

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my beloved family, my parents for their care, my dear brothers and my fiance for their support.

Special dedication to my grandfather, without his moral assistance and motivational words none of this would have been accomplished.

To my precious friends, I wish them all best of luck.

To all my Teachers

To everyone who has encouraged me and made me stronger

Thank you all

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Abstract

Training pupils to think critically is one of the most serious challenges that face EFL teachers nowadays. Applying the critical thinking skills in reading activity is such a very important aspect to develop the pupil's capability to comprehend and to make a sense of the text. This study intends to make EFL learners aware of critical thinking dealing with some effective strategies that will help them to overcome their difficulties in reading comprehension. The major purpose of this study is to investigate teachers' and pupils' perspectives about the development of reading comprehension strategies through teaching critical thinking skills. Furthermore, it examines how training in critical thinking skills increases reading comprehension. To test the study hypotheses, a mixed methods research design has been chosen to collect both quantitative and qualitative data from the selected sample. Classroom observation, a questionnaire and interview have been chosen as tools to collect data to determine the effects of using reading strategies on pupils' reading comprehension; as well as teachers' perceptions towards developing pupils' critical thinking skills. Based on the results of the study, it has been demonstrated that critical thinking plays a crucial role in improving learners' reading comprehension ability. The study also reveals the importance of implementing critical thinking skills in developing reading comprehension strategies.

Key words: *Critical thinking, critical thinking skills, reading comprehension, reading comprehension strategies.*

List of Abbreviations

CT: Critical Thinking

CTS: Critical Thinking Skills

EFL: English as Foreign Language

ELT: English Language Teaching

RQ: Research Question

ICQ: Instruction Checking Questions

CCQ: Concept Checking Questions

%: Percentage

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General Introduction

Developing the ability to think critically is an important element for modern education approaches. Preparing pupils to be able to think critically is one of the key goals for many teachers since it is suggested that critical thinking skills result in a better development in language improvement especially a receptive ability like reading. Reading skill enables pupils to acquire knowledge and comprehend information from the text. Thus, comprehension is the essence of reading, it is very important because not everyone reading a text can comprehend and understand what he is reading. Reading is both thinking and a cognitive process. Moreover, it implies that while reading, the reader is using some critical thinking skills and sub skills. It seems that there is a relationship between reading and critical thinking.

Due to the complexity of the reading skill, pupils usually suffer from poor reading comprehension. It requires the development of many other language skills and abilities. One of these skills is developing critical thinking, a cognitive strategy in reading to enhance pupils' text reading comprehension level. Critical thinking strategies may have a positive impact on developing pupils' ability to understand, interpret, and reflect upon the meaning of what is being read and to improve their reading comprehension. The present study investigates this problem to know about the extent to which critical thinking skills can help in developing EFL pupils' reading comprehension and facilitate their reading tasks. It intends to see how these skills play a crucial role in developing the capacities of learners in terms of reading comprehension skill. It also raises teachers' and pupils' awareness towards the influence of applying some reading strategies on the success of pupils' comprehension skill. For that, the following questions are raised:

- Is there a significant relationship between the reading skill and critical thinking?
- To what extent can critical thinking skills affect learners' reading comprehension?
- Do reading strategies develop reading comprehension ability?

Based on these questions, the following hypotheses are formulated: 1- There is a relationship between the reading comprehension skill and critical thinking 2-Learners who apply critical thinking skills perform better in reading comprehension than those who do not. The hypothesis states also that the practice in using strategies of reading appropriately; pupils will be able to achieve comprehension in reading easily.

To undertake this research, the selected population includes two classes of fourth year pupils of Kaibich Ahmed Middle School because they were having training in reading comprehension activities for their final exam. In addition to the two sample classes, their teacher and 18 teachers from different middle schools in Mostaganem were part of the sample study. 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, three data collection instruments were used. The first tool to be used is a classroom observation to have deep insights into the pupils and teacher's practices during the reading tasks. A questionnaire is submitted to discover teachers' perceptions towards the implementation of CTS in the reading comprehension tasks. An interview is conducted with pupils to check whether they adopt certain reading strategies to overcome their reading difficulties and an interview with their teacher to see if she maintains the same attitude.

The present research is divided into three chapters. The first chapter provides an overview of the topic. It is purely theoretical and gives an overview about critical thinking including its definitions from different perspectives, the main components and its benefits in education. Then, it deals with the definition of the reading skill and discusses various levels involved in a reading comprehension process. Moreover, it covers the different cognitive processes needed for text comprehension. The second chapter provides a description of research methodology; the methods and approaches followed in this research in addition to the different data collection tools used to investigate the role of CTS in enhancing EFL pupils' reading comprehension ability. The last chapter represents data discussion and suggests some recommendations.

CHAPTER ONE: CRITICAL THINKING
AND READING COMPREHENSION, AN
OVERVIEW

1.1 Introduction

Critical thinking has been a growing area of study that has attracted many philosophers, educators and researchers for a long time. It is a basic component of success in any career, social relationships, more importantly in the field of education. Foreign language learners need to develop such a skill, simply because they need to take responsibility for analyzing and evaluating information. In any language learning field, learners usually aim at developing the four linguistic competences; listening, speaking, reading and writing. Thus, learning a foreign language, as English, requires more effort. This chapter is devoted to various definitions related to the concept of critical thinking to give a general description of its definitions, models and how it plays an important role in enhancing pupils' reading comprehension specifically.

1.2 Definition of Critical Thinking:

Over centuries, the ability to think critically and to reason well has been considered an important and necessary outcome of life and education. According to Paul, Elder, and Bartell (1997) the intellectual roots of critical thinking are linked to the teaching practices of Socrates, who 2,500 years ago, established the importance of asking deep questions that makes you think profoundly before accepting ideas. His method of questioning is now known as “Socratic Questioning” and it is the most critical thinking strategy used by teachers.

Critical thinking is a process that makes learner think of a new way to face the challenges of the world. Generally, scholars and researchers have not agreed on a particular definition of the term critical thinking. Romeo (2010) explains that there is currently a lack of an accepted theoretical definition for critical thinking. Dewey (1910) introduces the term ‘critical thinking’ as the name of an educational goal, which he identifies with a scientific attitude of mind. In 1933, Dewey calls it “reflective thinking” and defines it as being “*the kind of thinking that consists in turning a subject over in the mind and giving it serious consecutive consideration*” (Dewey, 1933, p. 112). According to Elder and Paul (1994), critical thinking refers to the ability of individuals to take in charge of their own thinking and develop standards for analyzing their own thinking. Another considerable definition belongs to Facione (2000, cited in Yue Lin 2018, p.2) who characterizes critical thinking as a self-adjusting process involving the use of cognitive skills to make judgments and to improve the quality of these judgments. Similarly, Lau (2011) states that “*Critical*

thinking is thinking clearly and rationally. It involves thinking precisely and systematically and following the rules of logic and scientific reasoning, among other things” (p. 1) In other words, Lau (2011) means that critical thinking is the ability to think in an objective and organized manner using logic and reason. While Cortell (2005) defines Critical thinking as “*a complex process of deliberation which involves a wide range of skills and attitudes”* (p. 9) which shows that critical thinking focuses on various skills and attitudes. All these definitions state the necessity of critical thinking. By adopting and applying them in educational contexts, learners can acquire a variety of ways to think critically.

The recent years have witnessed an increasing interest in developing critical thinking skills of students in order to improve their thinking and learning abilities and help them to succeed in their educational goals. Critical thinking nowadays is one of the major concepts in education and it has also a significant position in second and foreign language learning (Atkinson, 1997).

1.3 Critical Thinking Skills

The skills that learners need in order to be able to think critically are varied. The most common ones that appear repeatedly are: analysis, evaluation, decision-making, problem solving and reasoning. Richard (1993) explains that critical thinking is the ability to take in charge of one’s own thinking, which includes accessing, analyzing, evaluating the effectiveness of thinking based on logic. Critical thinking is the analysis of facts to form a judgment. Analysis skill plays a major role in understanding any sort of data. Additionally, it is integrated in all the skills.

Another important skill of critical thinking is decision making. This skill can have a significant impact on the individual’s life. According to Harvey (2007), decision making is the act of selecting the most appropriate choice among other options based on the objectives. Students who memorize information may not be able to apply that information in solving problems. Critical thinking is a form of problem solving that is much more than just gaining knowledge. It is the act of carefully dealing with a problem to determine the best solution. The final skill which goes hand-in-hand with critical thinking is reasoning. GE Foundation Workplace (2006) defines reasoning as the capacity to make arguments in a logical and coherent way, and to justify those arguments using reasons. It is the ability to base decisions on facts, evidence, and/or logical conclusions. These skills help learner to come up with an accurate information to clarify his perspectives in a logical way.

1.4 Characteristics of a Good Critical Thinker

To be a critical thinker there are skills that every student should acquire to achieve this goal. Different researchers attempt to set certain characteristics for critical thinkers. According to Lau (2011), a critical thinker is someone who is able to formulate ideas in a logical way. Therefore, critical thinking requires the ability to apply reason. It is about being an active learner rather than a passive recipient of information. Moreover, being a critical thinker means having the ability to look for evidences before accepting or rejecting particular information. The critical thinker takes steps to assess his thinking using appropriate intellectual standards. According to Paul (1993) the critical thinker will routinely ask the following questions:

- *“What is the purpose of my thinking (goal/objective)?*
- *What precise question (problem) am I trying to answer?*
- *Within what point of view (perspective) am I thinking?*
- *What concepts or ideas are central to my thinking?*
- *What am I taking for granted, what assumptions am I making?*
- *What information am I using (data, facts, observation)?*
- *How am I interpreting that information? What conclusions am I coming to?*
- *If I accept the conclusions, what are the implications? What would the consequence be if I put my thoughts into action? For each element, the thinker must consider standards that shed light on the effectiveness of his/her thinking”* (Paul, 1993, p. 20-23).

1.5 Critical Thinking in Education

Today’s colleges and universities are concerned to “*define the enhancement of critical thinking as a primary reason for higher education*” (Halpern, 1999, p. 70). One of the aims of education should be developing students’ thinking skills as well as motor skills, which is a basic goal of the approaches in education. According to Elder & Paul (2008) students while thinking critically are not passive but active. In educational settings, teachers should be critical thinking agents who guide students to become better critical thinkers through teaching strategies (Halpern, 1999). It should be taught in a directed manner providing students with practice while evaluating and testing ideas.

1.5.1 Critical Thinking in Language Teaching

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Nowadays, enhancing critical thinking in learners is considered as one of the foreign language teachers' tasks due to its high position in language learning. When a language is taught or learned, it may require more thinking of how to communicate with it. This is because languages are culturally determined. And as cultures differ, so do languages. Therefore, language learners need to develop critical thinking. By practicing thinking critically when identifying similarities and differences makes the learning process more enjoyable. If language learners can take in charge of their thinking, they can monitor and evaluate their own ways of learning more successfully.

A number of English language educators and researchers have investigated the role of language teaching approaches in promoting students' critical thinking skills. For example, *“changing from teacher-centered to student-centered approaches enables higher education students to increase their intellectual abilities such as critical thinking and self regulated learning through problem orientation, experiential learning, and lifelong learning”* (Wal & Jickling, 2002, p. 229). This student-centered learning approach provides students with the ability to build up their knowledge and enables them to think critically and solve problems collectively. Alagozlu (2007) argued that since the traditional instructional process asks the students to receive ready-made information without questioning, students are not encouraged to think critically. The skill of critical thinking has been accepted as an important step in teaching and learning language because of many reasons. According to Mahyuddin et al (2004):

“language learners with critical thinking ability are capable of thinking critically and creatively in order to achieve the goals of the curriculum; capable of making decisions and solving problems; capable of using their thinking skills, and of understanding language or its contents; capable of treating thinking skills as lifelong learning; and finally intellectually, physically, emotionally and spiritually well-balanced” (p.22).

Therefore, teachers and students should both learn and practice how to think critically. Equally important, “students will feel free to express their opinions and thoughts when the classroom climate is open, stimulating, and supportive otherwise, students may not take the risk to engage with critical thinking processes” (Black, 2005, p. 4). For students to engage in critical thinking, teachers must be confident in their own ability to incorporate critical thinking skills in classroom settings and assigned work. They should consider the factors that may influence students' performance in fostering effective critical thinking.

1.5.2 Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Domain

Teachers and learners may comprehend more about critical thinking when it is associated with the cognitive domains of Bloom's taxonomy because it has proven to be a useful and an influential tool (Paul, 1985). Bloom's Taxonomy is a method created by Bloom (1956), an who classifies thinking skills on a hierarchal scale of six levels. It takes students through a thought process of analyzing information or knowledge critically. Bloom's taxonomy classifies six levels of thinking: "(a) knowledge, (b) comprehension, and (c) application represent lower-order thinking skills; (d) analysis, (e) synthesis, and (f) evaluation signify higher-order thinking or critical thinking skills" (Bloom, 1984, p. 18). Bloom's taxonomy is often presented in the form of a pyramid as shown in the following diagram.

