooperate, take risks, develop their communicative skills, and evaluate their own thoughts and others' viewpoints (Lakovos, 2011). Thus, PBL such as problem solving activities, CT tasks, and collaborative learning gives a creative approach to language teaching (Uden & Beaumont, 2006 as cited in Lakovos, 2011). This is an alternative

way to teach students how to learn about their learning which develops their CT skills and makes them creative learners.

1.8. Definition of Reading Skill

Reading is said to be the most important skill in English language. McKeown & Beck (2009) define reading as "a complex mental process with various interacting subprocesses" (p. 8). This means that reading requires several mental capacities when interacting with texts. In a similar way, Fairbairn & Fairbairn (2001) describe the act of reading as a complicated set of many activities and skills. Thoroughly, reading can be defined as "the complex communicative behaviour of deriving meaning from presented text" (Fox & Alexander, 2011, p. 7). In clearer terms, they contend that reading is a behaviour because it is an essential part of our lives; communicative in the sense that it is an activity to exchange information; and it is the process of understanding the message conveyed through the text.

However, Pugh, Pawan & Antommarchi (2000) argue that reading is not solely the ability to decode written texts but rather the ability to interact with the knowledge received and make use of it. Grabe (2009) accounts for the former definition by stating that "reading is also an interaction between the reader and the writer" (p. 15). This implies the fact that comprehension is an important outcome of reading because the purpose of reading is to obtain new knowledge. He also defines it as a strategic process due to the fact that it is a set of skills including the capacity to continuously evaluate the text.

1.9. Types of Reading Skill

Researchers identified two main types of reading: intensive reading (IR) and extensive reading (ER).

1.9.1. Intensive Reading

Intensive reading is commonly known as reading for purpose. Bamford & Day (1997) define it as a purposeful reading that aims at obtaining detailed comprehension of texts (as cited in Guevara Jimenez & Osorio Rosales, 2010). Similarly, Powell (2005) defines it as "the careful reading of short, complex texts for detailed understanding and skills practice" (p. 28). These two definitions denote that IR is about reading short passages to understand particular points. Also, IR is to learn language items such as vocabulary and grammar (Nation, 2009). Students do intensive reading to answer specific questions, gain new vocabulary, and learn grammar rules.

1.9.2. Extensive Reading

Unlike intensive reading, extensive reading is synonymous to reading for pleasure. Powell (2005) defines it as reading of large quantities of books with accessible language usually outside the classroom. It aims at obtaining the general understanding of the text and it is reading for pleasure like reading novels, stories or magazines (Grabe, 2009). On the whole, Nation (2009) points out that ER is the activity of reading texts to obtain the general comprehension and the message conveyed throughout the text rather than individual words or

expressions. He also notes that books for ER should be of interest and enjoyable for students. Powell (2005) supports this view claiming that the primary goal of ER is to foster the reading abilities in students and render reading an enjoyable task. Hence, students have the freedom to choose the types of books they wish to read.

1.10. Reading Techniques

Skimming and scanning are the most popular reading techniques which make reading speedy and easy to answer one's questions. Cottrell (2005) believes that skimming and scanning are mainly techniques that aim at extracting the general idea of the material, what she called "a more superficial reading of the material".

1.10.1. Skimming

Mikulecky & Jeffries (2009) define skimming as "a form of rapid reading for finding the general idea, or gist of a message or a book" (p. 170). Readers use skimming to quickly find the overall meaning of the text. For skimming, readers look quickly at paragraphs focusing on certain words and sentences that answer one's question. Hence, skimming is beneficial for research when the reader has to check different sources and decide for the relevant sites or books (Mikulecky & Jeffries, 2009). Similarly, Cohen (2015) draws attention to the fact that skimming is a crucial technique to save time. He further explains that skimming requires us to read the first or two lines of each paragraph of a text or a chapter, then, the continuity of reading depends on the usefulness of those first lines of each paragraph.

1.10.2. Scanning

Scanning is a technique used for the purpose of looking for a particular answer or key ideas (Lamb & Johnson, 1999 as cited in Guevara Jimenez & Osorio Rosales, 2010). Beale (2013) noted that scanning is another beneficial technique which saves time. In contrast to skimming, scanning does not require readers to read everything but rather looking for a particular piece of information. He adds that successful scanning lies in comprehending the text to easily obtain the required information. In addition to this, he emphasises the importance of using one's fingers to locate the necessary information as well as looking for key words. Thus, it is important to teach students these two techniques to make their research more effective.

1.11. Reading Strategies

Effective reading is not a random activity but it requires the mastery of a set of strategies. In this regard, most researchers agreed on the following set of strategies that readers should apply:

- Question everything they read especially assumptions both explicit and implicit ones (Cohen, 2015; Hedges & Price, 1999).
- Read between the lines because texts might be misleading and authors might be wrong (Brown & Keeley, 2007; Cohen, 2015).

- Underline and highlight the most important ideas in each paragraph (Cohen, 2015; Grabe, 2009; Hedges & Price, 1999; Nist & Holschuh, 2000).
- Use dictionaries to define ambiguous terms (Brown & Keeley, 2007).
- Make summaries to be more organised (Cohen, 2015; Slavin, 2018).
- Make outlines and use graphical tools such as concept charts and mind maps to organise one's thoughts (Cohen, 2015; Slavin, 2018).
- Evaluate texts through questioning the credibility of sources and the authority and background of authors (Cohen, 2015; Grabe, 2009; Mickulecky & Jeffries, 2007).
- Take notes about the most important ideas to remember them (Cohen, 2015; Nist & Holschuh; Slavin, 2018).
- Summarise and annotate the key ideas on the margin in one's own words (Nist & Holschuh, 2000).
- Elaborate on the notes taken by adding other ideas or examples from previous knowledge that are related to the current reading (Nist & Holschuh, 2000).

1.12. Benefits of Reading

Beyond shadow of doubt, reading plays an essential role in human beings' personal and professional lives. There are several advantages of reading including: a source of information that provides students with the necessary answers to their inquiries, books are full of new words that enrich students' vocabulary, and readers can obtain new styles of discussing topics through reading diverse types of books (Guevara Jimenez & Osorio Rosales, 2010). Also, reading allows individuals to be always informed about the world (Fairbairn & Fairbairn, 2001). When reading books, people gain knowledge about the different issues in all domains. Furthermore, Nation (2009) believes that reading is beneficial for both learning and pleasure. Put it differently, when people read, they learn new terms, gather information, as they enjoy the act of reading itself.

Another line of thought, reading can make people different from what they used to be. To account for this, Hedges & Price (1999) stated that "reading has the power to transform us from WHAT WE ARE right now to what WE COULD BE in the future" (p. 6). They also stressed the salient role of reading in improving individuals through the ability to think, imagine and grow while reading, claiming that "reading builds a better person" (p. 39). That is, readers are unique in the sense that they are more knowledgeable about the world, wiser, and with different visions.

1.13. Critical Reading

Critical reading is simply defined as the active interaction with texts through questioning and evaluating ideas. Cohen (2015) regards learning skills of critical reading as the essence of life. He further describes critical readers as active when treating a text, and evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the ideas presented by the author. Taking a similar path, Cottrell (2005) claims that critical reading "involves analysis, reflection, evaluation, and making judgments" (p. 147). In clearer terms, critical readers apply their CT skills when interacting with texts. It is important to be a critical reader because information provided in

books or in internet is not necessarily true. Thus, students need to be able to recognise which information is credible and worthy to use (Mikulecky & Jeffries, 2009).

Research requires students to look for information on the internet where they encounter endless sites and articles. For this reason, they need critical reading to carefully select the relevant information. Ergo, the role of teachers lies in providing students with the necessary skills of CT and problem solving to make use of their readings on the internet and in books as well such as: analysing data critically, evaluating evidence, questioning the authority of sources, comparing and contrasting, and constructing their own understandings and analysis of knowledge (Pugh et al., 2000).

1.14. The Role of Reading in Developing Critical Thinking Skills

Reading is the essence of cultivating important critical thinking skills. The role of reading in developing CT skills is well-described in Cohen's statement that "critical thinking is fed and nurtured by great books, which firmly places critical reading skills at the heart of learning" (2015, p. 177). Reading forces us to think and reflect deeply on the encountered knowledge. Supporting this view, Guevara Jimenez and Osorio Rosales (2010) acknowledge that keeping active critical thinking skills results from reading.

Moreover, Hedges & Price (1999) hold the view that reading improves our thinking and problem solving and the way we think of ourselves. They also maintain that reading contributes to our mental growth. That is, we improve our ways of thinking and perceiving the world through reading books. To account for this, Pugh et al. (2000) claim that "reading is the platform from which critical thinking, problem solving, and effective expressions are launched" (p. 25). To make it clearer, reading is the starting point of developing critical thinking skills and problem solving. For this reason, teaching critical thinking skills is essentially associated with the reading skill.

1.15. Conclusion

This overview provided deep insights into critical thinking and reading skill. Part of it was concerned with the clarification of what critical thinking is and its most important components and benefits. Then, the second part of this theoretical body was devoted to cover a thorough description of reading skill. To end up, the last part explored the role of reading in developing critical thinking skills. The next chapter will describe the practical part of this research to closely examine how reading can cultivate critical thinking skills in students.

Chapter Two
Research Methodology

2. Introduction

While the previous chapter aimed at covering the literature on critical thinking and reading skill, the present chapter attempts to provide a thorough description of the practical phase of this research work. Thereby, it sheds light on the research methodology followed in the collection of data including the approaches and methods that were chosen to undertake this research. Moreover, it describes the selected context and the sample population that contributed to the present study in order to give an accurate picture of this research. Finally, it highlights the data collection tools employed including a classroom observation, a questionnaire, and interviews.

2.1. Research Methodology

Research is one of the most significant activities students are required to do in higher education in order to answer questions and solve problems. Creswell (2012) defines it as "a process of steps used to collect and analyse information to increase our understanding of a topic or issue" (p. 3). This entails that research is any systematic activity that aims at gathering and analysing data to gain insight into a particular subject or field of study. The main goal of doing research is to seek truth and shape new understandings about different topics (Kothari, 2004). Indeed, the importance of research lies in obtaining new information to enrich one's previous knowledge. However, undertaking research does not occur at random but it requires following a suitable methodology. The latter is not merely about the systematic plan the researcher follows in examining a topic or a situation, but research methodology is also about justifying one's reasons for choosing a particular method over another (Kothari, 2004).

In addition to opting for the right methodology, the essence of a well-conducted research is to choose the right approaches and methods for the investigation of one's study. As far as our research is concerned, we opted for a mixed methods approach which entails a combination of both qualitative and quantitative paradigms "to gain better understanding of a complex phenomenon by covering numeric trends from quantitative data and specific details from qualitative data" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 39). That is, quantitative approach is related to the use of tools that can be expressed in terms of quantity, whereas qualitative approach is concerned with tools which seek to obtain individuals' perspectives, opinions and attitudes about a particular topic (Kothari, 2004). On the one hand, taking a quantitative approach is easier and simpler when analysing data, for it provides accurate and exact measurements (Walliman, 2011). On the other hand, Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009) assert that "the main advantage of qualitative data is that it provides a richer and more in-depth understanding of the population under study" (p. 3). Indeed, qualitative approach aims at obtaining detailed answers from the participants. For these reasons, researchers need to use both approaches in a mixed methods paradigm to enhance the quality of research.

It is important to mention that to validate or invalidate our hypotheses, we have chosen to triangulate during our research work because of the complexity of the topic examined.

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Honerene (2017) defines triangulation as "a powerful technique that facilitates validation of data through cross verification from two or more sources" (p. 91). It is the use of different tools of data collection to increase the credibility of data. However, Berg (2001) stresses the fact that triangulation is the use of several data collection tools (usually three) to investigate one phenomenon. He regards triangulation as a crucial method to obtain mutual confirmation and validation of results claiming that combining several instruments provides a richer and more complete picture of the study. In this vein, Cohen (2015) states that "if the conclusions from each of the methods are the same, validity is established" (p. 153). Researchers opt for multiple instruments to check whether they obtain similar or different results; getting similar findings is a confirmation of increasing validity. To justify one's choice, we adopted a triangulation approach to gain more accurate and in-depth data.

2.2. Procedure

The present research was carried out with second year master students of Didactics of Foreign Languages at the department of English at Abdelhamid Ibn Badis University, Mostaganem. This study was conducted in relation to a technique of teaching Intercultural Studies and Didactics module named "Reading Sessions". It took place during the first semester along thirteen sessions. The first instrument used was observation, followed by submitting a questionnaire to students after a few sessions. When students finished with all the reading sessions, we conducted an individual interview with ten of them and later another interview was conducted with their teacher in charge of the module of Intercultural Studies and Didactics.

2.3. Context of the Study

The study was conducted with second year master students of Didactics of Foreign Languages at the department of English, Abdelhamid Ibn Badis University, Mostaganem during the academic year 2018-2019. The fact that the study aims at investigating the role of reading sessions in developing students' critical thinking skills motivated us to choose this particular setting for the enquiry. To justify one's choice, we were concerned with the technique of reading sessions that was implemented only in teaching the module of Intercultural Studies and Didactics. Thus, the next part is devoted to cover a detailed description of the technique of reading sessions.

2.3.1. Reading Sessions

Teaching English as a foreign language at university requires creative ways and techniques that differ from one teacher to another. As stated earlier, the technique of reading sessions (RS) was proposed by Dr. Boudjelal, a lecturer in Applied Linguistics at University of Mostaganem to teach Intercultural Studies and Didactics module for second year master students of Didactics of Foreign Languages. It is worth to note that the level required for these sessions is an average level in English.

2.3.1.1. The Objectives of Reading Sessions

Unlike teaching university students by giving lectures, the technique of reading sessions is different in the sense that it aims at developing students' autonomy. According to the syllabus of Intercultural Studies and Didactics module provided by the teacher, the primary goal of reading sessions is to encourage students to be critical readers and enrich their knowledge in the field of didactics and intercultural studies. That is, although the core of these sessions is reading books, the content and the objectives of the module are still respected in the sense that the selected books are in relation to intercultural language teaching and learning. The main concepts and titles that were tackled throughout the reading sessions are cited below:

- Language and culture.
- The relationship between language and culture.
- Understanding interculturality.
- Linguistic competence, communicative competence, and intercultural competence.
- Cross-cultural, intercultural, and multicultural communication.
- Assessing intercultural communicative competence.
- Discourse and culture.
- Cultural identity and cultural stereotypes.
- Linguistic imperialism and national identity.
- Who is a native speaker?
- Cultural authenticity.
- Context in language teaching.
- Authentic texts.
- The language learner as ethnographer.

Other objectives of reading sessions include:

Reading books: The very first aim of reading sessions is to encourage students to read books inside and outside the classroom. It is an attempt to motivate students to develop a habit of reading in order to gain knowledge and develop one's language.

Working within a group: An essential goal of reading sessions is to foster students' collaborative work. That is, students read their chapters together, exchange ideas, explain to one another, look for examples together, share their points of view, and help one another while discussing their readings.

Developing the speaking skill: The technique of reading sessions aims at developing students' speaking skills through presenting, debating and discussing their readings. Also, the oral skill is emphasised in the sense that the teacher directs students to pronounce correctly and proposes ways through which they can introduce their presentations.

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Developing critical thinking skills: Another important goal of reading sessions is to develop students' critical thinking. The main required skills are: questioning, analysing, comparing, contrasting, identifying key ideas and creating one's own understanding of the text. In addition to helping students learn how to construct and deconstruct knowledge.

Developing English language: Since students are dealing with books by different scholars who use sophisticated language and dense styles, students may develop their English language through reading and interacting with those books. For instance, they can enrich their vocabulary by learning new words and expressions.

Making research: Reading books is an opportunity for students to do research and look for other sources of information on the internet to support their readings.

Developing the writing skills: Reading books helps students develop better styles of writing and enrich their vocabulary. Also, when students engage in this activity on a consistent basis, they enhance their skills of paraphrasing and summarising. Additionally, reading about intercultural learning adds to their knowledge to write better essays the day of the exam.

2.3.1.2. The Process of Reading Sessions

For timing, only an hour and a half is allowed for one reading session per week. During the first session, the teacher divides students into groups of three up to six members. The next step is the selection of names. Each group of students chooses an appealing name that is related to the context of language, culture, and intercultural learning. For instance, Dynamics of Language and Culture, the Future Intercultural Speakers, and the Intercultural Gate are among the chosen names. After that, the teacher helps students select interesting books about intercultural learning that are available at the university's library, in addition to selecting particular chapters to discuss for each group.

2.3.1.3. The Selected Books and Chapters

As stated earlier, the objective of the teacher is to raise students' awareness about the most important issues related to intercultural studies and didactics. Hence, the content of the chosen chapters was mainly about language, culture, and intercultural communication. Students tackled different chapters from four books about intercultural learning as cited below:

Book 01: *Language and Culture* by Claire Kramsch (1998).

- **Chapter 01:** The relationship of language and culture.

This chapter explains the relationship between language and culture and how they affect each other at different levels. Also, it compares between culture and nature in relation to a poem by Emily Dickenson and how they are interconnected. Another key idea is the role of discourse community in giving power to culture and how this power determines people as insiders and outsiders. The last point in this chapter is the theory of linguistic relativity which refers to how language affects one's thoughts.

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- **Chapter 06:** Language and Cultural Identity.

In this chapter, Kramersch examines the relationship between language and cultural identity and how language plays a crucial role in determining the relationship between individuals and the social groups they belong to. She also explains how language influences negatively one's cultural identity. One of the important ideas discussed throughout this chapter is the power of one language over the others and conflicts of identities. The main concepts identified are: linguistic nationalism, linguistic imperialism, and linguistic hegemony.

- **Chapter 07:** Current Issues.

This chapter is mainly about the most significant issues that are recently debated among researchers such as the native speaker and cultural authenticity. First, Kramersch questions the identity of the native speaker for being the model for all foreign language learners. Second, she highlights the concept of cultural authenticity and other notions including cross-cultural, intercultural, and multicultural communication.

Book 02: *Context and Culture in Language Teaching* by Claire Kramersch (1993).

- **Chapter 02:** Contexts of Speech and Social Interaction.

This chapter highlights the importance of context in foreign language teaching and learning. Additionally, it identifies the different types of context including the contextual and situational context to end up with the role of discourse in creating culture in the classroom. Also, it tackles the idea of discourse community and the shaping of context.

- **Chapter 06:** Authentic Texts and Contexts.

Throughout this chapter, Kramersch provides several definitions of authenticity according to different scholars. She also attempts to question the authenticity of the native speaker and how authenticity is created in the classroom. Finally, she stresses the importance of cultural competence in foreign language teaching and learning in addition to the notion of discourse and media.

- **Chapter 07:** Teaching Language along the Cultural Faultline.

The central idea in this chapter is the new ways of teaching language and culture to mediate between different cultures and understand the others. Another key point is the concept of cultural reality in contrast to cultural imagination and how individuals perceive one another. The last idea discussed is the main bridges and boundaries encountered in teaching language and culture.

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- **Chapter 08:** Looking for Third Place.

In this chapter, Kramersch explains the concept of the third place which entails the creation of an intercultural space where the learner mediates between his culture and others' cultures. Also, she puts emphasis on the importance of having knowledge about different cultures to be intercultural speakers.

Book 03: *Language Learning in Intercultural Perspectives: Approaches through drama and ethnography* edited by Michael Byram & Michael Fleming (1998).

- **Chapter 01:** The Privilege of the Intercultural Speaker.

In this chapter, Kramersch criticises the native speaker for being the ideal for all foreign language learners. She questions the privilege given to the native speaker and argues that the most important goal of language learning is to be intercultural speakers instead of trying to imitate native speakers.