The Taxonomy of Educational Objectives



Figure 1.1 Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom et al. 1956).

Starting from bottom to top in figure (1), knowledge would be the first level in Bloom's Taxonomy. At this stage, the critical thinker recalls or remembers previously memorized information or gained knowledge for the purpose of making use of them. This skill can be assessed through the use of different tools such as multiple or short-answer questions that require students to recognize specific information. Moving a step up in the scale, comprehension would be the second skill. At this level, students are required to paraphrase the content of knowledge in their own words. Bloom (1956) defines it as the ability to understand the meaning of any material. The third level in the lower order thinking skills is the application step. This latter refers to putting gained knowledge into use. It requires students to use knowledge, skills, or techniques in new situation. Unlike the lower order thinking skills, higher order thinking requires an advanced level of thinking. This category starts from analysis and goes through synthesis until it reaches the evaluation level. Analysis

is the first step in the higher levels of the taxonomy. It is to break down the idea into small fragments and seek for a link or connection between them. The fifth level and the second higher order thinking skill is called synthesis. For Bloom (1956), it is the ability to put parts together to form a new whole. In other words, it is the combination of different parts of information into something new according to what a particular situation requires. The highest level in Bloom's Taxonomy is evaluation. Since evaluation is the highest stage, it requires a higher intellectual level than all the previous stages. Students in this stage will critically assess the validity of a study and judge its results.

1.5.3 The Importance of Critical Thinking in EFL Program

Qing (2013) investigated the importance of critical thinking in college English learning. In this respect, he points out that those students who think critically are more confident, self-reliant, and come out with trust worthy conclusions. It can offer an opportunity to be objective, less emotional and more open minded to respect other's opinions. Hader (2005) claims that thinking critically increases creativity and enhances time management, as it does not only deal with logic and probability but also gives the ability to apply these skills to solve real life-problems. Thinking critically will also help in creating strong arguments. This means that the learner will be able to present and justify the claims based on the evidence. Critical thinking is an important skill that learners need to develop. Bloom's taxonomy can show the importance of thinking critically because it provides structure for teachers to model complex thinking that can guide students to become independent thinkers who can develop their own viewpoints. By asking questions and delivering assignments that directly correlate with specific learning objectives in each stage of the process, making the objectives clear to the student, teachers can encourage learners to be critical thinkers critical. Training to think critically can improve the way learners express their ideas. Critical thinking allows students to break down texts or any kind of information to improve comprehension. This skill is needed for learners specifically to become more curious and look further in their learning process to achieve the desired goals.

1.6 The Reading Skill

Researchers never come at a unique definition of reading. Each one considers reading from his own perspective as reading may mean many things to many people. For Widdowson (1979), reading is a process of getting linguistic information via print. This is the simplest definition of reading which means that it is the process of looking at a series of written

symbols and getting meaning from them. Alderson (2000) states “*what the eyes are doing while reading may not tell us what the brain is doing*” (p.4); and in Smith’s words (1971) what the brain tells the eye is more important than what the eye tells the brain. When we read, we use our eyes to receive written symbols and we use our brain to convert them into words, sentences and paragraphs that communicate something to us.

Harmer (2001) perceives reading as being “*A receptive skill which is a way in which people extract meaning from discourse they see. It is an exercise dominated by the eyes and the brain, the eyes receive and the brain then has to work out the significance of these messages*” (Harmer, 2001, p. 153). According to the definition given by Harmer (2001), reading is a mental process that entails the use of vision to any written material for the sake of understanding the general meaning of these written materials. It is also a cognitive process of decoding symbols and depends on the interaction between the reader and the writer. On the other hand, Shaw (1959) said that “*reading is the communication of thoughts, moods and emotions through which one receives from others their ideas and feelings*” (p.8). Shaw considers reading as a matter of communication in which the reader transmits his thoughts and feelings in order to introduce meaning.

Briefly, reading skill depends on the performance of the reader, his interaction with the text, his ability to decode symbols, get information and ideas and understand meaning. Reading is an indispensable skill for learners in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. Anderson (1999) pointed out that strengthened reading skills enable EFL learners to make more progress and obtain greater development in all academic domains.

1.7 Reading Comprehension

Before defining reading comprehension as a whole, comprehension has to be defined first. Comprehension as a word comes from the Latin term ‘comprehensionem’ which means ‘a seizing’; it means, when you comprehend you seize the information. The term ‘Comprehension’ is considered as a synonym of reading, “*without comprehension there would be no purpose to reading words. Comprehension is what entices the readers to continue reading*” (Caldwell, 2008, p. 175). In other words, without comprehension of a written passage, reading will be meaningless.

According to Anderson (1995), comprehension is analyzed into three stages. The first stage is concerned with perception. At this stage, the message being either talk or print is encoded.

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The second stage is called the parsing stage. At this point, what was encoded is turned into the mental map to gain meaning. The final stage is the utilization stage. Here, what was acquired as new knowledge from sentences' meanings is used in understanding other things. It means that comprehension is to take in information, and then try to work it, and finally use it.

Reading comprehension refers to the process of understanding the written material. Snow (2002) describes reading comprehension as the process of extracting and constructing meaning from the written language. Snow (2002) confirms that reading comprehension requires three basic elements: the reader who is doing the comprehending, the text that is to be comprehended, and the comprehension activity. In addition to that, he adds that in order to comprehend written materials, the reader needs to have some basic knowledge. This includes the knowledge about vocabulary, syntax and strategies for applying that knowledge.

To conclude, reading comprehension is the understanding of the given written material. It is a process that relates information from texts with information from previous knowledge and experiences. It is an ongoing cognitive process that depends on making meaning from a text in hand to gain an overall understanding of it.

1.7.1 Components of Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is a multi-component process that involves interactions between the reader and what he brings to the text. Among these components is using the background knowledge or prior knowledge. It represents the experiences, conceptual understandings, attitudes, values, skills, and strategies that students use to comprehend what they are reading. Harmer (2001) claims that “*understanding a piece of discourse involves much more than just knowing the language. In order to make sense of any text, readers need to have pre- existent knowledge of the world*” (Harmer, 2001, p.214). So, it can be said that reading comprehension is not only a matter of understanding the print on page but, it is the creation of meaning by combining what the print tells with what the reader already possesses as knowledge. Another important component is vocabulary. Students with poor vocabulary encounter difficulties when attempting to understand a text. Coady and Huckin(1975) comment on the importance of vocabulary in ensuring texts' comprehension. For them, comprehension is reached once a passage's lexis is covered. This is a general rule for any text's language being a foreign, a second and even a native one. Caccamise and Snyder (2005) also report that vocabulary knowledge positively affects reading comprehension and academic performance. So, vocabulary knowledge is recommended for the understating of a

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given text either being in a native language or a target one. Strong vocabulary skills are needed to help a student's ability to read (Taylor et al.2009). Without a strong vocabulary base, students will struggle to understand what they have read.

In addition to the previous components Alderson (2000) adds that "*a simple view of reading should consist of three essential components: word recognition (decoding) skills, problem- solving comprehension abilities, and reading rate or reading fluency*" (Alderson, 2000, p.12). Word recognition according to Wolf and Katzi-Cohen (2001) refers to the correct and rapid access to word meaning through 'decoding' of written word. They explain that word recognition goes through two main stages: the first stage is known as 'phonological decoding' based on the ability to relate visual decoding of word forms with phonological codes; the second stage is known as 'lexical or semantic access' refers to the ability to recognize word meanings. This means that, the reader needs to be able to phonologically decode or lexically recognize words' meanings because this will directly affects his text comprehension. If readers failed in decoding a word or recognizing its lexical meaning during reading, consequently this will lead them to focus all their mental capacities on identifying the word rather than understanding them. Fluent reading is also regarded as key to comprehension. Reading accurately and correctly has an important role in improving students' reading comprehension.

Reading comprehension is the most complex aspect of reading. It does not only involve all of the other four aspects of reading, but according to Schumm (2006), comprehension of a text requires the reader to grasp what certain words mean, and the way they have been used to create that particular meaning. It requires the reader to contextualize, analyze, and evaluate the different components of the written material. Therefore, the appropriate use of strategies should be taught to learners who struggle with problems in comprehension because they may help them either consciously or unconsciously. The reader must learn certain comprehension strategies to actively engage with a text. He must ask and answer questions about its meaning and summarize what he has read. Understanding which components are most important to reading comprehension is vital for students to achieve their goal when reading. The skills of reading comprehension develop and improve over time through instruction and practice.

1.7.2 Schemata Theory in Reading Comprehension

Linguists, cognitive psychologists, and psycholinguists have used the concept of schema (plural: schemata) to understand the key factors that affect the comprehension process. According to this theory, schemata represent knowledge about concepts: objects and the relationships they have with other objects, situations, events, sequences of events, actions, and sequences of actions. Bartlett (1997) defines schema as an active organization of past reactions, or past experiences. Schema is the abstract representation of prior knowledge stored in memory. However, Brown (2001) explains how the schema theory works and argues that it addresses “*how the reader brings information, knowledge, emotion, experiences, and culture to the printed word*” (p. 42). Schemata theory, then, believes that comprehending a text is a matter of interaction between reader’s background knowledge and the text. That is to say, the importance of schema theory to reading comprehension lies in how the reader uses schemata and it emphasizes the readers’ ability to relate his previous knowledge with what he is learning now for better comprehension of the written text. Schemata theory is very important to reading comprehension because it guides readers to comprehend new experiences and knowledge and enables them to make assumptions and predictions of what they might experience in another given context.

1.7.3 Models of Reading Comprehension

Researchers have been studying the link between the reading process (what goes on in the brain) and how to teach reading. Depending on their interpretation of the reading process, they have developed a model of reading. A reading model according to Singer and Ruddell (1985) is a graphic attempt which describes how an individual perceives a word, processes a clause, and comprehends a text. Some models, known as top-down and bottom-up activities. These two activities are approaches used for a better explanation of how to be an effective reader. Before applying these models in a classroom, first to know what the bottom-up and top-down processes are.

1.7.3.1 The Bottom-Up Model

An approach developed by Gough in 1972 who said that reading is a process of decoding letter by letter. According to him the primary goal of the reader is to read texts and focus on linguistic forms at the level of words and sentences. Maroof (2016) suggests that “*this process follows an order; first, it is important to interpret letters and words. Then, in this process the reader has to perceive phrases and paragraphs in order to interpret the whole text*” (as cited in Méndez & Llivignay, 2017, p. 38). In other words, this process

involves understanding the new words and new structures and then creating meaning from the text by activating prior knowledge. It requires the reader to put the heard language from sounds to words to grammatical relationships to lexical meaning. The bottom-up reading activities can help learners to understand linguistic elements of what they have read.

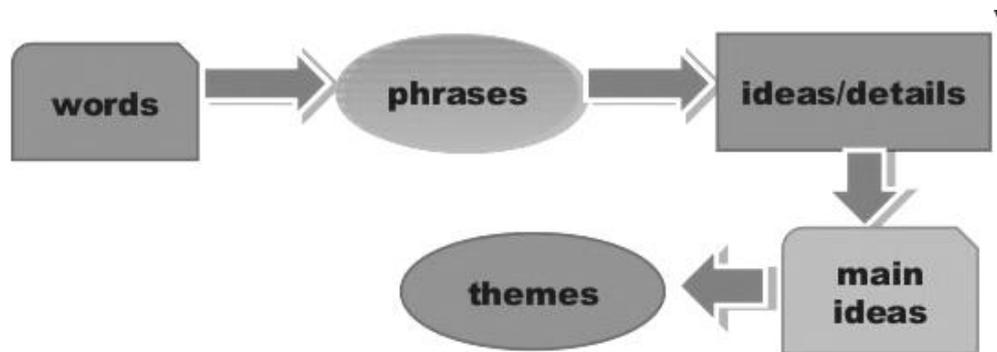


Figure 1.2 The Bottom-Up Model (Darchiny Rajaseragan, Bottom up & Top down tutorial, 2014)

1.7.3.2 The Top-Down Model

Richards (1990) defined the top-down model as:

“the use of background knowledge in understanding the meaning of a given text that means readers make connection between their previous knowledge about a topic, situational or contextual knowledge, or knowledge stored in long term memory in the form of “schemata” and “scripts”. (Richards, 1990, p.50-51)

In this respect, top-down processing uses the existing knowledge in the mind (schemata) to help the reader understand the general meaning; from the whole to the smallest unlike the bottom-up processing which starts by the smallest linguistic unit to the whole text. The reader who uses top-down processing makes assumptions and reasonable guesses about the text relying on background knowledge when dealing with unknown vocabularies. Goodman (1985) one of the proponents of the top-down model agrees that comprehension is the basis for decoding skills, and meaning is brought to print, not derived from print. It means that students in this process focus more on understanding the main ideas of a passage than understanding every word. It allows readers to decode a text even without understanding the meaning of each word. The top-down model encourages students to rely on their own

knowledge and use context clues to understand new concepts or words. By building background knowledge, readers can increase student' understanding of texts.