- **Chapter 04:** Cultural Practice in Everyday Life: The language learner as ethnographer.

This chapter highlights the importance of taking an ethnographic approach to language learning to better understand the cultural practices of other groups. Also, it examines the importance of making learners mediators between their own culture and the target one. Furthermore, it explains how ethnography helps learners examine and understand the context of the other cultures.

- **Chapter 05:** The Culture the Learner Brings: A Bridge or a Barrier?

This chapter examines the importance of teaching culture to foreign language learners. Also, it explains how students' awareness of the different cultures plays an essential role in creating discussions in the classroom. Finally, it shows the role of the learners' own culture in bridging the gap between the mother culture and the target one.

- **Chapter 12:** Cross-cultural Encounters.

This chapter discusses the role of raising students' intercultural awareness in having successful communication in cross-cultural encounters. Also, it examines the different factors that help avoid cultural shocks among students in multicultural classrooms. An example was provided which was about the project of a joint cross-cultural context between English and French students.

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- **Chapter 13:** Language Teaching and the Process of European Integration.

This chapter is concerned with two main issues. First, it discusses the difficulties of teaching foreign languages in European countries due to the existence of various cultures in one community. Second, it examines the different approaches to teaching foreign languages in multicultural classrooms including: the foreign-cultural, the intercultural, the multicultural, and the transcultural approaches.

Book 04: *Intercultural Language Teaching and Learning by Anthony, J. Liddicoat & Angela Scarino (2013).*

- **Chapter 02:** Languages, Cultures, and the Intercultural

This chapter highlights the key concepts related to intercultural language teaching and learning including language, culture, and intercultural learning. First, it reviews the different understandings of each concept from an intercultural perspective. Second, it explains how these key elements relate to one another and their importance in intercultural learning.

- **Chapter 06:** Resources for Intercultural Language Learning.

This chapter highlights the different goals of using resources in intercultural language teaching and learning. Also, it examines the diverse sources for input that provide language learners with knowledge about intercultural learning and their authenticity. Most importantly, it stresses the main advantages and disadvantages of textbooks and the importance of using other resources.

- **Chapter 07:** Technologies in Intercultural Language Teaching and Learning.

This chapter is mainly about the role of technologies in providing learners with knowledge about intercultural learning. It shows how technologies help learners understand the most important concepts about interculturality. Other points include the integration of different technologies and how learners should engage in checking information on the internet.

- **Chapter 08:** Assessing Intercultural Learning.

This chapter stresses mainly the need to develop new ways of assessing learners' intercultural communicative competence. First, it compares between the traditional way of assessing intercultural learning and the new one. Then, it tackles the concept of the institutional character of assessment. Finally, it attempts to understand the process of assessing learners' intercultural performance.

After selecting books and chapters, students were supposed to make their outlines and share them with the other groups. Thus, all students would read the same chapters for the

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discussion session. It is worth to note that the aim of the teacher was not about giving presentations but rather discussions to involve all students in the reading task. Thereby, one group explained their chapters and the other students listened, took notes, asked questions, gave examples and discussed ideas together. The teacher, on the other hand, was participating in the discussion by adding further details and illustrations. Also, he was giving instructions about how to read and how to discuss chapters in a critical way. What is more, the teacher devoted a session to show students how to read books critically as he was explaining some important reading strategies in each session to help students develop their critical thinking skills. At the end of each session, students were asked to take notes and write them in a form of reports to submit to the presenting group (see appendix 1). The latter would collect the reports and evaluate them. By the end of the reading sessions, each group submitted a summary of the discussed chapters to the teacher.

2.4. Participants

Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (2012) noted that a key step in research is the careful selection of the sample that is meant to contribute to the fulfillment of the study. They define the sample in a research study as "the group on which information is obtained" (p. 91). That is, it is important to choose the group of participants that fits one's study and aims of research.

As previously mentioned, the selected sample of this research is composed of 20 second year master students of Didactics of Foreign Languages (one male and nineteen females) who belong to Abdelhamid Ibn Badis University. This particular group of students was intentionally chosen as informants for being newly introduced to the technique of reading sessions in which we are interested to investigate. Not only students, but the teacher in charge of Intercultural Studies and Didactics module will also take part in the present study.

2.5. Data Collection Instruments

For this study, we employed multiple data gathering instruments. These include: a classroom observation, students' questionnaire, and interviews with both the learners and the teacher in charge of Intercultural Studies and Didactics.

2.5.1. Classroom Observation

Marshall and Rossman (1989) define observation as "the systemic description of events, behaviours, and artifacts in the social setting chosen for study" (p. 79 as cited in Kawulich, 2005). In clearer terms, observation is a tool used to have a thorough description of the context chosen for research. In our case, observation was used as the first tool to collect data, particularly, participant observation to gain an insightful idea of the process of reading sessions. Kawulich (2005) defines participant observation as the activity that allows researchers to get insight about the performance of a given group of individuals under study in the natural context by acting as a participant and an observer in that performance.

Undoubtedly, it was an opportunity to have a closer look at the situation to have better understanding of the phenomenon under study. One of the main advantages of observation is to gain more reliable data (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009). However, being a completely involved participant in those reading sessions through doing the readings and discussing them made the observation task quite difficult to take notes of all items being observed. Ergo, this limitation led us to conduct an unstructured observation by merely taking notes of the key items relevant to the study.

2.5.1.1. Description of the Observation

More specifically, the classroom observation started from October 08th, 2018 until January 24th, 2019 throughout the first semester. That is, we started observing the classroom practices from the very first session until the last one. Concerning the number of sessions, students had thirteen sessions including those for reading, discussing and one session devoted for how to read. The classroom observation was essentially intended to observe specific items and variables related to both students and the teacher. These items included: students' critical thinking skills when discussing chapters, students' collaborative work, teacher's assistance, students-students interaction and students-teacher interaction (see appendix 2).

Students' critical thinking skills: We focus on what critical thinking skills students have through observing whether or not they ask questions, how they interact with the texts, and whether they construct their own understandings of what they read.

Students' collaborative work: We pay attention to the extent to which group work is established among students, whether or not they share ideas and engage in discussions to analyse chapters together and shape their own understandings.

Teacher's assistance: We draw attention to the extent to which the teacher guides students during the discussion of chapters and the instructions he gives to students when presenting and explaining ideas.

Students-students interaction: We observe how students interact with one another while having discussions and whether they ask and answer questions.

Students-teacher interaction: The focus is on the ways students interact with their teacher and whether they engage with him in the construction of meaning and discussion of chapters.

2.5.2. Questionnaire

The questionnaire is the second tool we have opted for to collect quantitative and qualitative data. Brown (2001) defines the questionnaire as "any written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing answers" (as quoted in Dörnyei,

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2007, p. 91). It is the most popular instrument used to gather data in case of big enquiries. One of the main advantages of submitting a questionnaire is that measuring the data is easier and accurate. Yet, participants usually do not provide honest answers and most of them do not answer all questions which impacts the data analysis negatively. Also, some participants act carelessly and do not give the questionnaires back.

To investigate the role of reading sessions in developing students' critical thinking skills, twenty copies of the questionnaire were handed to second year master students of Didactics of Foreign Languages right after having a few reading sessions. The aim of choosing this particular timing was to discover students' first impression about the reading sessions. Also, it aimed at disclosing the extent to which students were familiar with critical reading and critical thinking concepts.

2.5.2.1. Description of the Students' Questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of both close-ended and open-ended questions to obtain quantitative and qualitative data. Close-ended questions aim at obtaining exact answers by providing the participants with yes/no questions or a set of suggested items to choose the appropriate answer(s) through ticking the right box(es), while open-ended questions are intended to obtain personal opinions and to give space to participants to add further explanations. For the purpose of organising our questionnaire, it is intentionally divided into seven sections and each section consists of a number of questions (see appendix 3).

➤ **Section One: Personal Information (Q1-Q3)**

This section is devoted to the participants' personal information to have background knowledge about their gender, the university system they belong to, and their level.

➤ **Section Two: Reading Strategies (Q1-Q3)**

The second section targets students' reading strategies. The first question aims at enquiring whether students do certain readings such as books, articles, and novels. After that, they have space to mention other sources they are interested in to read. The second question investigates whether students are accustomed to using internet and dictionaries while reading books in order to have an idea about students' critical reading techniques. The last question of this section is intended to reveal the strategies students use when reading books or any other materials. The suggested answers include: highlighting and underlying, making notes and using dictionaries. At last, an open-ended question is given to provide other reading strategies they use.

➤ **Section Three: Reading Sessions (Q1-Q4)**

In this section, students are asked about their opinions and attitudes concerning the reading sessions. Question (01) attempts to know whether or not students like the reading sessions which aims to explain whether or not students are engaged in those sessions. Then,

question (02) looks into students' perceptions regarding developing certain critical thinking skills through reading sessions allowing them to justify their answers. Question (03) tries to gather students' opinions about the positive side of reading sessions. On the other hand, question (04) gives space to students to tell whether or not they face any difficulties in reading sessions as they are requested to mention any shortcomings according to them.

➤ **Section Four: Reading and Critical Reading (Q1-Q3)**

The third section is concerned with critical thinking and critical reading. Question (01) gives students the freedom to define critical thinking in reference to their own understandings in order to know if students are aware of their critical thinking skills. Then, question (02) seeks to discover students' strategies of reading critically to investigate what reading techniques students usually follow before having the reading sessions. The last question in the section attempts to determine whether or not students are encouraged to read critically which echoes the role of teachers in developing students' critical reading.

➤ **Section Five: Questioning Reading**

This section consists of a series of statements to tick what is relevant to each student regarding their skills of questioning their readings. The given choices include: asking and answering questions while reading, identifying the author's thesis statement, identifying what arguments and assumptions are presented in the text. The aim of these statements is to know whether students question their readings or they accept any piece of information for granted.

➤ **Section Six: Comparing and Contrasting Reading**

In the same manner as the previous one, this section suggests four statements about the skills of comparing and contrasting one's readings such as: examining the similarities and differences between ideas, comparing one's current readings to others, looking for counter arguments, and relating previous knowledge to the current one. Thus, this section is an attempt to investigate the extent to which students compare and contrast their readings to previous ones.

➤ **Section Seven: Evaluating Reading**

The aim of this section is to enquire whether students evaluate and assess their readings or just accept all that they read. This series of statements consists of three questions that address students' skills of evaluating their readings. It suggests evaluating various perspectives and ideas, examining strengths and weaknesses of arguments, and questioning the authority of the author.

2.5.3. Interview

In order to prove or disprove our questionnaire's findings, a structured interview was opted for to obtain detailed data from our informants. A structured interview can be defined simply as the use of pre-planned questions with the use of a record device to gather information in a face-to-face contact (Kothari, 2004). According to Vanderstoep & Johnston

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(2009), in face-to-face interviews, the researcher has the chance to ask follow-up questions for further clarifications or details in addition to collecting both quantitative and qualitative responses for better understanding of the study. Indeed, the interview is an opportunity to ask further questions in order to obtain further explanations by the interviewees. As far as our research is concerned, we conducted interviews with students and their teacher of Intercultural Studies and Didactics as well to increase the credibility of our research findings.

2.5.3.1. Description of the Students' Interview

An interview was conducted with ten students of second year master students of Didactics of Foreign Languages after finishing all the reading sessions in order to validate or invalidate the questionnaire's answers regarding the role of reading sessions in developing students' critical thinking skills. For this reason, the questions were deliberately similar to those of the questionnaire and other questions were repeated to check whether students' responses and attitudes changed during and after the reading sessions. The interview is composed of eight questions as follows (see appendix 4):

Questions (01) and (02) are intended to know whether or not students have the habit of reading books and whether they use the internet and dictionaries to support their readings.

Question (03) attempts to confirm whether or not students liked the reading sessions after finishing them all.

Question (04) investigates the extent to which reading sessions contributed to the cultivation of the most important critical thinking skills in students.

Question (05) seeks to discover whether there were any shortcomings about reading sessions.

Question (06) attempts to reveal whether students are aware of what critical thinking is. The aim is to check if students reshaped their understandings of the concept of critical thinking after having a series of reading sessions.

Question (07) is directed to discovering whether students were motivated to read critically and what strategies they could apply. This question refers mainly to the teacher's role in developing their critical reading strategies.

Question (08) intends to discover to what extent students would develop critical thinking skills to apply in their future readings.

2.5.3.2. Description of the Teacher's Interview

The teacher's interview was the very last instrument used to obtain deeper information about the process of reading sessions and to what extent it was successful. It is composed of fourteen questions combining both open and close-ended questions (see appendix 5). The aim behind opting for an interview with the teacher in charge of the Intercultural Studies and Didactics module was to arrive at a thorough description about the experience of introducing the reading sessions, its benefits and shortcomings, whether it helped develop students' English language and their critical thinking skills in particular, and what might be modified concerning the process of reading sessions.

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Question (01) is an attempt to have insight about the importance of teaching intercultural studies to master students aiming at paving the way to the next question about the methods used in teaching this module.

Question (02) aims at discovering what methods the teacher used to follow in teaching Intercultural Studies.

Question (03) is an attempt to know what reasons made the teacher opt for introducing this technique of reading sessions to master students.

Question (04) inquires into the teacher's experience with introducing the technique of reading sessions to second year master students of Didactics of Foreign Languages.

Question (05) is concerned with disclosing the teacher's feedback about the level required for the reading sessions, especially their level in terms of critical thinking skills.

Question (06) seeks to discover what the teacher observed about students' attitudes towards the RS along the semester.

Question (07) investigates whether or not students developed certain critical thinking skills according to the teacher's point of view.

Questions (08) and (09) look into the teacher's positive and negative feedback about teaching Intercultural Studies using reading sessions.

Question (10) is intended to see to what extent students benefited from the reading sessions during their exam of Intercultural Studies.

Question (11) enquires what other skills developed by students apart from critical thinking.

Question (12) explores the extent to which reading sessions were successful.

Question (13) examines whether there are any changes the teacher wants to bring to the reading sessions.

Question (14) seeks to explore any further comments or recommendations by the teacher.

2.6. Conclusion

This chapter attempted to delineate the research methodology followed in conducting this study, the context in which the investigation took place, and the participants that took part in the fulfillment of the research work. As far as data collection instruments are concerned, a triangulation framework guided this research through the use of a classroom observation, students' questionnaire, and interviews with both students and the teacher to accumulate multifaceted data. Thus, the coming chapter will deal with data analysis, discussion of the findings, and recommendations.

Chapter Three

Data Analysis and Recommendations

3. Introduction

To have a thorough picture of the research topic and its purpose, an overview about critical thinking and reading skill was provided in the first chapter followed by the presentation and description of the different tools that were used to collect data in the succeeding chapter. The present chapter is concerned with the analysis and the discussion of the obtained data through this investigation to answer the previously stated research questions. Finally, some suggestions and recommendations will be laid out by the end of this chapter.

3.1. Data Analysis

After collecting data from the classroom observation and the responses provided by the informants including second year master students of Didactics of Foreign Languages and their teacher in charge of Intercultural Studies and Didactics module through a questionnaire and interviews, we attempt now to analyse those data and discuss them highlighting the several shortcomings and limitations that were encountered along the current study. However, data analysis will cover only the most important questions that are linked directly to the research questions in order to validate or invalidate our hypotheses.

3.1.1. Analysis of the Classroom Observation

As mentioned previously, the fact that the researcher is a participant observer resulted in having an unstructured observation, for it was difficult to take notes and cover all the selected items to be observed in all sessions while being one of a group's members who had to read chapters, present, discuss, and interact with the teacher and classmates. For this reason, we will mention only the most important notes about each item during thirteen reading sessions on Intercultural Studies and Didactics as follows:

Students' critical thinking skills

During early and mid reading sessions, it was noticed that most students were unable to discuss their chapters. Most of them were just following with the presenting group without asking questions or sharing their ideas. We noticed that only two or three students were participating in the discussions, asking questions about the chapters discussed, responding to the teacher's feedback, shaping their own perspectives, and expressing their own ideas and examples. What is more, two students were able to evaluate and assess the authors' style and language and even their advanced views. They were criticising some viewpoints that scholars advanced by giving logical reasons. On the other hand, most of the time, the presenting groups did not construct their own understanding of their chapters in the sense that they were only repeating the authors' exact words. In other words, most of them could not interact with the texts and decipher their meanings. However, during late sessions, we observed a progress in students' critical thinking skills given the fact that more students were engaged in the discussions asking and answering questions, giving examples and explaining the authors' ideas according to their own understandings.

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Student's collaborative work

Although collaborative work is one of the key goals of reading sessions, we noticed that only one group or two which really worked as a group by reading and analysing chapters together. That is, when presenting, students of the one group were helping one another and they had an idea about each chapter not only the chapter each group is concerned with. Also, if one student failed to answer the teacher's questions, another student of that group answered instead. The majority of students in the other groups gave the impression that one student was doing the work for the others. Furthermore, we observed that only few students were sharing their ideas and interacting with one another.

Teacher's assistance

What we observed was that the teacher contributed to a great extent in guiding the discussions. Throughout all sessions, he constantly directed students how to read the chapters critically by showing them how to identify the main idea of each paragraph, asking them whether or not they agreed with scholars, how to open and close the discussion, exemplifying, simplifying the style in one's own words, how to analyse and evaluate the different perspectives presented by authors, how to compare and contrast and how to construct and deconstruct knowledge. We also observed that the teacher explained to students how to present chapters and convince the audience, how to quote and how to question authors' authority and ideas. Most importantly, the teacher clarified for students how to be critical readers through synthesising, reflecting on others' ideas, evaluating perspectives and beliefs, and relating the current readings to their previous knowledge.

He also noted certain reading strategies to use such as highlighting and underlining key ideas, using internet and dictionaries effectively, and making notes. In addition to that, most of the time the teacher added details and examples to clarify ideas especially complex notions concerning culture and intercultural learning. Moreover, we noticed that the teacher emphasised key features of intercultural speakers including open-mindedness, accepting differences and considering others' points of view and feelings as well which is related to critical thinking. However, it was noticed that the teacher did not interfere much but rather insisted on students to discuss and analyse chapters during mid and late discussions.

Students-students interaction

Despite the fact that students were supposed to have discussions and not mere presentations, what we noticed in the early stages is that students were not interacting with one another but rather one group presented and the others followed silently without asking questions or adding details or sharing their own understandings of the chapters. In better terms, we did not notice any instances of exchanging ideas and opinions about the topics discussed during the sessions. Only during late sessions, students started to share their points of view, examples, and criticism of the content.

Students- teacher interaction

Concerning students' interactions with the teacher during discussions, we remarked only two or three students that continuously answered the teacher's questions and elaborated on others' discussions. The others rarely participated or provided further explanations whether they were part of the presenting groups or the students following the discussion. Thus, we did not observe much interaction between the students and the teacher but rather very few students were engaged and involved in the discussions.

3.1.1.1. Discussion of the Observation

Through the obtained data from the observation, the previously stated hypotheses have been proved to some extent. First, some students developed certain basic critical thinking skills and abilities at the end of the reading sessions. Among those skills, the ability to identify the most important ideas, question the information they read and evaluate authors' arguments and viewpoints. This confirms the role of reading sessions in enhancing students' critical thinking skills. However, it is suggested that failing to engage in discussions during the early sessions is due to several reasons. The fact that they were used to having lectures and passively receiving information from teachers was difficult for them to be introduced to such a new technique. To put it differently, students were not accustomed to reading books and discussing them with their classmates and the teacher. Thus, they had no idea how to interact actively with chapters and analyse them.