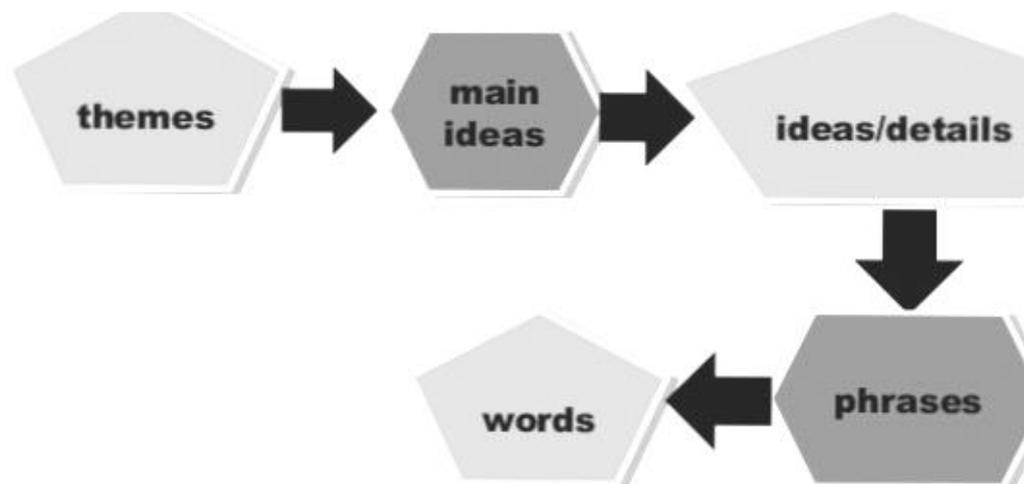


Figure1.3 The Top-Down Model (Darchiny Rajaseragan, Bottom up & Top down tutorial , 2014)

1.7.3.3 The Interactive Reading Model

The interactive model is the attempt to make connection between both models of reading; the bottom up and top down ones. It is a reading model that recognizes the interaction of the two processes simultaneously throughout the reading process. Similarly, Eskey (1988) sees that “*the interactive model takes into account the continuous interaction between bottom-up and top-down processing in the construction of the meaning of a text*” (Eskey, 1988, p.93). It is not just a combination of the models; it is an attempt to take into account the strong points of the bottom-up and top-down models, and tries to avoid the criticisms leveled against each, making it one of the most promising approaches to the theory of reading today (McCormick, 1988). Although Goodman supports the top-down approach, his model by his own admission is interactive. According to him (1981) the goal of reading is constructing meaning which requires interactive use of syntactic and semantic cues. An interactive model is one which uses print as input and has meaning as output.

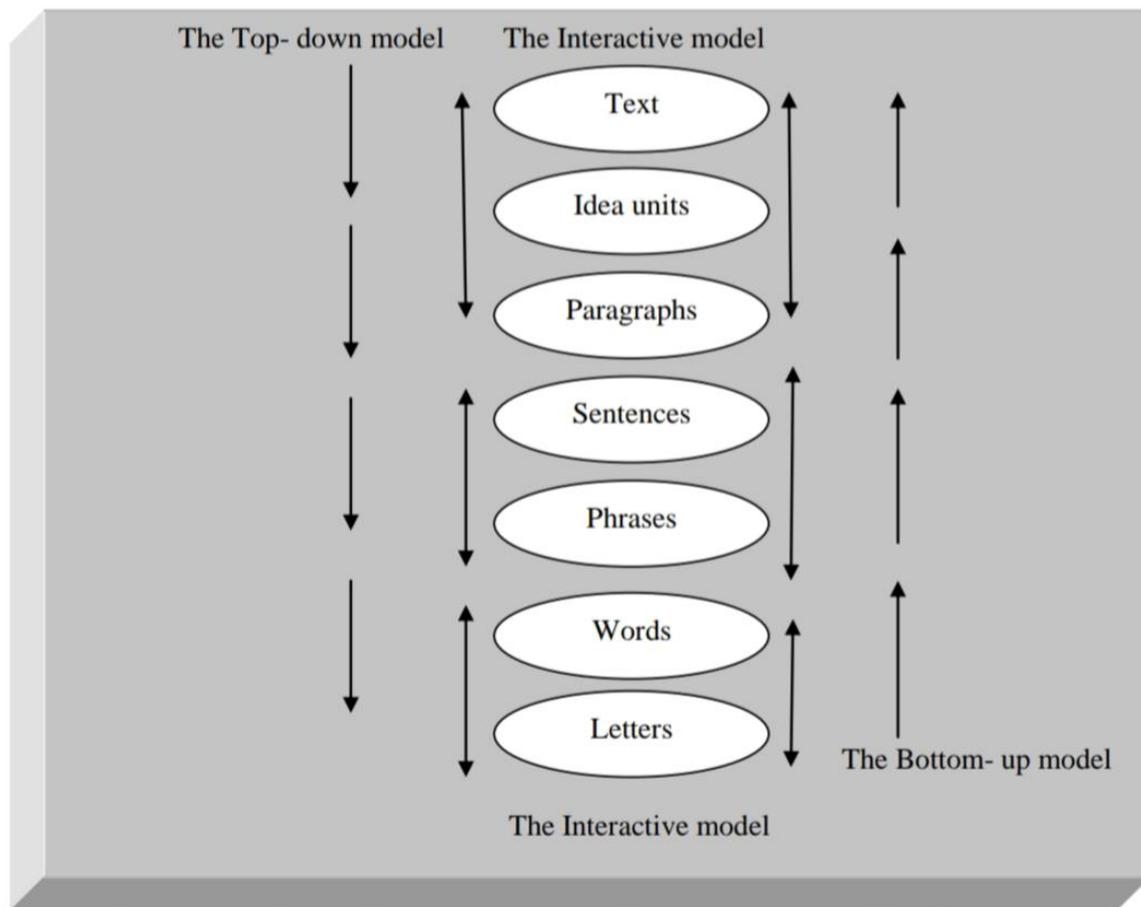


Figure 1.4. Models of the reading process (Perfetti, Landi & Oakhill, 2005)

1.7.4 Levels of Reading Comprehension

The term “levels of comprehension” refers to the thinking processes that are stimulated in order to arrive at answers to reading comprehension questions. Students use these levels or thinking skills that range from the literal to the abstract to process information effectively. This is important because as students progress through each grade, the demand to read at a deeper level and understand complex text increases. Many researchers have studied how levels of comprehension affect reading comprehension. Five levels of reading comprehension can be taught to learners; where each type is important in helping readers to understand the meaning of the text.

- **Lexical Comprehension:** lexicon is the collection of vocabulary in a language. Lexical comprehension during the reading process refers the understanding of key vocabulary words found in the reading material.
- **Literal comprehension:** It is the form of locating information in texts. It refers to the readers’ ability to understand the explicit meaning of the text; what is directly

mentioned by the author. It seeks to answer the questions who, what, when, and the where of the story. Literal comprehension is considered as a very important level for the reason that it is the basis of other levels of understanding and without it students would not be able to move to other levels.

- **Interpretive Comprehension:** is about the understanding that requires readers to reflect on literal information, make links between information, identify or draw inferences from information given in a text. It prompts the reader to wonder ‘what if’ or ‘why’. It relies more on background knowledge through which a reader may predict or infer the meaning of the ambiguous passage. It is a high developed level of understanding because in this level the reader is expected to involve the critical thinking processes.
- **Applied Comprehension:** is when the reader uses background information to form opinions. It is a critical and evaluative level in which the reader is required to ask why the writer says what he is saying. The reader is expected to be able to distinguish true information from the personal views and judgments to assess the accuracy of the information presented in the text.
- **Affective Comprehension:** refers to the text effect on the reader; which is in fact the main purpose of the writer. It is when readers understand the emotional and social aspects of the text they are reading. As Hoque (2017) claims, “*the affective domain involves our feelings, emotions and attitudes*” (p. 48). The more the affective level of readers is high, the more likely the reader will be committed and motivated to read.

To sum up, reading comprehension levels are what make a reading process effective; they help learners to improve their vocabulary knowledge and grammar use; thus, they need to be learned and developed.

1.7.5 Reading Comprehension Strategies

Reading strategies play an important role in the promotion of reading comprehension, especially for poor readers who are always struggling in reading. Most of EFL learners face many problems especially in comprehension of written materials when reading. They may use various reading strategies that could help them to achieve a meaning of texts successfully. Garner (1987) defines reading strategies as “*generally deliberate, playful activities undertaken by active learners, many times to remedy perceived cognitive failure*” (p.95). Therefore, reading strategies are techniques used by the reader in order to facilitate the

process of reading and overcome reading difficulties. McNamara (2007) defines reading strategies as the different cognitive and behavioral actions readers use to achieve reading comprehension. That is to say, these strategies are mental actions that readers make use of for the sake of developing their reading comprehension processes. Some strategies that contribute to successful reading comprehension are prediction, activating prior knowledge, questioning, visualizing, monitoring and clarifying, and drawing inferences.

- **Predicting:** When students make predictions about the text they are about to read, it sets up expectations based on their prior knowledge about similar topics. Making predictions is a strategy that focuses on guessing or making presumptions on what the text is about.
- **Activating prior knowledge/Previewing:** It helps us better process new information and build upon what already known. By linking instruction to familiar topics, or prior experiences, students will learn more effectively.
- **Questioning:** This strategy requires the reader to ask questions before, during, and after reading a particular material, which may allow him/her to predict the content of the present material.
- **Visualizing:** The reader creates images in his/her mind that reflect the ideas of the text. Studies have shown that students who visualize while reading have better recall than those who do not (Pressley, 1977). Visualizing brings the text to life by engaging the imagination.
- **Self-monitoring:** Hanson (1996) says that for student to control his performance, he needs to self-monitor. According to him self-monitoring is a natural step for students to become independent and take responsibility for their own behavior.
- **Clarifying:** students need to clarify meaning to promote deeper understanding of the text.
- **Drawing inferences:** The inferences are the conclusions that a reader draws about the unsaid passage based on what is actually said by the author. Readers who make inferences use the clues in the text to help them figure out what is not directly said.

1.8 Developing reading comprehension through Critical Thinking Skill

Reading comprehension is a mental process that requires the use of different cognitive skills when dealing with a particular piece of information. Grabe (2010) stated that the comprehension process needs not only linguistic resources and automatic processing but also

Chapter One: Critical Thinking and Reading Comprehension, an Overview

higher-order abilities and skills. This means that, the complexity of the reading process requires readers to develop mental abilities such as critical thinking skills. Reading consists of different mental skills that are considered as the crucial elements of critical thinking, including inference, synthesis, analysis, and evaluation (Grabe, 1991).

Comprehension depends on characteristics such as prior knowledge and critical thinking can be considered as a means to activate that knowledge or construct schema. Norris and Phillips (1987) indicate that critical thinking provides an explanation for activating existing schemata and for constructing new ones by contrasting ideas and engaging in reflective thinking. As readers mature in their critical thinking skills, they are able to achieve efficiently the ultimate goal of reading. Sheikhy (2009, as cited in Kamali & Fahim, 2011) conducted a study exploring the relationship between autonomy, critical thinking ability and reading comprehension. The results showed that there is a significant relationship between critical thinking ability of learners and their performance on reading comprehension. In other words, it was concluded that the higher the critical thinking ability, the higher reading comprehension.

When students improve their critical thinking skills while reading, they will relate and identify details. They will compare and apply understanding in new situations. The reader will think reasonably and reflectively for the purpose of constructing the exact meaning. When reading a text, students must make inferences and draw conclusions in order to determine what the author does not state directly. Students must think critically while using clues in the text to arrive at a conclusion. Applying previous knowledge to the information presented by the author can infer what is happening. Students must think critically when determining cause and effect in a reading passage, to understand that each action has a consequence. The student must make logical connections between events. Comprehension and critical thinking are so closely related, it can be said that a comprehension process cannot be achieved without some type of critical thinking. By identifying individual skills needed for comprehension, teachers can provide practice in CT in order to develop these skills.

1.9 Conclusion

Briefly, the present chapter states the literature review of critical thinking strategy as a useful and significant tool in educational settings. In addition, it highlights the effects of this strategy on developing students' reading comprehension through providing various definitions for the notions of critical thinking and its skills. Additionally, it shows some of reading strategies that

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may solve the problem of reading comprehension, and also, the necessity of teaching students these strategies in order to apply them appropriately.

**CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY
DESIGN**

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2.1 Introduction

In teaching reading comprehension skill, teachers apply a variety of methods, techniques and strategies. This chapter is devoted to know which of those techniques are used in the case of fourth year middle school pupils and the extent these techniques are successful. The previous chapter stated the literature review of reading comprehension and critical thinking skill as one of the useful and significant technique pupils can rely on during their reading process. This chapter presents the practical part of the research as it introduces the research design which is aimed at covering the approaches and methods that were chosen to undertake this study. It is also devoted for the analysis of the data obtained. To collect data for our research, a qualitative approach was adopted. Classroom observation, questionnaires, and an interview were administrated for teachers and some pupils of fourth year middle school to obtain the desired results.