Clearly, most students developed certain awareness of what critical reading is and what reading strategies they should use when reading books or doing research. Most importantly, the teacher played a crucial role in achieving these results. Through his instructions and remarks along the reading sessions and mainly the session he devoted to how to read, students learned that reading is not a random task, but they need to develop the necessary reading strategies to read books in a critical way. Also, the teacher's emphasis on the importance of being intercultural speakers developed students' consciousness about the need for critical thinking in learning about other cultures. In other words, students learned that an intercultural speaker should be open-minded and disposed to accept and tolerate differences and these features are closely related to critical thinking.

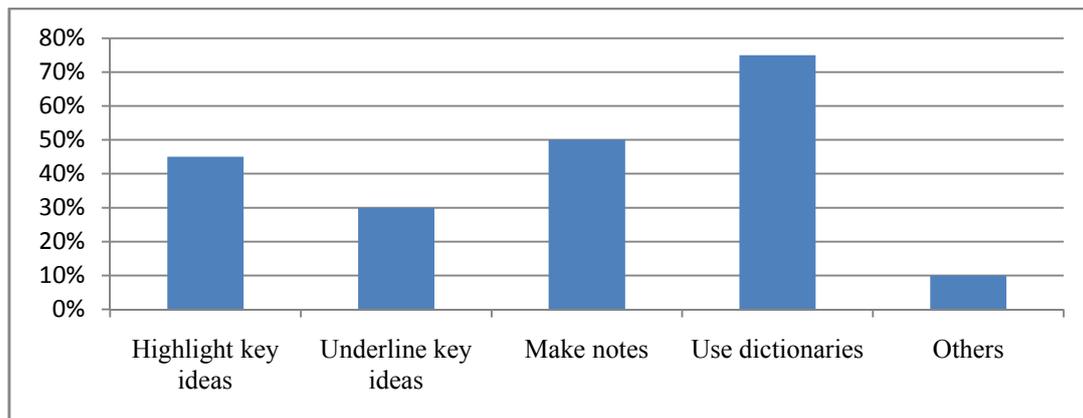
The last point is that collaborative work helped students develop their critical thinking skills in different ways. First, working in groups helped students think about their readings and exchange ideas. Also, it encouraged them to be responsible for their learning, seek knowledge to backup their topics and overcome their fear of reading books. Again, the fact that the teacher took part in the discussions and helped students construct meaning and analyse chapters encouraged students to talk and share what they have understood from those chapters. Therefore, we can conclude from our observation that reading sessions were beneficial for students to develop their critical thinking abilities to a given extent. In addition to that, the teacher's efforts and guidance contributed to a great extent in developing students' reading strategies for effective critical reading.

3.1.2. Analysis of the Students' Questionnaire

From the discussion of the observation, we concluded that students developed some critical thinking skills and reading strategies. Still, it is important to discuss and analyse the responses that were collected directly from students through a questionnaire concerning their opinions and attitudes towards reading sessions and whether or not they found them helpful in enhancing their critical thinking skills. As stated earlier, we have chosen the most important questions to be analysed; we will report the relevant comments students provided to answer the research questions. To this end, the obtained answers are categorised into four main elements that are closely related to our hypotheses. It has to be noted that some students did not answer all questions which may affect the results in a way or another.

- **Students' reading strategies**

The first question to be analysed is question 03 in section two from the questionnaire (see appendix 3) which seeks to know what reading strategies students were accustomed to use when reading books or any written text. The graph below illustrates students' responses.



Graph 3.1: The Reading Strategies Used by Students

We can notice that the majority of students (75%) do use dictionaries to check the meaning of new vocabulary they encounter when reading books. 50% of students make notes and few students opt for highlighting and underlining ideas. Only two students (10%) mentioned other techniques

"I check for new concepts on the internet".

"I use charts".

- **Students' perceptions towards reading sessions**

The questions to be analysed under this category belong to section three in our questionnaire (see appendix 3).

The first question was about whether or not students liked the reading sessions they had in Intercultural Studies and Didactics module. The following table presents students' attitudes towards reading sessions.

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	Number	Percentage
Yes I like reading sessions	11	55%
No I do not like reading sessions	09	45%

Table 3.1: Students' Attitudes Towards Reading Sessions

As it can be observed, students' attitudes regarding reading sessions are more or less on opposing ends of the spectrum. 55% acknowledged that they liked reading sessions while 45% of them did not like them.

The following table shows students' responses to question two about whether or not they felt that those reading sessions helped develop their critical thinking skills. In case students answered with "yes", we asked them to explain how they were helpful.

	Number	Percentage
Yes they helped	13	65%
No they did not help	07	35%

Table 3.2: The Effectiveness of Reading Sessions in Developing Students' Critical Thinking Skills

Clearly, the majority of students (65%) acknowledged that reading sessions were helpful for them in enhancing their critical thinking skills, while the rest (35%) claimed that they did not develop any critical thinking skills. The obtained answers from students' explanations of how reading sessions helped develop critical thinking skills are categorised as follows:

Gain new knowledge: Some students stated that reading sessions helped them gain new knowledge about the different topics tackled in chapters and learn new vocabulary. Also, they noted that it was a new experience which helped refresh their memories and made them more self-confident.

Decipher ideas: Most students agreed that reading sessions helped them develop their abilities to decipher, analyse, question, judge, understand, relate and express ideas as well as understand them from different perspectives. Some answers are listed as follows:

"Reading with deeper understanding, relating, and analysing ideas".

"It helps analysing and understanding ideas from different points of view".

"Knowing how to analyse and judge".

"They enabled me to create my own perspective towards many topics that we have dealt with and I do have opinions of what is right or wrong about many ideas".

"I have discovered my ability to decipher very complex texts. I am more self-confident".

Next, an open-ended question was asked to discover students' perceptions regarding the positive side of reading sessions (see appendix 3). The most common answers students acknowledged are quoted below:

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"Acquiring new vocabulary and have a critical mind".

"Reading sessions help us at least open a book and read and also know how to analyse chapters".

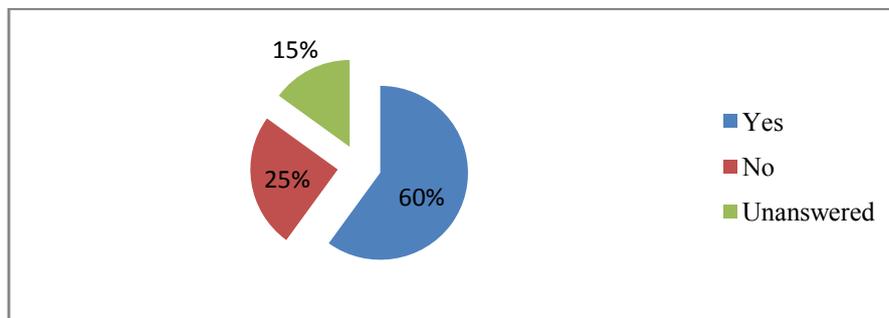
"Know new vocabulary and new ways of thinking to choose the most important ideas".

"They make students accustomed to reading, analysing and relating ideas. Moreover, they foster collaborative work and discussions".

"They were beneficial for me in the sense that I am not scared of reading anymore, I learned new vocabulary and I developed new ideas and new angles to see the world".

Other students provided common answers such as improving critical thinking skills, reading with deeper understanding, and developing one's writing abilities. From these comments, we can figure out that reading sessions played an essential role in developing students' critical thinking abilities, their background knowledge, their vocabulary, and their reading strategies. Also, they helped change students' negative attitudes towards reading and developed other skills including the writing skill.

The next graph shows the analysis of students' answers in response to question four (see appendix 3, section three) concerning the shortcomings of reading sessions. It is followed by an open-ended question to clarify one's answer.



Graph 3.2: Shortcomings of Reading Sessions According to Students

We can observe that the majority of students (60%) developed negative attitudes towards reading sessions, while only 25% of them denied any shortcomings for the technique of reading sessions. 15% of the students provided no answer to this question. The main reasons for having negative attitudes towards reading sessions were:

Time: Most students acknowledged that time was not enough to read all chapters and analyse them with deep understanding.

Language: Another obstacle that made the majority of students dislike reading sessions was the high level of language and style. Students faced difficulties in understanding chapters because scholars such as Claire Kramsch used a very sophisticated language and style especially when speaking about complex concepts such as language and culture.

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Obligatory reading: Some students stated that they do not like reading when they are obliged to. They justified their answers as follows:

"Sometimes we could not find enough time to read or to go deeper".

"Maybe when we read by obligation we cannot manage our time to read".

"We do not have time to read all chapters and write reports".

"The objective was to discuss what we understand but there were no discussions. Most students did not understand chapters as some chapters were a bit advanced at the level of ideas".

- **Reading and Critical Thinking**

The first question to be analysed in this category is question 02 in section four in the questionnaire (see appendix 3). We intended to give an open-ended question to know how students read critically for the purpose of investigating whether or not they apply critical thinking skills when reading books. Students' responses can be categorised as follows:

General Reading Strategies: Some students noted that they usually highlight key words, use dictionaries, paraphrase, and use internet to broaden their knowledge.

Analysing Ideas: Most students agreed on the importance of focusing on the main ideas, extracting the general idea, constructing ideas, and accepting others' ideas. Also, some students stated that they try to identify the writer's point of view and arguments and have their own interpretations of the text.

Questioning: Some students mentioned that they analyse, criticise, compare ideas and ask questions about what they read. Among students' answers we mention:

"Reading critically is when you get the general idea and reformulate it in your own words".

"I try to understand the key concepts, notions and ideas and I use internet to broaden my knowledge".

"You can read critically by analysing ideas and going beyond the sentence".

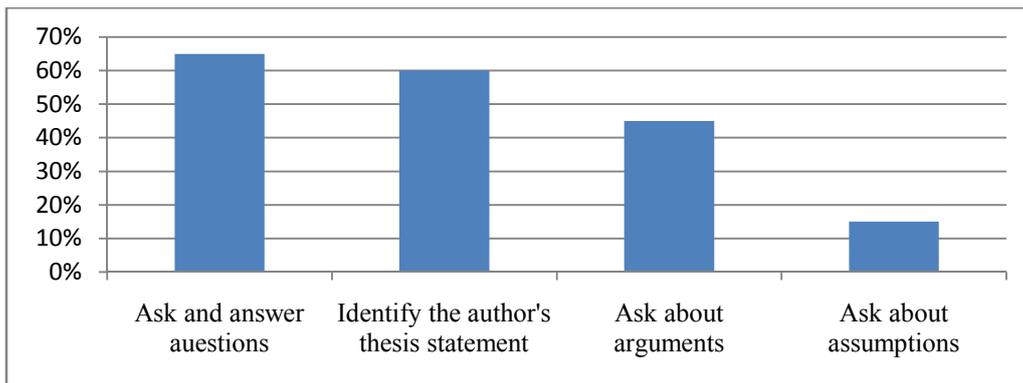
"It is to read a book, understand what the writer wants to say, and reconstruct ideas having my own interpretation".

"When I read I highlight key words and use dictionaries to check vocabulary".

The next questions belong to the last three sections in our questionnaire which concern three main critical thinking skills: questioning, comparing and contrasting as well as evaluating readings.

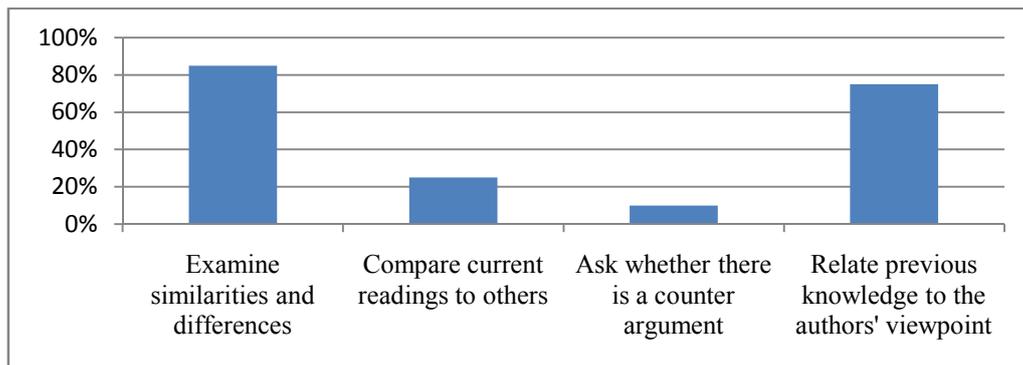
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The following graph represents how students question their readings.



Graph 3.3: Questioning Reading

As it is noticed, the majority of students (65%) do ask and answer questions when reading books. Also, 60% of them can identify the authors' thesis statements. A few others question their readings to identify the arguments and assumptions mentioned by the authors. Next graph shows how students compare and contrast their readings.

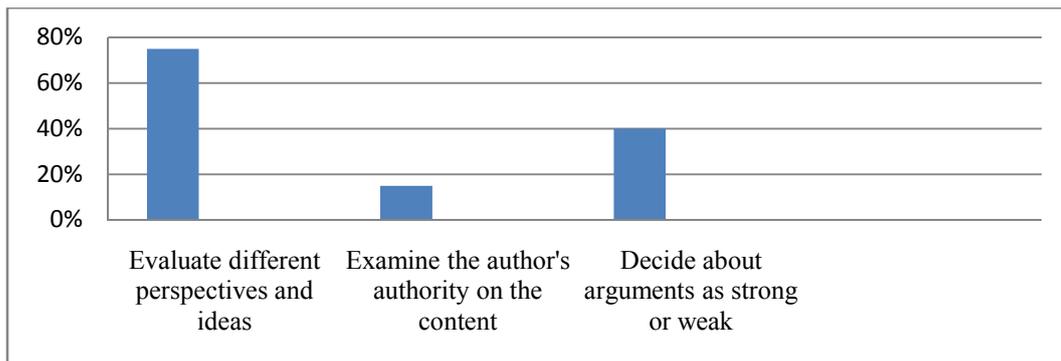


Graph 3.4: Comparing and Contrasting Reading

Clearly, most students do examine similarities and differences between ideas and they relate their previous knowledge to the authors' viewpoints. Only 25% of the students make comparison between what they read to other readings. 10% of them can identify counter arguments in texts.

The last question is concerned with students' abilities to evaluate what they read. Their responses are illustrated in the graph below.

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Graph 3.5: Evaluating Reading

This graph reveals that the majority of students (75%) are able to evaluate different perspectives and ideas when reading books. Very few students (15%) can examine the influence of the authors' authority on the content and some others (40%) are capable of assessing arguments as strong or weak.

3.1.2.1. Discussion of the Results

The obtained results reveal that reading sessions helped students develop their critical thinking skills to a great extent. Many students are now able to read critically using different strategies that they learned during the reading sessions. The most important critical thinking skills that students developed include the ability to analyse, question, compare, evaluate and consider ideas from different perspectives. However, students stated certain difficulties that they faced during the reading sessions. We conclude that those difficulties affected students' performance to some extent especially the advanced language of scholars and the limited time for analysing chapters.

3.1.3. Analysis of the Students' Interview

The analysis of the students' interview aims at investigating the final impressions and attitudes towards reading sessions and their role in developing critical thinking skills. For this reason, it was important to submit questionnaires and conduct interviews with students at different stages of the reading sessions: a questionnaire after a few sessions and interviews right after finishing all reading sessions. To justify one's choice, students' attitudes towards reading sessions at the beginning of the semester might have changed after having more of them. As mentioned previously, we intended to ask questions to students that are similar to the questionnaire's ones in order to compare between both answers and check any change in attitudes towards reading sessions or the progress in relation to critical thinking skills and reading strategies. We will focus only on the most relevant questions that may support the results obtained from the questionnaire.

Question 3: Did you like the reading sessions of Intercultural Studies and Didactics module? Can you explain why? (see appendix 4).

Six students replied positive answers, while the other four students acknowledged that they did not like them for several reasons. They justified their answers as follows:

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"Yes of course, very much. They were really inspiring sources that encouraged us to read more critically especially in culture, we have gained much knowledge. So, it is special and it created in us the habit of reading".

"Yes, somehow. It was so helpful in developing our skills in analysing and asking questions especially developing our critical thinking".

"Somehow, not really. It is really beneficial, it helps you develop your critical thinking and your critical reading as it improves your language and your writing as well, but it is really difficult, I mean language was so difficult because it is special to some scholars like Kramsch and others".

"No, I did not like it at first. It was difficult because it was new for us, we do not know how to manage time for reading chapters and understanding the language that was of high level for us, of course as beginners in reading sessions of interculturality".

Question 4: To what extent were they helpful to develop effective critical thinking skills?
(see appendix 4).

The majority of students believed that reading sessions were very beneficial for them because they helped them develop their critical thinking skills. Only three students claimed that those reading sessions were helpful to a given extent. Some of their answers are listed as follows:

"I think to a great extent because maybe before we used to read just reading without analysing or evaluating, reading passively, taking everything for granted, but in reading sessions, we really did know how to relate a paragraph to another, an idea to another, how to analyse deeply each idea and how to go deeper. Maybe one paragraph may take half an hour or more just to analyse it. So, it developed critical thinking to a great extent".

"Well, they were beneficial and helpful for me. They made me read in other ways like when you read, you get the main point of each paragraph not reading just spontaneously".

"It helped me somehow".

"Well, I think those sessions were really good for developing critical thinking because to start with, when the topic is culture and we are reading about views about other people... well, in order to understand a view that is different from yours, you are definitely using critical thinking, because you need to think. It's not like a story that is just told to you and you can understand it directly, you need to really focus and read again and again and try to put yourself in someone's shoes and this is critical thinking".

"Yes, they helped me a lot because the teacher guided us and gave us another idea that I did not have before".

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Question 5: Do you have any negative feedback about reading sessions?

Three students did not show any negative attitude towards reading sessions claiming that they were very helpful and beneficial. The majority stated that reading sessions were negative in terms of difficult language, complex notions in relation to culture and insufficient time for reading all chapters. Some of the answers they provided were:

"Not at all, no... they were good".

"Yes. Usually the language used is complicated, sometimes it is hard to get the point of view of the author".

"Sometimes when you face some problems in understanding. For example, we cannot understand Kramersch's style because it seems very difficult to understand and maybe related to philosophy".

"Although it was very important, but I think it has a negative side such as spending a long time to understand just one idea, also because the language and words we read were difficult".

Question 7: Have you been encouraged to read critically? If yes, what strategies were you advised to use?

Given the fact that the aim of this question was to investigate the role of the teacher in charge for Intercultural Studies and Didactics module in enhancing students' critical reading and what reading strategies students could develop during the reading sessions, all students stated that the teacher encouraged them to read critically by using some important reading strategies. Students' responses are cited below:

"Yes. As our teacher said that when we read a paragraph, first we have to look for the topic sentence because it says a lot and so you can obtain the main idea of each paragraph. It is not necessary to understand word by word, it is enough to have a general idea about what you are reading".

"Yes, I did not have it before but since we had the reading sessions with our teacher of interculturality, I had the courage to read critically and to read more. For me, the strategies are: First of all, I read the text carefully, I read it again and again in order to understand it, explain the difficult words in the text using dictionaries or internet, understand the general idea and analyse it, evaluate it and say if I agree or disagree about any point of view".

"Yes, to highlight the main ideas and key words".

"Yes, very much. Well, the teacher of interculturality told us to read the text and understand it despite the limited time we had for reading, we need to develop our own ideas, use dictionaries to see other meanings of those sentences and words and also on the internet. He told us to visit other sources that are connected to those topics, also asking him whenever we have obstacles, so we were really encouraged to read critically".

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Question 8: For your future readings, do you feel that you are capable enough to question, analyse and evaluate them? In other words, do you feel that those reading sessions developed your skills of questioning, analysing and evaluating?