2.2 Research Methodology

Research methodology is a systematic way to solve a problem. It is a scientific study of how research is carried out. It is about describing, explaining and predicting phenomena. It is also defined as the study of methods by which knowledge is gained. Research can be defined as “an activity that involves finding out, in a more or less systematic way, things you did not know” (Walliman and Walliman, 2011, p.7). Methodology according to Brown (2006) is the foundation or the framework of what the research is based on. The term of research methodology according to the American heritage dictionary of the English language can be defined as “the organized questioning and exploration either by hypotheses formation or scientific testing of any inquisition or query by following a set of standard rules and procedures”.

There are two basic types of research associated with the scientific method, quantitative and qualitative research. Quantitative research is based on collecting facts and figures. However qualitative research is based on collecting opinions and attitudes. The present study uses both the qualitative and quantitative approach to gather data. The quantitative method is done in order to provide numerical values about the teachers’ opinions toward the use of certain strategies in teaching reading comprehension. As for the qualitative method, an observation is devoted for the pupils in order to examine their attitudes in their usual learning environment, before and during having reading comprehension activities. The

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methods used in this study enable to investigate implications of critical thinking skills in the English language teaching; and describe common reading strategies pupils apply while reading.

For this purpose, a mixed research methods has been used in this research, which includes three types of data collection: teachers' questionnaire, pupils' and teachers' interviews, and analysis of observation sessions of two selected classes of fourth year. Due to the current situation in the country, we faced some obstacles and could not conduct and finish our work with the two sample classrooms. The research study is carried out to identify, analyze and describe factors contributing to reading comprehension skill, reading strategies and teachers' and pupils' perceptions towards these strategies. In addition to that, it investigates the possible relationship between applying critical thinking skills and the improvement of reading comprehension.

2.2.1 The Participants and the Educational Context

Participants in this study consist of two classes of fourth year pupils at Kaibich Ahmed middle school, located in Mesra, Mostaganem. The representative sample chosen includes 62 pupils. The teacher of English of the two classes is also chosen to be a member of the sample of the present study. We have also chosen 18 teachers to fill the questionnaire using an online form due to the actual situation the country is passing through. They all teach fourth year classes in middle schools in Mostaganem. The case study sample have been purposefully chosen because fourth year pupils will have final exam in the end of the year. So, they are focusing more on reading comprehension; in addition to having a reading comprehension training as it will be included in their exam.

2.3 Data Collection procedure

There are many tools to collect data. In this study we opt for three data collection instruments: a questionnaire, a classroom observation and an interview. The first is a popular method of collecting data. "It contains a set of questions (closed (yes, no), open-ended (free answers), and multiple choice questions) conducted to the participants with a request to answer them and return it back" (Kothari, 2006, p.101). The second involves observing behavior and recording the results of those observations. Moreover, "it enables the researchers to obtain what is currently happening" (Kothari, 2006, p.96). The third is the interview, an important data technique involving verbal communication between the researcher and the

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participant. As Gresswell (2012) stated an interview is typically a face-to-face conversation between the researcher and a participant. The main task in interviewing is to understand the meaning of what the interviews say (McNamara, 2009). These three important tools were meant to provide worthy data. The aim behind using these instruments is to obtain quantitative and qualitative data to verify and measure the credibility of the present study. The objective of choosing these tools depends on the overall aims of the research which are investigating the implications of critical thinking skills in English language teaching and developing existing methods and strategies of reading comprehension and its application in EFL classrooms in Algeria.

2.3.1 Teachers' Questionnaire

The questionnaire is considered as well-known means of collecting data that can be analyzed in terms of quantity and quality. It provides the researcher with the ability to analyze numerical data as described by Wilson et al., (1994):

“The questionnaire is a widely used and useful instrument for collecting survey information, providing structured, often numerical data, being able to be administered without the presence of the researcher, and often being comparatively straightforward to analyze”.

(Wilson et al., 1994, p1)

In this study teachers' questionnaire aims at investigating teachers' view about the impact of teaching critical thinking skills on the development of reading comprehension strategies and to know the teachers' awareness about the pupils' preferable strategies while reading. Also, we want to be familiar with their suggestions about the effective ways of teaching reading comprehension.

2.3.1.1 Administration of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was given to 19 teachers in different middle schools from Mostaganem. The teachers we have asked have an experience of 1 to 15 years in teaching. It has been administered on 28 may 2020 via email. During the distribution of the questionnaire, many obstacles have raised because of the circumstances in which the country is passing through. Teachers did not reply immediately, due to work pressure. Accordingly, it took more than two weeks to collect the data.

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2.3.1.1 Description of the Questionnaire

The teachers' questionnaire begins with a brief introduction that describes the aim behind the study. The questionnaire consists of three main sections which are a mixture of closed ended (multiple choice and yes/no questions) and open-ended questions as follows:

Section One: General Information (Q1- Q3)

In this opening section, teachers are asked to state their gender in Q1. Then, in Q2, they are required to state their qualification. In Q3, teachers are asked to mention how many years they have spent during their teaching career. Teaching experience is a good cue that may inform about the efficiency of the teaching process.

Section Two: Reading Comprehension (Q4- Q8):

Section two entitled reading comprehension contains five questions. The first two questions are designed to figure out pupils' level in reading and to investigate teachers' primary focus in teaching reading. The aim behind asking teachers about their primary focus in teaching reading is to indicate if they focus more on one skill rather than the others and this can explain pupils' level in reading. The last three questions are about reading comprehension, its difficulties and how teachers overcome these difficulties. This section is concerned with questioning reading comprehensions issues and the way teachers deal with these issues.

Section Three: Critical Thinking and Reading Strategies (Q9-Q18)

Section three consists of ten questions in order to investigate teachers' perspectives about the impact of applying cognitive skills and some of the reading strategies on developing reading comprehension. It is for getting some ideas about the effective strategies teacher apply for pupils to achieve comprehension. Through this section the researcher explore the teachers' views about critical thinking, and the extent of using its skills as well as its importance for EFL learners. It also provides teachers with the opportunity to add any comment or suggestion related to the study.

2.3.2 Interview

An interview is direct face-to-face research instrument in the form of verbal set of questions. It is a conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee to obtain valid

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data. It can be structured, semi-structured and unstructured. According to Kothari (2004), 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. Conducting an interview was necessary for better understanding and obtaining more in-depth information.

2.3.2.1 Description of Teacher's interview

The Interview was addressed to the teacher who teaches the two sample classes of the study. The researcher chose to undertake the interview with one teacher because she is the teacher of all fourth year classes in Kaibich Middle School. Since the study focus on fourth year pupils the researcher wanted to discover more details related to the study by interviewing just their teacher. It was important to see the feedback of the teacher in charge. The interview seeks to explore teacher's attitude toward implementing critical thinking skills in teaching reading comprehension for EFL pupils. The teacher allowed us to record the interview on the mobile phone. The interview is composed of ten questions:

- **Questions (01) and (02)** seek to discover the level of reading comprehension questions which are reflected in middle schools and to investigate the purpose of asking such questions.
- **Question (03)** aims at discovering to what extent the teacher implement CTS in her classrooms.
- **Questions (04) and (05)** investigate whether the teacher consciously think of critical thinking when asking comprehension questions and to what extent questioning is an effective tool for enhancing pupils 'critical thinking.
- **Questions (06) (07) and (08)** look into the teacher's feedback about whether critical thinking can be taught or not and investigate the extent to which CT is important for pupils.
- **Question (09)** is directed to discover how the teacher encourages their pupils to develop their critical thinking skill.
- **Question (10)** seeks to explore any further comments or recommendations by the teacher.

2.3.2.2 Description of Pupils' Interview

In order to have more facts about the impact of CTS and the use of certain cognitive strategies on pupils' performance, we directed this interview in order to collect qualitative

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data. The pupils' interview was administrated to six (6) pupils from fourth year classes at Kaibich Ahmed middle school in Mostagnem. Since fourth year are more exposed to reading comprehension activities. The language was simple regarding their level and some words were translated into Arabic when necessary.

Pupils' interview consisted of close-ended questions and open-ended questions. All the questions were the same for all the 6 pupils. It dealt with the main strategies the pupil apply while reading and the common reading difficulties they face. The last question devoted to the pupil in order to give their different suggestions concerning our topic. To obtain accurate information the researcher asked the pupils to be free in answering the questions, either in Arabic or in English. The answers were given in Arabic and then translated in English. The interview is composed as follows:

Question (1) and (2) are intended to discover pupils' appreciation and level toward reading skill.

Question (3): According to you, what is reading comprehension?

Question (4): By asking this question we want to highlight the major difficulties pupils suffer from while reading.

Question (5): The aim behind asking this question is to see the main strategies pupils follow when they do not understand long sentences or a passage in a text?

Question (6): By this question we intended to know whether the teacher points out pupils' reading comprehension problems and how she deals with them.

Question (7) and (8) are intended to know if pupils are aware of reading strategies and what are the most reading strategies they apply while they do not understand a text.

Question (9): This question is devoted in order to give the different suggestions concerning our topic.

2.3.3 Classroom Observation

Observation is an approach of data collection. It is a method of directly observing teaching practices. Cardwell (2013) points out "observation is a general term used to describe any situation in which an observer records behavior that is exhibited by a participant. The term "observation" may be used as a technique of gathering information" (Cardwell, 2013,

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p.159). In clearer terms, observation is a tool used to have a description of the context chosen for research and to gather more validate data. It is an opportunity to have a closer look at the situation to have better understanding of the phenomenon under study.

Recently within Algerian education system, there have been attempts to integrate higher-order thinking skills in the curriculum. In this research, classroom observations were needed to examine the cognitive level of the questions asked by the teacher, and whether these questions support and develop their critical thinking skills. To achieve this purpose, the researcher uses a check-list technique to help organize the remarks.

2.3.3.1 The Administration of Classroom Observation

Observation of the learners and their teacher is used in order to reach more validity of the results. It is based on a checklist which includes steps of a reading lesson: Pre- reading step, while- reading step and post- reading step. Every step in the checklist was provided by four instructions or procedures the teacher should use in specific time. The observation was done without informing the teacher about the aim of it. It means both the teacher's and the learner's behaviours were natural during the lesson. We wanted to observe the learner's and teacher's behaviours during these steps. We also wanted to gain insights into strategies the teacher employed in teaching reading comprehension. I hoped that I would be able to understand more fully how teachers taught reading comprehension to fourth year classes. Through this method I could as a non-participant observer see what was actually happening in the classroom.

2.4 Data Analysis

2.4.1 Analysis of the Questionnaire

Section One: Background Information

Q1: Teacher's Gender: The first question asked was about teachers' gender. The results revealed that 16 out of 19 participants are females with the percentage of (84.2%). However, only 3 men out of 19 answered the questionnaire. We can then claim that female teachers dominate English classes, may be because females appreciate more foreign languages.

Q2: Teacher's Degree: 53% of teachers who answered the questions hold a classical degree and for the (47%) hold an LMD degree. Through this the researcher had the chance to see the

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differences between teachers from the two degrees in terms of teaching. It may provide significant help to enrich the topic under investigation with their views and comments.

Q3: Teachers' experience: The statistics show that the majority of teachers experience is from 5-10 years its equal (50%) and eight (8) teachers are novice represent (40%), whereas, more experienced teachers over ten (10) years are the minority that represent 20%. The results indicate that the majority has a reasonable experience in teaching and may indicate that they have a wise view towards the process of teaching and learning in terms of pupils' needs and performances.

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Q4: According to your experience, how would you describe the reading level of your pupils in this class?

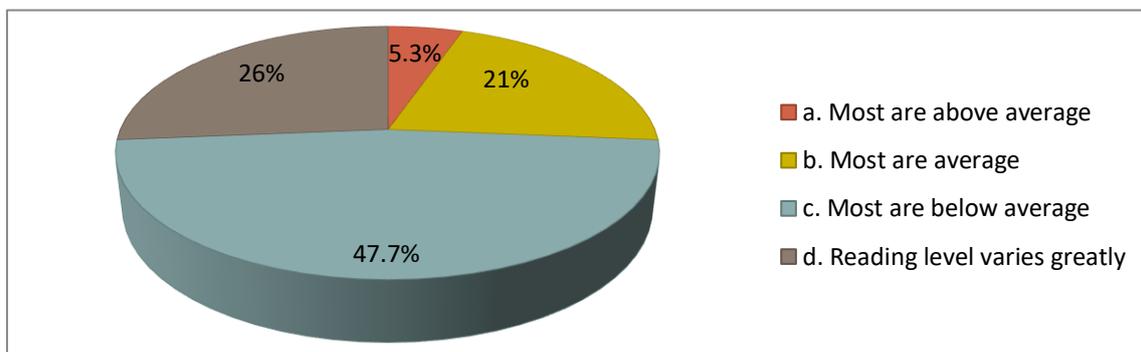


Figure2.1 Teachers' Opinions about their pupils' reading level

Most of the teachers 47, 7% judged fourth year pupils have a below average reading, 26% of teachers confirmed that pupils' reading level varies greatly. While 21% of teachers stated that the reading level of fourth year pupils is average. Only 5.3% said that their reading level is above average. Teachers' opinions vary but the majority agreed that reading level is generally below average.