The majority of students acknowledged that they are now capable to read critically because they developed the skills of questioning and evaluating their readings. Only one student whose answer was "not really". Some students replied as follows:

"Ah, I cannot say I will be absolutely capable but I think to a great extent, because I can say we built the habit... I mean we were accustomed how to read critically and I think we progressed very much".

"Yes. Well, after those reading sessions, after going through different books, different views, different writers, and even in those books; there were different views of different people, all of that, I think that I have developed a kind of a tendency to think more critically, so I feel that if I read more books, I would definitely think more about them".

"Yes. I have this ability because I had experience this year, so I see that I am able to read critically, to question, to evaluate and do not read randomly like I used to do before".

"Yes, now I am capable to read and analyse because I have learned how to read".

3.1.3.1. Discussion of the Results

Students' answers in the interview confirmed what they had said in the questionnaire. Concerning their attitudes towards reading sessions, most of them maintained that they liked them because they helped them develop certain skills and gain knowledge in relation to interculturality. Few students who had shown negative attitudes insisted on the previously stated shortcomings including lack of time, the advanced level of style and language, and the difficulties they faced in understanding cultural concepts.

Most importantly, the majority of students acknowledged that reading sessions were very helpful in developing their critical thinking skills. Through those sessions, they realised that they are no longer reading passively as they used to do, but they learned how to read critically. The major skills they developed comprise the ability to question any information they read, analyse ideas and judge them from different perspectives, relate and compare what they read to their previous knowledge and identify the authors' points of view.

When it comes to the teacher's role, all students confirmed that their teacher during reading sessions played an essential role in showing them how to read critically through the use of certain reading techniques to understand and analyse their readings. The most important strategies they learned to use include: looking for the topic sentence to obtain the main idea of the text, using dictionaries and internet, highlighting key words, developing their own understandings of the text, and analysing ideas.

3.1.4. Analysis of the Teacher's Interview

In addition to the classroom observation and the students' responses, it was important to disclose the feedback of the teacher in charge of Intercultural Studies and Didactics regarding reading sessions and students' performance to gain deeper insights into the effectiveness of this technique in developing students' critical thinking. To analyse and discuss the teacher's answers in the interview, we will review the most important questions that are directly linked to the research questions (see appendix 5).

First, the aim was to discover the reasons why the teacher proposed the technique of reading sessions to teach Intercultural Studies and Didactics module. He claimed that he wanted to teach the content of his module and change students' negative attitudes towards reading. He stated, *"I introduced the technique of reading sessions because I wanted to work on two objectives at the same time. On the one hand, I wanted to deliver the content of the lectures and at the same time to change those negative attitudes our learners develop about reading"*. For him, books are the most reliable sources of information while most students do not read because they find it boring and even when they read, they do it passively.

When we asked him about students' level concerning their critical thinking, he acknowledged that some students were not critical because they were accustomed to learning by heart which made him work hard to teach them how to be critical readers. He also noted that most students had problems in language which was an obstacle for them to understand the advanced language of scholars. He replied, *"when I was teaching Intercultural Studies using the reading sessions technique, I found it difficult to identify certain critical instances from learners' interactions and practices orally in the classroom, but I used to do certain extra efforts like "what do you think?", "do you agree with Claire Kramersch? Do you see how she beautifully criticise the European culture even though she is part of it?". That is why I was instigating them to dare, but I think critical thinking should be the next stage while the first one is to develop the linguistic ability. So, if you access that linguistic repertoire which Claire Kramersch uses, then you can embrace critical thinking. Thus, there is an obstacle which is language"*.

When it comes to his feedback about students' performances and whether he noticed any progress regarding their critical thinking skills, he confirmed that students had some reading abilities and they worked hard. Yet, only few students were critical due to their problems of language. He said, *"honestly, to a given extent, because I could see some efforts being done. Some of the learners were critical in the way they answered and interacted, but some others were not. But at least from the beginning until the end, I can say that it was successful to some extent taking into account students' abilities to read, to decipher and to identify certain views scholars advanced in their books"*.

To reply to our question of whether or not he observed that his instructions about how to read critically were beneficial for students, he showed a positive attitude asserting that they learned that reading requires certain strategies despite the fact that students were not that critical during the sessions. He commented, *"although learners were not able to read*

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critically, at least they developed a consciousness and awareness that reading is important and it should be done in relation to certain techniques, so given the fact that I opened a room for questioning how to read even if they have not developed critical thinking, but since they started thinking it is a positive sign because thinking is the best process and when you start thinking, the coming stages are easier".

Concerning his opinion about the positive side of teaching interculturality using reading sessions, he stressed the beauty of having books on tables to be read and the efforts students made stating that *"what was positive is that I was really happy to see books on the tables. I found it interesting because they were attempting to work hard"*. However, when it comes to the shortcomings, he identified some of them in relation to him and to the students as well. He believed that the level was not taken into account because books were very advanced in terms of style and language. Also, some students did not read the assigned chapters because they were accustomed to receiving information passively. He replied, *"I think that among the shortcomings I had is that I think I did not take into consideration the level, because the books were very dense in style, but as far as the learners are concerned, there is a huge room for criticism. Students are used to ready-made information. Sometimes, I found that they were not reading; some of them were just following the discussion because of the presence which was obligatory"*.

Finally, when we asked him about the success of reading sessions, he confirmed that they were successful to some extent and he claimed that there are certain elements to be modified. He said, *"I would say they were successful to an extent of adaptation because I believe that your first attempt should not be successful totally, that is why I believe that it was a successful journey with certain points to modify and question"*.

3.1.4.1. Discussion of the Results

The teacher's answers reveal that reading sessions were not that helpful in enhancing students' critical thinking skills because their language was not excellent enough to understand books written by scholars whose style is very dense. Also, students did not have much knowledge about culture and intercultural learning to reflect on their readings. For these reasons, it was difficult for the teacher to observe any critical thinking instances from students' discussions of the tackled chapters. Concerning reading strategies, the teacher was satisfied with students' efforts because he confirmed that students became aware about how to read critically even though they were not that critical. Furthermore, the teacher's efforts throughout the reading sessions in explaining to students how to read critically, how to question their readings and construct their own understanding were very beneficial for students and helped them develop some reading strategies. Thus, the teacher played an important role in developing students' critical reading abilities.

3.2. General Discussion of the Results

Overall, the results have indicated that the implementation of reading sessions was successful to some extent in fostering critical thinking. Despite the difficulties students faced concerning the dense style and language used in the books they dealt with and the complexity

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of the content itself which is culture and intercultural learning, students developed some critical thinking skills that enabled them to read books critically. Through reading sessions, students gained the habit of reading and thinking deeply about the information they read. The main skills most students developed comprise skills of questioning, analysing, comparing, and evaluating ideas and beliefs in addition to developing one's own perspectives and understandings.

Additionally, reading sessions helped students learn some important strategies to read critically. The majority of learners maintained that reading sessions were beneficial in the sense that they helped them discover how passive readers they were, therefore, they developed some techniques to use including: highlighting key words; identifying the main ideas; using dictionaries and internet; identifying the author's point of view; asking questions; evaluating perspectives; analysing and relating ideas; and paraphrasing. In essence, the teacher played a paramount role in developing students' critical reading. Throughout the reading sessions, he was a facilitator through his instructions about how to read, how to analyse, how to discuss and convince others, how to encode and decode meaning, and how to ask questions and evaluate ideas. Also, he instigated them to question their readings and develop their own understanding of the text. Thus, we can say that the teacher's guidance and advice for his students about the importance of critical reading and the ways of doing that were of great use in developing their critical thinking skills.

3.3. Recommendations

After identifying the encountered difficulties and shortcomings of the implementation of reading sessions, some recommendations are suggested below in addition to the teacher's suggestions provided during the interview to make this technique more effective.

Allowing Sufficient Time for Reading

Considering students' complaints about the lack of time to read and analyse all chapters, we suggest to start reading sessions during their first year of master degree; second year master students are required to write dissertations which might make it difficult for them to concentrate on reading sessions. Also, it is recommended to ask students to read and analyse articles too because reading books takes more time than reading articles. Another point is that students should be given enough time to write reports after finishing the discussion because it is difficult for them to follow discussions and write reports at the same time.

Giving Students the Right to Select Books

Some students claimed that they cannot read when being obliged. Thus, it might be of great use if the teacher decides about the content to be delivered, and gives the choice of books and chapters for students. Indeed, when students have the chance to select the books and chapters they are interested in, they are more likely to engage in discussions and share their ideas. Thus, students can select books whose language is accessible to be able to comprehend the content.

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The Integration of Teaching Culture

Most students faced difficulties in understanding concepts in relation to culture due to the fact they do not have sufficient knowledge about the different cultures in the world. Thus, we suggest to integrate the teaching of culture and intercultural communicative competence during the three years of licence so that they get familiar with their own culture and the target one and to be well-informed about the main characteristics of intercultural speakers. As a result, students will be able to read about others' cultures and reflect on them because background knowledge is important for critical thinking.

Integrating Reading Comprehension

It was noticed that most students in the early reading sessions were not aware of the required reading strategies to read books critically. They were accustomed to reading texts passively because they did not have Reading Comprehension module which is very important for students to develop their reading skills. For this reason, we suggest the integration of Reading Comprehension module for students at university to develop the necessary reading strategies to interact with texts.

The Teacher's Recommendations

Taking into account the different shortcomings identified in the reading sessions, the teacher recommended providing students with the list of books to be read during the summer holidays in order to have more time to read. He intends also offer students the chance to read in details and to check internet as he confirmed that he will be available online to answer students' questions or to provide clarifications. Moreover, he plans to devote more sessions to teach students how to read critically and raise their awareness about the importance of reading. In addition to that, he intends to focus on the speaking skill to enhance students' abilities in presenting and discussing topics.

3.4. Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, we have attempted to answer our research questions through the analysis and discussion of the findings. We have discovered that both the teacher and students showed positive and optimistic attitudes towards reading sessions. The obtained results from the different data collection tools have revealed that reading sessions were very beneficial in developing students' critical thinking skills. Moreover, students developed certain reading strategies that enabled them to read more critically. We have also concluded that the teacher played a crucial role in enhancing students' critical reading abilities through his efforts, guidance and instructions. Finally, we have provided a set of possible recommendations that would make reading sessions more successful and fruitful.

General Conclusion

In teaching English as a foreign language, active learning is highly recommended for students to achieve higher level in their studies. However, most university students are still passive recipients of knowledge especially after the development of technology which facilitated their access to all sorts of information, but encouraged them to accept all knowledge on the internet as true. In order to help students become independent learners, the major role of teachers is to develop their critical thinking skills. Educators suggest that the most important skill that promotes critical thinking among students is the reading skill. Reading books pushes learners to think about what they read and therefore improves their ways of thinking and perceiving the world. The more students read, the more they enhance their critical thinking abilities and thus they develop as critical readers.

This research has focused on three main objectives. The ultimate purpose was to investigate the effectiveness of reading sessions in enhancing students' critical thinking skills. Also, the study aimed at discovering what reading strategies students might develop to be able to read critically. Moreover, it attempted to investigate the teacher's role in developing students' critical reading abilities during the reading sessions.

The first chapter covered the theoretical background of the research topic. The first part highlighted the main conceptualisations of critical thinking under three main fields: philosophy, psychology and education. Then, it presented the prominent features of critical thinking, its salient abilities and dispositions as well as its benefits in education. Finally, it gave insight into the notion of creativity in teaching English as a foreign language. The second part was devoted to the reading skill by providing the most important definitions, types, strategies, benefits and the concept of critical reading. The last part was solely concerned with the role of reading in developing critical thinking skills.

As for the methodology followed in undertaking this research, it was described in the second chapter. Given the complexity of the topic, it was important to take a triangulation approach to undertake this research. A mixed methods approach was chosen to collect both quantitative and qualitative data from the selected participants who included second year master students of Didactics of Foreign Languages and their teacher of Intercultural Studies and Didactics module at Mostaganem University. First, we conducted a classroom observation to investigate the teacher and students' practices during the reading sessions. A questionnaire was handed to students to provide answers about their attitudes towards reading sessions. To obtain more details from students, we conducted an interview at the end of the reading sessions. The final step was to conduct an interview with the teacher of Intercultural Studies and Didactics to obtain further information about the application of reading sessions and the extent to which it was successful.

The last chapter was devoted to the analysis and interpretation of results. First, we analysed and discussed the obtained data from the classroom observation. Then, the most important responses of both students and the teacher through the questionnaire and interviews were analysed and presented in demonstrative figures. Finally, a general discussion of all the

General Conclusion

results was provided briefly followed by some proposed recommendations concerning the use of reading sessions.

Through this study, we have discovered that reading sessions were effective to some extent in developing students' critical thinking skills. The majority acknowledged that those reading sessions in Intercultural Studies and Didactics module helped them develop certain critical thinking skills. The main skills they mentioned were: the ability to question all that they read and evaluate ideas by judging them as strong or weak. Also, they learned to analyse ideas and relate them to their previous knowledge. Furthermore, the results have revealed that students could develop the most important reading strategies that help them read books critically. For instance, most students have learned how to identify the main ideas of paragraphs, the authors' viewpoints as well as arguments and assumptions. They have also developed their abilities in analysing texts and constructing their own understandings in addition to some basic reading strategies such as paraphrasing, using dictionaries, and highlighting key words. Through the observation and students' responses, we have concluded that the teacher played an essential role in developing students' critical reading abilities. Along the reading sessions, the teacher guided students, instigated them to ask questions, discuss, and construct their own understandings of ideas. Also, he encouraged them to dare and reflect on their readings by pushing them to share their ideas whether viewpoints or criticisms. Most importantly, the teacher's instructions about how to read were of great use in raising students' awareness about what critical reading is and how it should be done.

Hence, the previously proposed hypotheses have been proved. We assumed that reading sessions could help students develop their critical thinking skills. We also estimated that students might develop some reading strategies that enable them to read books more critically. Finally, we expected that the teacher could serve as a facilitator who guides students and correct them. We also assumed that he could play an important role in motivating students to think about their readings and providing them with the necessary reading strategies to be critical readers.

Eventually, this research was an attempt to answer a limited number of questions. Therefore, apart from critical thinking, we suggest that there are other important dimensions for the implementation of reading sessions in teaching English as a foreign language at university to be investigated in further research. Given the fact that the core of reading sessions is to read books, this technique is of great use because reading has endless advantages for both teachers and learners. However, it is advisable to take into account the previously mentioned shortcomings and the proposed recommendations to have more fruitful results. We hope that our humble work raises the faculty's awareness towards the significance of teaching students through the use of reading sessions to develop their critical thinking and many other skills.

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Appendices

Appendix (1): Students' Reports

A Report from Early Sessions

15/10/2018

The Dynamic Aspects of Language and Culture group presented the book of "Language and Culture" by Claire Kramsch (1998). This German scholar wrote many books such as "Context and Culture". In the book of Language and Culture, Kramsch explained how language and culture are related to each other. In the first chapter, she introduced language as a social media and that language expresses cultural reality. She also highlighted the point that language embodies and symbolises cultural reality. Then, Kramsch explained the relationship between nature and culture by comparing their definitions through a poem written by Emily Dickenson to come to the idea that culture immortalises nature which paves the way to the idea of speech community. After that, the group introduced the idea of communities of language users in which she talked about the two functions of culture (liberating or constraining). In addition to the idea of discourse community, she also mentioned the idea of the insiders and outsiders in which she talked about orientalism, hegemony and linguistic relativity. Finally, she discussed the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis.

Appendix (2): Checklist Observation

Sessions	Early Sessions	Mid Sessions	Late Sessions
Students' Critical Thinking Skills			
Students' Collaborative Work			
Teacher's Assistance			
Students-students Interaction			
Students-teacher Interaction			

Appendix (3): Students' Questionnaire

Investigating the Role of Reading Sessions in Developing Learners' Critical Thinking

This questionnaire aims at collecting data to investigate the role of reading sessions in developing learners' critical thinking. It will be of great help to provide honest answers and comments. All responses will be kept confidential.

Section one: Personal Information

Please tick the right box(es)

1- Gender: Male

Female

2-What is the university system that you belong to?

a- Classical

b- LMD

3- Level:

Section two: Reading Strategies

1-Do you read books, articles, and novels?

Yes

No

Others: (please specify).....

2-Do you use internet to support your readings?

Yes

No

3-How do you read?

I highlight key words and main ideas

I underline key concepts and ideas

I make notes

I use dictionaries to check new vocabulary

Others:.....

Section three: Reading Sessions

1-Do you like the reading sessions in Intercultural studies and Didactics module?

Yes

No

2-Do you feel that those sessions helped you use your critical thinking?

Yes

No

If yes, how?.....

.....

3-What is positive about reading sessions?

.....

.....

.....

4-Are there any shortcomings?

Yes

No

If yes, please mention them:.....

.....

.....

Section four: Reading and Critical Thinking

1-What is critical thinking (in your own words)?

.....

.....

2-How do you read critically?

.....

.....

3-Have you been encouraged to read critically?

Yes

No

Section Five: Questioning Reading

I do ask and answer questions while reading

I can identify the author's thesis statement

I ask what arguments the author presented

I ask what assumptions have been made

Section Six: Comparing and Contrasting readings

I examine the similarities and differences between ideas

I compare what I am reading to other readings

I ask whether there is a counter-argument

I consider how my prior knowledge relates to the author's viewpoint

Section Seven: Evaluating Reading

I can evaluate different perspectives and ideas in my reading

I examine the influence of the authors' authority on the content

I can decide about arguments as strong or weak

Thank you for taking time to fill up this survey. Your answers are highly appreciated!

Appendix (4): Students' Interview

The aim of this interview is to discover your feedback about the reading sessions of Intercultural Studies and Didactics regarding developing critical thinking skills. Your honest answers will be of great use for this research.

1-Do you read for pleasure or for purpose? When reading for purpose, which books do you read?

2- Do you usually support your readings for purpose using internet, dictionaries or other sources?

3- Did you like the reading sessions of Intercultural Studies and Didactics module? Can you explain why?

4- To what extent were they helpful to develop effective critical thinking skills?

5- Do you have any negative feedback about reading sessions?

6- Explain critical thinking in your own words.

7- Have you been encouraged to read critically? If yes, what strategies were you advised to use?

8- For your future readings, do you feel that you are capable enough to question, analyse and evaluate them? In other words, do you feel that those reading sessions developed your skills of questioning, analysing and evaluating?

Appendix (5): Teacher's Interview

The aim of this interview is to reveal your feedback about the reading sessions introduced in the module of Intercultural Studies and Didactics and how students reacted to them.

1-As a teacher of Intercultural Studies and Didactics, what is the importance of teaching this module to master students?

2- At first, how did you teach this module?

3-Why have you decided to introduce the reading sessions in teaching Intercultural Studies?

4-What can you tell about your experience in introducing the reading sessions to second year master students of Didactics of Foreign Languages?

5-Did their level meet your expectations? How about their critical thinking skills?

6- What is your feedback concerning their performance? Have you noticed any progress regarding their critical thinking skills?

7- While having the reading sessions, have you observed that they benefited from your instructions about how to read critically? How?

8- What was positive about teaching Intercultural Studies using the reading sessions?

9- What was negative about that?

10- As far as the exam results are concerned, what is your feedback about students' work?

11- Have you noticed that students developed other skills in their English language except for critical thinking? If yes, what are they?

12- To what extent were the reading sessions successful and fruitful for students?

13- Are you thinking of changing anything about the process of the reading sessions? What can you tell about that?

14- Are there any suggestions or comments to add?