Q5: What is your primary focus in teaching reading? (You can choose more than one answer)

As it is observed from the table below, the majority of teachers 84, 2% declared that their primary focus in teaching reading is reading comprehension. They greatly focus on pupils' understanding; in order to enhance their reading ability. While 15, 8% have chosen reading fluency; pupils have to be fluent readers. 10.5% of teachers said that their primary focus is grammar which implies that they do prefer to make their pupils understand text structure and general organization of the ideas expressed throughout the text. 10.5% of them

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also claimed that they focus on spelling because reading entails good speaking abilities and high fluency; since the pronunciation of a word can change the whole meaning of a sentence or a passage.

Suggestions	Number of Answers	Percentage%
Reading fluency	03	15.8%
Reading comprehension	16	84.2%
Grammar	02	10.5%
Spelling (pronunciation)	02	10.5%

Table.2.1 Teachers' Primary Focus in Teaching Reading

Q6: Do your pupils experience difficulties in understanding texts or any written materials?

The majority of teachers 94.7% answered with 'yes' ensuring that their pupils do experience difficulties in understanding texts. 5.3% of teachers answered with 'no', and confirmed that their pupils do not face reading difficulties. Each pupil has his own difficulties this is why teachers should provide them with necessary help to overcome such difficulties.

In relation to this question, when asked "Can you state briefly the common difficulties they face?" Teachers' answers are summed up as follows:

- Pupils read with disconnection any type of passage.
- They cannot spell and they do not understand lots of vocabulary.
- New lexis, misunderstanding of key words.
- The inability to decode the unfamiliar terms and to identify what the text is about.
- Pronunciation problems.
- They cannot read through the context.
- Difficulties with new language forms.
- Limited vocabulary, poor decoding and word recognition skill problem.

It seems from the teachers' above points that their pupils struggle with almost common difficulties in reading comprehension.

Q7: According to you what are the causes behind these difficulties?

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Suggestions	Number of answers	Percentage %
Lack of time	04	21%
Lack of reading habit	12	63%
The difficulty of the reading skill itself	03	15.3%
The difficulty of the kind of texts	09	47.3%

Table2.2 The Causes behind Pupils' Reading Difficulties

Accordingly 47.3% of teachers added other suggestions. For some teachers pronunciation difficulties and ambiguous words are the obstacles that pupils face when reading. Others said that pupils suffer from difficulties due to the lack of vocabulary background. They also stated that the main problem that pupils have when reading is time, pupils do not have much time to comprehend the text and to try new reading strategies. Teachers also claimed that pupils find reading activity boring this is why they do not concentrate.

Q8: How do you guide your pupils to overcome their reading difficulties?

Suggestions	Number of answers
➤ Ask them to read the text aloud	04
➤ Try to find out the cause of the problem	15
➤ Try to explain the general idea of the text	13

Table2.3 Teachers' Techniques for Guiding Pupils' Reading Difficulties

Fifteen (15) teachers said that they try to find out the cause of the problem. While thirteen (13) of them rely on reading aloud technique. Four (4) teachers assumed that they try to explain the general idea of the text. (Some teachers have chosen more than one answer). Some added other suggestions which are summed up as follows:

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- I ask them to explain what they have got from the passage then I explain the text for them.
- Explain the key words, skimming and scanning tasks, illustrate with pictures and videos.
- I try to simplify the text to make it accessible for them and reading loud may build not only word-sound awareness but expand their vocabulary as well.
- Explain the new words; scan the text (title, the source, the date of publication the writer the type of the text....) divide the text into paragraphs next divide pupils according to these paragraphs in order to read.
- Ask them to prepare it at home and give extra tasks about lexis.
- Reread the text/ ask them simple questions to make the text clear

From these suggestions, it seems that teachers are aware of their pupils' needs and difficulties, and they try their best to help them overcome these difficulties to become advanced readers. Every teacher has his own techniques in dealing with their pupils' difficulties.

Section Two: Reading Strategies

Q9: Can you briefly define “reading strategies”?

This question attempts to know what teachers think about reading strategies to see if they all have the same idea about them. All teachers, regardless their experience, agreed that reading strategies are the techniques used before, during and after reading to help the reader improve comprehension. They commented that reading strategies are the process of using different cognitive skills and tools for a specific objective which is reaching the ideas given in a piece of writing and answering questions about it. They also added that these strategies are especially essential for those who struggle with reading. The use of different reading strategies facilitates decoding. Some teachers from the participants pointed out that the strategies used by middle school teachers in teaching reading are divided into three steps. The first step is the pre-reading step, in which the teacher tries to elicit information from his pupils about the topic they are going to read. They make connections between their background knowledge and the new text by asking some questions and predicting what they are going to read. The second step is while-reading step, here the teacher tries to check the pupils understanding starting by the general idea. After that the teacher asks them to look for specific information and more details; like words which are closet or opposite in meaning.

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The final step is post-reading step in which pupils can sum-up the text, reflecting on it or discussing what they have learnt from it. Teachers' answers showed that teachers almost share the same essential definition of reading strategies, which is "the techniques used to understand any given text easily".

Q10: According to you, are reading strategies important in enhancing students' reading comprehension?

The majority of teachers 94.7% responded 'yes'; and then, ensured that reading strategies are important in enhancing pupils' reading comprehension. However; 5.3% of them did not answer. Teachers do agree that reading strategies are very important in enhancing their pupils' reading.

- **If yes, how?**

Teachers' suggestions about the importance of reading strategies can be stated as follows:

- They clarify pupil understanding of the text.
- There is nothing worth without a planned strategy. Learning itself depends on strategies.
- They are beginners; they need these strategies in order to grasp the meaning.
- Help them to read in more efficient way.
- Some pupils need strategies not all of them have the same level of acquisition.
- Reading strategies guide to better comprehension.
- To break the ice while reading and love reading.
- Help learners to overcome their reading difficulties and save time to the teacher
- Help pupils grasp the text better, guess the meaning of the words they do not know and so enhance their critical thinking.

It seems from the above teachers' suggestions that they are aware of the importance of reading strategies in enhancing and developing pupils' reading comprehension. Almost all teachers' suggestions turn around the same point which is the role of these strategies in understanding and grasping the meaning of any text.

Q11: Do you agree that reading is a thinking process that requires the use of different cognitive skills?

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The majority of teachers 95% ensured that reading is a thinking process that requires the use of different cognitive skills. 5% of teachers do not agree that reading is a thinking process. From the above results, it can be assumed that the majority of teachers prefer or use cognitive strategies to develop their pupils' reading skill and language learning abilities.

- In relation to this question, the teachers were asked to justify their answers they added justifications as follows:
 - I agree since the reader starts reading silently, he needs to be conceptive and fully aware to understand the text. It is indeed a thinking process.
 - To answer a given question about the text or try to understand the text itself, pupils use their minds in a clear and organized way.
 - Understanding and interpreting are among those cognitive skills.

Q12: Do you enable your learners to explain and interpret given concepts related to the text?

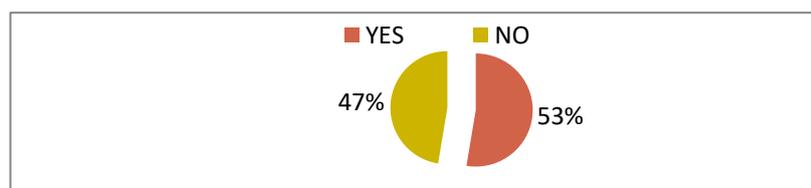
78.9% of teachers reported that they encourage their pupils to explain and interpret concepts related to the text. This implies that teachers do value this skill and consider it important. A small number (21.1%) indicated that they do not do so. This may indicate that these teachers expect their pupils to be aware of this skill.

➤ If yes explain how?

The majority of teachers justified their choice stating that: By asking them to be free in expressing their ideas according to their own understanding. Many said that they use dictionaries, pictures, gestures or giving examples. Others explained that they give bonus for the one who explain and give synonyms or opposites of the given words. One teacher stated that he helps them by asking specific questions that push them to interact and thus to interpret.

Q13: Do you enable your learners to identify and analyze the motives and causes of a given text?

Figure2.2 Analyzing and Identifying skills



53% of teachers mentioned that they ask pupils to analyze and identify causes of a given text in order to answer reading comprehension questions. While, 47% of teachers preferred

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not to ask them to do so. It can be assumed that teachers, who ask their pupils to analyze and interpret, encourage more their pupils to develop their reading strategies.

- Teachers who answered with ‘yes’ are asked ‘how’, they added these suggestions:
 - By questioning, by forming a group discussion and allow them to share their ideas, by asking them to reflect on the given text

Q14: Do you ask your pupils while reading to? You can choose more than one answer.

Suggestions	Number of answers	Percentage%
Activate their prior knowledge	11	57.9%
Make predictions, preview or survey a text	10	52.6%
Generate the questions	04	21.1%
Summarize	05	26.3%
Use concept maps, or text structure frames	06	31.6%

Table2.4 Teachers’ Instructions while Reading

The majority of teachers 57.9% confirmed that they try to activate their pupils’ prior knowledge. Also 52.6% of them focused on leading pupils to make predictions, preview or survey a text. Whereas 31.6% of teachers asked their pupils to use concept maps, or text structure. 26.3% of teachers ensured that they ask their pupils to summarize the text. In addition 21.1% of teachers declared that they motivate pupils to generate their own questions.

We can assume that the majority of teachers focused on asking pupils to activate their prior knowledge, because they consider it as a core factor in enhancing EFL pupils’ reading skill; as well as, requiring them to make predictions, preview or survey a text while reading to develop their critical reading abilities.

Q15: Are you aware of the existence of critical thinking skill?

As it is shown in figure 2.3 the majority of teachers 94.7% indicated that they are aware of the existence of critical thinking skill, whereas, 5.3% stated that they are not conscious about its existence. The majority of teachers are knowledgeable about what critical thinking means. This awareness will probably help them to develop their pupils’ thinking skills.

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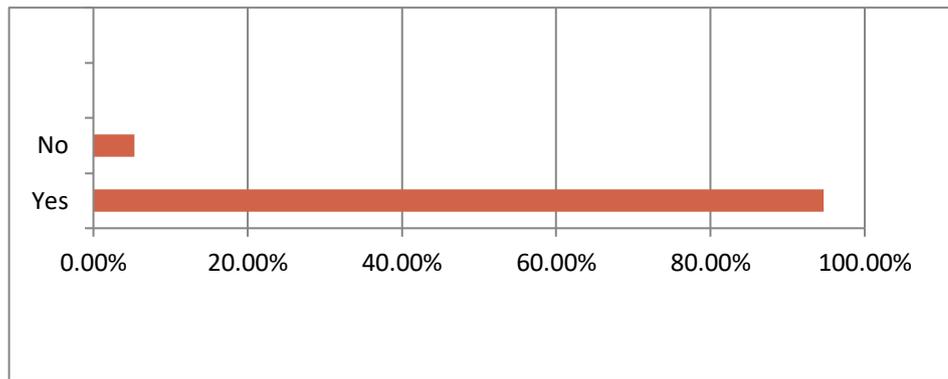


Figure2.3 Teachers' Awareness of the Existing of CT

If yes please provide a brief definition of it? Teachers' answers are summarized as follows:

- I work to develop this skill which is the process of analyzing, evaluating, interpreting, or synthesizing information and applying creative thought to form an argument, solve problem, or reach a conclusion
- It is the ability to understand the links between ideas and think clearly and rationally
- Thinking outside of the box and enabling different approaches to a given task
- it refers to the ability to analyze information objectively and make reasoned judgment
- It is the ability to think clearly and understand the logical connection between ideas. It helps the learners to be active rather than passive by being free in thinking independently

Q15: Do you encourage your pupils to develop their critical thinking skill?

The majority of teachers 84.2% replied that they draw their pupils' attention to the existence of the CTS. However, 15.8% do not do so. The respondents agreed that critical thinking should be developed explicitly as much like the four skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening). Teachers were required to provide some explanation of how they develop these skills. Among those who opted for yes, 12 have justified their choice claiming that they encourage their pupils by doing some challenging activities and allowing them to share their ideas openly. One teacher added that he tried to put them in real life situations, and give them more time. This would indicate that teachers are aware of the significance of CTS.

Q16: To what extent do you think that developing learners' critical thinking skill would help them enhance their academic achievements?

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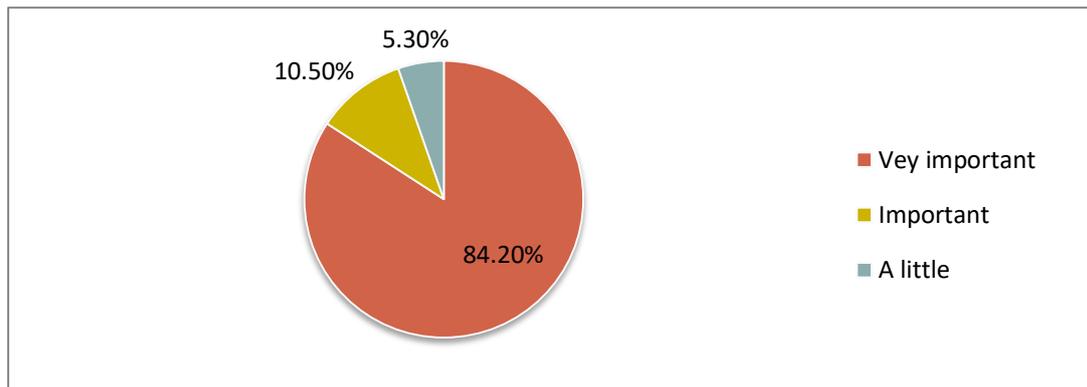


Figure.2.4The Importance of Developing Pupils' Critical Thinking Skill

84.20% teachers argued that developing pupils' critical thinking skill to enhance their academic achievements is very important, while, 10.5% indicated that it is important. It seems that teachers are aware of the importance of critical thinking skill in the sense that it helps pupils to take part in the learning process. A percentage of 3.70% represents those who claimed that developing pupils' critical thinking skill is not important for pupils to enhance their academic achievements.

Q17: What can you suggest to improve the learners' reading comprehension achievement?

Teachers' Suggestions and Comments

- Have more reading sections.
- Provide them with short stories instead of boring text to feel the pleasure of reading.
- They need to make a purpose for their reading to be motivated.
- Using simple and short texts. - Using pictures to direct pupils to guess what the text is about.
- Writing down the unfamiliar terms on the left side of the white board and ask pupils to look them up in the dictionary or translate them into Arabic. -Writing down the mispronounced terms and after pronouncing them correctly.
- Develop reading habits and the use of reading strategies.
- As a teacher in a middle school I wish if the authorities devote more time for English language.
- Devote much time for reading, and work with real life situations.
- Find books they enjoy, read aloud, skim the headings of texts, re-read confusing sections...etc

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- Extensive reading. When you read a lot about a given subject, you will have a bunch of ideas, and this will allow you to compare, analyze and synthesis.
- Selecting texts that are accessible for the pupils' understanding. Writing the difficult terms on index cards and then conduct a classroom discussion about their meaning to enrich their linguistic repertoire.

To sum up teachers' questionnaire, we can say that teachers are highly conscious of the importance of reading strategies and they have positive attitude towards developing them through applying some cognitive skills such as CTS.

2.4.2 Analysis of Teacher's Interview

1- **What do you think of the cognitive levels which are reflected in middle school reading comprehension questions?**

2- **What is the purpose of asking knowledge and comprehension questions?**

- **The teacher's answer:** the teacher described the level of reading comprehension questions which is reflected in the middle schools as being acceptable. Concerning the purpose of asking comprehension question she replied: "The purposes behind asking knowledge and comprehension questions are to give them a reason to read, to make a disequilibrium in the learners' minds so they can compare or link between the new idea and what they have previously, to stimulate critical analysis..."

3- **Do you think questioning is an effective means of enhancing learners' critical thinking skills?**

- **The teacher's answer:** "Critical thinking is increasingly important in teaching middle school learners....Personally, I do my best to implement this important skill in my classes by asking my learners questions as much as possible, inviting them to use what they have learnt in different situations like writing dialogues...helping them to connect their ideas, guiding them to the right way of working in groups, encouraging them to discuss their ideas and productions in the whole class...)

4- **To which extent is critical thinking implemented in your classroom?**

5- **Do you consciously think of critical thinking skills when you ask comprehension questions?**

- **The teacher's answer:** 'Yes, I do'. 'Questioning is a good way to enhance learners' critical thinking that's why teachers depends most on this strategy...).

6- **Do you think that critical thinking can be taught?**

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7- **Why do pupils need critical thinking?**

8- **Do you think that if the pupil develops his thinking skills can be an effective reader?**

- **The teacher's answer:** When it comes to her feedback about whether CT can be taught we noticed that the teacher agreed directly and justified her answer as: "It is so important, it needs to be taught and developed as much as the other four skills. It opens the pupils' minds and let them think correctly, enhances their ability to express ideas, improves their comprehension skills...). She definitely agrees with the idea of developing critical thinking skills for a better performance in reading activity.

9- **How do you encourage your pupils to develop their critical thinking skill?**

- **The teacher's answer:** " By inviting them to work in groups in class or in doing projects, asking questions using diagrams in discussing or analyzing topics, helping them to link between ideas using materials like videos/ pictures/ handouts to clarify things for them and let them use their background knowledge..."

10- **Are there any suggestions or comments to add?**

- **The teacher's comment:** learners are able to surprise us by their shining ideas but as teachers we should do our best and be intelligent to elicit their ideas from their minds.

2.4.3 Analysis of Pupils' Interview

1- Do you like reading?

2- How could you describe your level in reading?

Pupils' answer: Three of them replied positive answers, while the other two pupils acknowledged that they do not like reading. They added "Reading in English is boring and not easy...). Concerning their level they all mentioned that it is average.

3- According to you, what is reading comprehension?

Pupils' answer: The majority of pupils believed that reading comprehension is about understanding the main ideas in any given text to answer comprehension questions. One of the pupils defined it as: "Reading comprehension is the ability to comprehend what the author intended to say..." Other pupil stated that reading comprehension is: "To read for the sake of getting information and understand its meaning...."

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4- Do you have difficulties in understanding texts? What difficulties do you mainly encounter in reading your English texts?

Pupils' Answer: Most of pupils (4 of them) ensured that they encounter difficulties in understanding the text under reading. Two of them claimed that they do not face any difficulty in understanding texts. The most stressed difficulty pupils suffer from is to understand meanings of the new words. For others understanding the main idea is their major constraint in text reading comprehension.

5- When you do not understand a long sentence or a passage in the text, what do you do?

Pupils' answer: Concerning what pupils do if they do not understand a text, the majority of them re-read the text again, they believed that it is the best solution to grasp meaning because the more you read the text again and again the more you can understand it and read it attentively. Others sought help from the teacher, they believe that the teacher is the source of information and she can help them overcome their reading difficulties.

6- Does your teacher point out your problems regarding reading and reading comprehension?

Pupils' answer: Concerning whether or not the teacher points out his pupils' problems, four pupils opted for 'sometimes'. Two of them claimed that their teacher never pointed out their problems this could be due to time. According to pupils' answer we can say that teachers do help their pupils in a way or another to overcome their reading problems.

7- Do you know what reading strategies are?

8- To overcome your reading difficulties what strategies do you use?

Pupils' answer: Not all the pupils were able to define what reading strategies are; which indicates that pupils are not aware of the ways and techniques they should use to enhance their reading skill and reading comprehension. However, just two of them define it as: "Strategies we use in order to understand the text..." Concerning the most strategies they use they prefer looking only for the main ideas (skimming) of the text for faster reading. Others opted for summarizing because it helps them generate their own ideas to better understand.

9- Any comments?

Pupils' answer: pupils did not add any suggestions or comments.

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2.4.4 Analysis of Classroom Observation

- **In the pre-reading step:** we observed that the teacher uses several materials to activate learners' prior knowledge to elicit information. The pupils looked for some pictures and the teacher tried to quiz them by asking them questions related to the topic to guess what is about. We noticed that the teacher wrote the instruction on the board.
- **In the while-reading step:** in this step the teacher asked her pupils to read silently in limited time. She enabled them to skim and scan the text and to look for key words to guess the main idea. We noticed that the teacher asked them about the language form and repeated every time some of grammar rules. We noticed also that each pupil worked individually and if a pupil needs help he asks the teacher using the mother tongue especially when the questions were about the meaning of the new words. We observed that pupils used the mother tongue more than the teacher. The teacher used mother tongue rarely in difficult situations when she felt that pupils did not understand, and it was the final solution, also when she tried to give instructions in case they did not understand for example an activity. When a pupil asked for the meaning of a word, the teacher wrote it on the board and let her pupils guessed its meaning by activating their prior knowledge from the previous lessons.
- **In the post-reading step:** We noticed that the pupil always sought for teacher's feedback and the teacher therefore, used a supportive feedback to motivate the learners reflect on the reading passage. The teacher encouraged the learners to review and sum up what they have learnt.
- We noticed that the teacher used two different type of questions:
 - **Instruction Checking Questions (ICQ)**, the teacher used this type after giving the instructions to make sure pupils have understood what they needed to do.
 - **Concept Checking Questions (CCQ)**, are questions designed to check learners' understanding of language item.
- We found that there was much more noise when participating and this did not let them concentrate well.
- During the explanation of the lesson we observed that the teacher when presenting new words of the given text, she used eye contact to make them stop talking. Also when they did not understand the new words verbally she tried to fix it in their

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memory using hand gestures, body movement, and facial expression in order to facilitate and improve learning vocabulary.

2.5 Conclusion

Through this chapter, the researcher has presented the sample chosen, the context of the study, and the adopted methodology. In order to obtain an objective data, the investigator used and explained the research tools which were: classroom observation, a questionnaire and interviews. As for the results of our work will be further discussed and studied within the following chapter.

**CHAPTER THREE: FINDINGS
DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher will interpret and discuss the results in relation to our main research questions. Also, it focuses on testing our hypotheses with an attempt to provide some effective suggestions and recommendations that may contribute in the improvement of the pupils' reading comprehension.

3.2 Findings Discussion and Analysis

3.2.1 Discussion of Teachers' Questionnaire

➤ Pupils' Level in Reading

The findings obtained from teachers' questionnaire reveal that most of pupils have a level below the average in reading and only a minority of teachers stated that their pupils' level is above average. Therefore, the majority of teachers (84.2%) focus on developing comprehension skill when teaching reading. The results obtained from teachers' questionnaire show that most teachers have common focus in teaching reading which is reading comprehension. Their main concern is how to make pupils understand easily what the text is about.

➤ Pupils' Difficulties While Reading

From the results obtained from question six, it can be noticed that a considerable number of pupils experience problems when reading a given type of texts; the fact that raises pupils' serious need for reading comprehension strategies instruction and training. They should develop strategies that can help them overcome these obstacles. In relation to questions six teachers were asked to state the common reading difficulties their pupils face, for some teachers pronunciation difficulties and ambiguous words are the obstacles. As for the others the main problem that learners have when reading is the text length and the pupil's unfamiliarity with the topic. The common stressed difficulty provided by teachers was understanding meaning. It seems that pupils suffer from problems of understanding or at least guessing general meaning of the text at hand. Teachers agreed that because of the lack of vocabulary pupils do not achieve comprehension. Each pupil has his own difficulties this is why teachers should be count for pupils' mental, cognitive and even psychological individual factors to provide them with necessary help to overcome such difficulties.

➤ The Causes Behind Reading Problems

Concerning this question, teachers claimed that the lack of reading habit is the main cause behind reading problems, while others related reading problems mainly to the nature of the text. They showed an agreement on the fact that text selection can have an effect on reading comprehension. Teachers also claimed that the time devoted for reading comprehension session is not sufficient. These are the main difficulties pupils in middle school share while reading any text.

➤ **Teachers' Suggestions for guiding pupils to overcome reading difficulties**

From the suggestions provided by teachers, every teacher uses different teaching strategy to overcome reading difficulties focusing on their pupils' needs and level. Teachers showed care about their pupils since they stated different ways to help them when they do not understand while reading. Some of teachers suggested that the explanation of the key words is the best strategy to achieve comprehension. Others claimed that preparation of the text at home is good for pupils in order to not waste time in classroom and focus more on the comprehension questions. They also claimed that reading aloud for many time can be a good strategy to comprehend more the text at hand. They added that illustration using pictures and videos can also help pupils comprehend the text. Every teacher has his own way in guiding his pupils to overcome their reading difficulties. Teachers showed responsibility of improving their learners reading performances by using a number of techniques for doing that.

➤ **The reading strategies developed by teachers**

The overwhelming majority of teachers were able to define what reading strategies are. Each definition differs from one to the other according to teachers' perceptions. However; they do focus on common points; which are reading strategies are effective in facilitating pupils' reading process and helping them comprehend text meaning easily. Teachers do agree that reading strategies are the process of using different cognitive skills and tools for reaching the meaning of ideas given in a text. Some reading strategies suggested by teachers are summed up as follows:

- Ask them to read the text sentence by sentence and try to understand them and then relate their meaning to each other.
- Ask them to read the text at home.
- Ask them to read the text silently.
- Allow them to use a dictionary.

Chapter Three: Findings Discussion and Recommendations

- Help them to enrich their vocabulary.

It seems that teachers are aware about their pupils' needs and difficulties, and they try their best to help them overcome these difficulties to become fluent and advanced readers.

➤ **The Role of Reading Strategies in Enhancing Pupils' Reading Comprehension**

The majority of teachers ensured that reading strategies are important in enhancing pupils' reading comprehension. The answers indicate that teachers are aware of the advantages of applying reading strategies and they do focus on how they can be used by pupils in order to help them understand meaning and enhance their reading comprehension skills, in addition to teacher's role in helping pupils achieve text comprehension.

➤ **The Use of Cognitive Skills in Reading Comprehension**

According to the results teachers strongly agreed that reading is a thinking process, which requires the use of cognitive skills. Teachers were asked if they let their pupils develop cognitive skills such as: interpreting, identifying, analyzing. They confirmed that they do encourage their learners to develop such skills. To make sure they do the researcher asked them to justify their answers by asking them to explain how. The results showed that every teacher uses techniques that work best for his pupils. Some teachers give them the chance to express their ideas freely, others by using dictionaries, pictures or gestures. Asking questions and forming group discussions to push the pupil to think deeply and share ideas were common answer among teachers.

➤ **The Existence of CTS**

The majority of teachers are knowledgeable about what does critical thinking mean. This awareness will probably help them to develop it in the classroom. This may indicate that teachers' awareness of this skill would lead them to raise pupils' awareness about it as well. Teachers who are aware of this skill were required to define it. According to their definitions, it appears that teachers are conscious about CTS. All the definitions that have been provided contain the key aspects of CTS including analyzing, inferring, evaluating, synthesizing... etc.

➤ **The Importance of Developing Pupils' CTS**

According to the results obtained from section three teachers do encourage their pupils to develop their critical thinking skill. This implies that teachers do value this skill and consider

it important as the other skills that should be developed by their pupils. In order to check if they do so, the researcher wanted to confirm if this skill is applied in the reading sessions. Teachers were required to answer what they ask their pupils to do while reading. Multiple choices were given each one is a skill of critical thinking. The majority of teachers focused on asking pupils to activate their prior knowledge, because they consider it as a core factor in enhancing EFL pupils' reading skill; as well as, requiring them to make predictions, preview a text. All the characteristics that have been mentioned are the core of critical thinking. It is noticed that the frequent use of the skill of activating prior knowledge is highly implemented by teachers than the other skills. This indicates that the majority of teachers are implementing tasks that foster critical thinking skills whether consciously or unconsciously.

➤ **Teachers' suggestions to improve the learners' reading comprehension**

All the teachers agreed that they need to devote much time for reading sessions to develop the reading habits in pupils. Selecting texts that are accessible for the pupils' understanding is also important because it makes pupils enjoy reading and do their best to understand. They strongly agree about the idea of teaching reading at an early stage of teaching EFL. According to them, when pupils develop the habit of reading in the FL, they will be familiar with it. As a result, they would be better learners and build a positive attitude towards this language.

3.2.2 Summary of Teachers' Questionnaire Findings

According to the results obtained from teachers' questionnaire, one can notice that the majority of teachers appear to be familiar with critical thinking, as they provide different but relevant definitions. Besides, they all agreed that critical thinking should be developed to improve pupils' reading performance. As noticed from their views, all the teachers agreed strongly that CTS are useful in reading comprehension. Furthermore, teachers agreed that reading strategies play a major role in improving reading comprehension skill. They claimed that by applying appropriate reading strategies and developing critical thinking skills, pupils can face reading difficulties. In other words, these strategies facilitate the reading process, through providing the appropriate procedures to do so.

3.2.3 Discussion of Teachers' Interview

The purpose of conducting the interview was to discover to what extent CTS are implemented in the fourth year classes in middle school. In addition to that it attempted to know whether the teacher consciously thinks of critical thinking while asking comprehension

Chapter Three: Findings Discussion and Recommendations

questions and to see her feedback toward this skill. The results obtained from the three opening questions in the teacher's interview revealed that the teacher asks comprehension questions in order to stimulate their pupils' critical analysis which proves that the teacher depends on questioning as a strategy for developing pupils' CTS. Based on answers of questions 4 and 5, we assume that the teacher is consciously thinking of critical thinking when designing comprehension questions because according to her it is an effective way for enhancing comprehension skill. Our hypotheses suggest that critical thinking skill has a positive impact on reading comprehension, in which it affects pupils' performance in reading. Teacher's responses proved this hypothesis claiming that CTS need to be taught and developed as much as the other four skills because it opens pupils' mind and organize their thinking skills. In the last questions, the teacher was required to indicate her methods and suggestions for how to encourage pupils to develop CTS. Teacher's answers imply that she is aware of the significant role CTS play in developing pupils' academic achievement.

3.2.4 Discussion of pupils' Interview

The main goal of this interview is to know the most reading difficulties pupils face. Besides, it investigated the reading strategies applied by them to overcome these difficulties. The findings obtained from pupils' interview revealed that not all the pupils give high importance to the reading skill. This can be assumed from their answers while asking if they like reading. However, pupils, especially at their level should focus on reading as it can be a means to develop different other skills. The results of the questions in the interview revealed that pupils do face comprehension problems when reading a given type of texts. This fact indicates and raises the serious need for reading comprehension strategies instruction and training. From the results obtained it seems that pupils suffer from problems of understanding or guessing the general meaning of the text. When asked which strategies they follow when they do not understand the majority of them claimed that they re-read again or seek help from teachers. From their answers we can confirm that the teacher is the main source of information and she is supposed to help her pupils in a way or another to overcome their reading problems. The answers indicated that not all pupils do make use of reading strategies. They are not aware of the advantages they can gain from applying these strategies in order to improve their reading process.

3.2.5 Summary of the Findings from Teachers' and Pupils Interviews

Chapter Three: Findings Discussion and Recommendations

To sum up teacher's and pupils' interviews results, we can say that the teacher is aware of the significant importance of developing CTS and how applying reading strategies can improve and facilitate pupils' reading comprehension, helping them exert meaning from texts, and developing their whole reading proficiency. Teacher's positive feedback toward critical thinking skills confirmed that the teacher is encouraging her pupils to think critically. She gives equal importance to reading strategies and she encourages her pupils to make use of all of them to facilitate their text comprehension. However, from pupils' interview, we discovered additional facts revealing that the majority of pupils feel that reading is a boring activity; consequently, they are not wholly involved in it and that is why not all of them make use of reading strategies. They tend to ask their teacher when they do not understand a word or a passage. It seems that pupils do not make much effort while reading they mainly depend on their teacher.

3.2.6 Discussion of Classroom Observation

In order to demonstrate if pupils' critical thinking skills are improved and enhanced through teacher's questions and techniques in teaching reading comprehension, we conducted classroom observation sessions. Classroom observation revealed some points of similarities as well as some points of differences with the results of the questionnaire and the interviews. The results obtained from these sessions are summed up as follows:

➤ The Use of the Mother Tongue (Arabic)

Concerning the language used in the classroom when teaching reading comprehension, we observed that the teacher uses both Arabic and English. When pupils do not understand a word they ask in Arabic. We can assume that the use of Arabic helps to some extent pupils to achieve comprehension especially when there is new vocabulary.

➤ The Time Devoted For Reading Comprehension

The time devoted for reading comprehension session seemed to be insufficient.

➤ Classroom Interaction

The findings of the observation showed that interaction depends on the choice of the topic. When the learners understood the topic ,they interact positively ,they participate ,also the topic of the lesson made the learners motivated or it can be boring which made them not interesting, and there is no interaction. We noticed that pupils do not have the chance to

interact with each other. The teacher concentrates mainly on interaction between her and the pupil. She does not focus on dividing pupils into small groups for discussions.

➤ **Teacher's Way for Helping pupils in Reading Comprehension**

From the analysis, it was noticed that the teacher asks two types of questions: instruction checking questions (ICQ) and concept checking questions (CCQ) to make sure that pupils understand teacher's instructions as well as the text at hand. This can be a very useful technique for helping the pupils answer comprehension questions. The teacher uses pictures to illustrate and to activate pupils' prior knowledge. During our observation, we also observed that pupils can understand better when the teacher uses the body language to make them understand such a word, they guess the meaning of that word and say it with their mother tongue (Arabic language).

➤ **The use of CTS in the Classroom**

Pupils' responses mostly concentrated on guessing the main idea of the text. Besides, the responses focused on more creating or forming something new. It was noticed that comprehension questions include tasks which needed the pupils' ability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate. Comprehension tasks also required pupils to identify, to describe, to make judgments. Comprehension questions in middle schools do ask pupils to think critically but it is up to the teacher and the pupil to develop consciously these important skills. Pupils always wait for teacher's instructions, words of approval, correction, advice. It can be inferred that teacher's role is crucial to enhance the pupils' critical thinking skills, because he is the motivator who can guide them to organize their thinking.

The findings demonstrated the significant advantages of CTS in improving and facilitating pupils' text-comprehension. The use of effective critical thinking strategies is perhaps the most important means to help readers improve text comprehension.

➤ **The Use of Post-Reading Activities**

At post-reading stage teachers are expected to encourage pupils to reflect upon what they have read to help them use the newly learned words in creative ways. From what has been noticed the designed activities do not give the chance to the pupils to implement their creative thinking or to build something new from what they have learnt.

3.2.7 General Discussion of the Results

Chapter Three: Findings Discussion and Recommendations

Overall, the results confirmed that the Algerian education system attempt to integrate higher-order thinking skills in the curriculum and they have indicated that the implementation of CTS is successful to some extent in fostering reading comprehension. Pupils develop unconsciously some critical thinking skills that enable them to read critically. We can say that pupils are not aware of what critical thinking skills are but they do apply some cognitive strategies in reading which help them overcome their reading difficulties. The main skills teachers develop in the classroom are questioning, analyzing, activating prior knowledge and comparing. Consequently, the results confirmed our hypotheses, that CTS is one of the essential and effective ways of enhancing pupils' reading comprehension.

3.3 Recommendations

At the end of our research, we suggest the following recommendations to raise the importance of developing CTS for a successful performance and accomplishment in the reading skill. It proposes some suggested practical recommendations for both teachers and learners for the sake of a better reading comprehension achievement.

3.3.1 Recommendation to teachers

It is necessary that every teacher has an understanding of the complexities of the reading process and the skills to implement all the components of effective reading instruction.. Teachers are required to promote critical thinking skills in their classes. Teaching critical thinking for pupils is a crucial need. They should look for interesting and useful strategies to implement skills of critical thinking. One way to do this is to design some cognitive tasks associated with critical thinking, such as: involving pupils in discussions, asking significant questions, comparing two sources addressing the same issue, reviewing pupil's own writing and their peer's to evaluate and make logical judgments. Help pupils to identify their reading purposes first and provide them with suitable reading materials taking into account the pupil's interest and level. Additionally, reading sessions help to learn some important strategies to read critically.

Classroom activities are also important for a better achievement in teaching reading skill. The evaluation of reading comprehension inside the classroom should compose three phases: pre-reading activities, while- reading activities and post -reading activities (Williams 1996).

➤ Pre-Reading Activities

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These kinds of activities seek for motivating learners to be prepared in order to read the text. Such activities begin with the teacher's role of introducing the topic. The teacher can provide pupils with a text and then ask them to write a short paragraph on what they have already known about the topic to assess their prior knowledge. The teacher should encourage the learners to have a discussion about the topic and use strategies such as drawings, pictures quotations...etc to stimulate pupils' prior knowledge about the theme and leads him to make predictions, connections and then to ask questions.

➤ **While-Reading Activities**

The goal of these activities is to help learners to deal with the text and to focus on its aspects to understand it better. During this stage, pupils will be able to confirm predictions, gather and organize information. This stage is normally dominated with discussions, the teacher should ask learners to read the text in chunks and stop after each one to talk about the main ideas and guess what comes next. This activity can be done in small groups or as a class. Common activities in this stage are: skimming, scanning, re-reading, pause and predicting, asking and answering questions, summarizing, reading aloud, and getting detailed information. The aim behind the while-reading activities is to understand the writer's purpose and help reading comprehension of the text.

➤ **Post-Reading Activities**

Post-reading activities are those strategies the reader applies after he has read the text and has a complete picture of it. These activities are very important, since they provide pupils with the opportunity to summarize, question, reflect, discuss and respond to text. When pupils finish reading the text, there must be activities to help them analyze concepts for deeper understanding of ideas and organize information for later retrieval. Teacher can use these strategies for evaluation and application. S/he can verify if the pupil understood the content, or used the reading strategies, vocabulary and grammar correctly through comprehension questions or other activities. Common post reading activities are: creating stories or end of stories, producing posters, reconstructing texts, and questioning the text or views of the writer.

Middle school teachers should adapt with their learners abilities and create a good atmosphere where learners should be motivated to learning English. New ways of teaching should be introduced for instance, engage pupils in group discussion to tell their point of views, to be

Chapter Three: Findings Discussion and Recommendations

taught that point of views are valuable and they should support their views with logical arguments. This might help them to develop reasoning and debating skills. In order to make learners motivated to read teachers are supposed to choose a text that is relevant and can encourage them to use their critical thinking skills. Learners' styles must be taken into account by their teachers in order to provide more opportunities to learn. When using any teaching strategy, teachers should help pupils to understand why a strategy is useful, and describe explicitly how the strategy should be used. Teachers should help students choose the most appropriate strategy to overcome a reading difficulty. Varying these reading strategies will increase the pupil's comprehension over the subject matter. Teachers should work as motivators for their pupils through giving them appropriate instructions and encourage practice. Pupils need to have the opportunity to choose any type of texts to read. Additionally, teachers should first teach self development strategies individually or in groups to reinforce other skills mainly critical thinking ones.

3.3.2 Recommendation to pupils

Pupils' recommendations aim at improving pupils' reading comprehension abilities via raising their awareness towards the importance of using appropriate and effective text comprehension reading strategies. It is important to say that pupils can improve their reading comprehension if they concentrate on learning various reading strategies. They must contribute the development of their critical thinking skills. They should be conscious that CTS are necessary and make them proficient in the foreign language. Learning how to use these skills is very important for their educational achievements, text understanding is one of these achievements. Pupils should be actively engaged in the reading process because the more they read, the more they will comprehend the material to be read. They should pay attention and take notes, ask and respond to questions. Pupils should read with paper and pen in hand. They can then take notes of things they predict or understand. They can write down questions. They can create a vocabulary list of all the highlighted words in the text along with any unfamiliar terms that they need to define. As they read, they should be encouraged to stop periodically their reading and summarize what they have just read. In creating a summary, pupils have to integrate the most important ideas and generalize from the text information. This practice of integrating and generalizing in the creation of summaries make long passages more understandable. Effective readers monitor their understanding, and when they lose the meaning of what they are reading, they often unconsciously select and use a reading strategy that will help them reconnect with the meaning of the text. They should decide which

strategies are most helpful in making meaning; practice those strategies, and adjusting the strategies when necessary.

3.4 Pedagogical Implications

It is important to say that pupils can improve their reading comprehension better if teachers concentrate on teaching them reading strategies. In fact; teaching pupils to use reading strategies is very important for their educational achievements. Reading comprehension is also one of these achievements that are in real need for teaching reading skills. One possible implication points out the need to develop reading skills that lead to develop reading comprehension and reading strategies. The results revealed that teachers have a positive attitude towards fostering reading comprehension through developing CTS. Moreover, it is also revealed that CTS is an important skill that would help pupils achieve better results in their academic career. However, from the analysis of pupils' interview it was noticed that pupils do not give reading the importance it deserves.

Another implication is that, it is important for pupils to be taught practical problem-solving strategies and critical thinking skills. They need to be engaged in reading activities as much as possible in order to improve their reading skills. Therefore; it is the teachers' job to guide and help them understand what the text implies. Both teachers and pupils should be aware about the benefits and purposes of using reading strategies in the reading process. Therefore, teaching instruction should spend more time on teaching different types of reading strategies and help pupils choose the most appropriate strategy to overcome reading difficulties since most of pupils had a teacher-centered learning background. They have to be given the opportunity to experience and practice different reading strategies to become independent readers. More time should be spent to develop reading strategies training tasks to prepare pupils for independent reading.

To achieve better results on the same topic further research is highly recommended. Since the educational system aims at creating self-sufficient learners who are able to infer, interpret, analyze, criticize, and evaluate information and not just absorb whatever presented to them. It would be advisable if policy and decision makers integrate implicitly or explicitly critical thinking in all subjects. This could be done through integrating critical thinking in all the lessons. Critical thinking has the absolute power to transform a learner from being passive information receiver into an active learner with outstanding ability to solve problems, construct strong arguments, analyze and evaluate any sort of information, and make wise

Chapter Three: Findings Discussion and Recommendations

decisions and logical judgment. Since the ability to think critically is a primary goal of education, it needs to be taken in consideration. The programs should be designed to make learners good thinkers. Some other potential ideas are recommended for future research includes researching other strategies focused on enhancing pupils' reading skill. Technology resources should be incorporated such as tablets to help pupils develop vocabulary skills. In other words, the more electronic devices pupils have, the more strategies they can acquire to achieve better text comprehension.

3.5 Limitation of the Study

Limitations of the research are those obstacles that arise in study which are out of the researcher's control. These obstacles can have a negative impact on the results and the conclusion of this work. As any researcher, one has faced some issues. Sometimes, the researcher found some difficulties in finding references related to the topic. Also, because of special circumstances related to the current situation in the country. Besides, within the questionnaire, some questions needed justification but some participants did not justify their points of view. Time constraints constitute a considerable obstacle to enlarging the size of the interview sample.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter offers more details about the gathered data in order to shed light on the importance of CTS. The outcomes show that critical thinking has a great impact on pupils' reading performance. In addition to teacher's help, he can raise their awareness by motivating and encouraging them to develop these important skills. It is important to say that pupils can improve their reading comprehension better if teachers concentrate on making their pupils think critically and teaching them reading strategies, when, where and how to use them in their reading process. To conclude, we can say that the results revealed from the analyses confirmed our hypotheses, that CTS have a significant effect on pupils' reading comprehension and reading skill development.

General Conclusion

Reading is a complex cognitive activity that draws on many cognitive strategies, such as prediction, skimming, scanning and so on. In order to be able to read with some proficiency, pupils have to be able to use some of these strategies in an appropriate way to achieve comprehension easily. That is why; the present research offers some important points concerning the impact of applying some strategies and skills of critical thinking on reading comprehension. The study has been conducted with the aim of investigating critical thinking skills as one of the most important and effective factors which has a great effect on pupils' achievement and performance in reading comprehension.

The research goes through two main stages: a theoretical stage and practical one. The first stage consists of one theoretical chapter that provides some important notions and concepts concerning critical thinking and reading skill. We tried to define both critical thinking skills and reading comprehension as well as its related models and levels. We demonstrated the importance and role of reading strategies on reading comprehension. In addition to that, we have stressed and mentioned some of these strategies that enable pupils to achieve comprehension in reading. The second stage is composed of two practical chapters which aim at describing the methodology adopted by the researcher in addition to the analyses and discussion of the obtained results. Data and evidences were collected through three main tools: (teachers' and pupils' interview, teachers' questionnaire, classroom observation) to confirm our hypotheses. The study also presents teachers' and pupils' perceptions and attitudes in regards to the topic under investigation. At the end, we tried to suggest some recommendations and pedagogical implications for both teachers and pupils in order to raise their awareness about the importance of critical thinking skill for effective reading proficiency.

We suggested that there is a significant relationship between critical thinking skills and the development of reading comprehension abilities. Pupils who develop and apply certain cognitive strategies of critical thinking while reading perform better than others. From the interpretation and analysis of data obtained from teachers' questionnaire, we found that

teachers do encourage their learners to be critical thinkers but they need more training to present new teaching ways to raise their pupils' thinking abilities. In the interview we investigated whether pupils suffer from reading difficulties while reading and what are the strategies applied by pupils and teachers to overcome these obstacles. We found that the pupils are not really aware of what reading strategies are. They do make use of some cognitive strategies unconsciously like skimming and scanning, picking up the key words and translate them in Arabic, the use of dictionaries. Their teacher claimed that the development of CTS lead to the improvement of using the appropriate reading strategies which have a strong impact on pupils' text comprehension; the fact that confirms our research hypothesis. The results of classroom observation sessions confirm that the Algerian education system attempt to integrate higher-order thinking skills in the curriculum and the level reflected in the reading comprehension questions encourage the reader to develop and organize his thinking abilities. In addition to the teacher help, he can facilitate the reading comprehension process for them by proving the appropriate instructions when necessary. The findings discussed in this general conclusion should be taken into careful considerations, because if implemented correctly, reading skills teaching and learning will be improved significantly.

This study has got some limitations essentially in terms of the lack of printed books and the sample population as its results cannot be generalized, unless other studies are carried with a larger sample population. Another limitation concerns the online use of questionnaire due to current situation. The data would have been much more accurate if the questionnaires were carried out in the classroom. Further studies could be conducted to explore the importance of critical thinking skill in the classroom.

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Appendices

Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear teachers,

This questionnaire aims at finding out the possible relationship between EFL learners' critical thinking abilities and their reading comprehension. Information provided here will strictly be used anonymously for research purposes. You are kindly invited to answer the following questions by putting a tick (✓) in the appropriate box and commenting when necessary. Thank you for accepting to complete this questionnaire.

SECTION ONE:

- **General information**

- a. **Gender**

- a. Male

- b. Female

- b. **Degree**

- Classical Bachelor's Degree.

- LMD Master's degree

- c. **How many years have you been teaching English ?**

-years

SECTION TWO

- **Reading Comprehension**

1. According to your experience, how would you describe the reading level of your pupils in this class?

- a. Most are above average
- b. Most are average
- c. Most are below average
- d. Reading level varies greatly

2. What is your primary focus in teaching reading?

- Reading fluency
- Reading comprehension
- Grammar
- Spelling

3. Do your pupils experience difficulties in understanding texts or any written materials?

- Yes No

-Can you state briefly the common difficulties they face?

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4. According to you what are the causes behind these difficulties?

- Lack of time
- Lack of reading habit
- The difficulty of the reading skill itself
- The difficulty of the kind of texts
- Others, please specify

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.....

5. How do you guide your students to overcome their reading difficulties?

-Ask them to read the text aloud

- Try to find out the cause of the problem

- Try to explain the general idea of the text

- Others please specify

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SECTION THREE

• Reading Strategies

6. Can you briefly define “reading strategies”?

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7. According to you, are reading strategies important in enhancing students’ reading comprehension?

Yes

No

- If yes, please mention why?

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8. Do you enable your learners to explain and interpret given concepts related to the text?

a. Yes

b. No

If yes, how?

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9. Do you enable your learners to identify and analyze the motives and causes of a given text?

a. Yes

b. No

If yes, how ?

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.....

10. Do you enable your learners to form new ideas on the basis of their prior knowledge?

a. Yes

b. No

If yes, how?

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.....

11. Do you ask your students while reading to?

- Activate their prior knowledge
- Make predictions, preview or survey a text
- Generate the questions
- Summarize
- Use concept maps, or text structure frames

Other suggestions

If you have any other suggestions or comments, please do not hesitate and add them below.

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12. Do you agree that reading is a thinking process that requires the use of different cognitive skills?

Yes

No

Whatever your answer, please justify

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.....
.....

Thank you

Teacher's interview

Dear teacher, this interview is part of our research work. Your completion of this interview will be a great help to bring fruition to the study. The main purpose of this interview is to investigate the role of critical thinking skills in enhancing pupils' comprehension ability. I would be grateful if you could answer these questions.

1. What do you think of the cognitive levels which are reflected in middle school reading comprehension questions?
2. Why and what is the purpose of asking knowledge and comprehension questions?
3. Do you think questioning is an effective means of enhancing learners' critical thinking skills?
4. To which extent is critical thinking implemented in your classroom?
5. Do you consciously think of critical thinking skills when you ask comprehension questions?
6. Do you think that critical thinking can be taught?
7. Why do pupils need critical thinking?
8. Do you think that if the pupil develops his thinking skills can be an effective reader?
9. How do you encourage your pupils to develop their critical thinking skill?
10. Are there any suggestions or comments to add?

Thank you for your collaboration

Pupils' interview

The following questions are aimed at investigating the pupils' usage of the reading text-comprehension strategies. The information gathered will be conducted and analyzed in our research work.

Please, you are kindly asked to answer carefully the answers.

1. Do you like reading?
2. How could you describe your level in reading?
3. According to you, what is reading comprehension?
4. Do you have difficulties in understanding texts? What difficulties do you mainly encounter in reading your English texts?
5. Does your teacher point out your problems regarding reading and reading comprehension?
6. When you do not understand a long sentence or a passage in the text, what do you do?
7. Do you know what reading strategies are?
8. To overcome your reading difficulties what strategies do you use?
9. Do you use your previous experience or background knowledge to understand a reading text?

Observation Checklist:

Unit:	Level &Stream:
Required materials:	Lesson Focus:
Competencies:	Aims &Objectives:
Time:	

Lesson steps	Procedures	Yes	No	Needs improvement
Pre Reading	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The teacher enables the learners to recall facts and basic concepts to understand a given content. 2. The teacher uses several materials to activate learners' prior knowledge to elicit information. 3. The teacher asks the learners a set of questions about what they want to know from the reading passage. 4. The teacher is able to motivate the learners in order for them to exploit reading to the end. 			
While reading	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The teacher enables the learners to skim and scan through the text. 2. The teacher asks thought provoking questions through strategies and interventions based on specific needs of learners and targeted skills. 3. Teacher asks questions using literal, inferential, and critical comprehension levels aligned to the multiple text structures 4. The Teacher uses a variety of teaching strategies that enable the learners to identify and analyze the motives and cause of a given reading passage. 			

<p>After reading</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The teacher paves the way for the learners to reinvest what they have learnt. 2. The teacher uses a supportive feedback to motivate the learners produce and reflect on the reading passage. 3. The teacher encourages the learners to review and sum up what they have learnt through synthesizing the given reading context. 4. The teacher enables the learners to evaluate and create new concepts and ideas on the basis of the previous ones. 			
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Lesson Evaluation:

Date: / /