

# Utilizing an Instructional Higher-Order Thinking-Based Strategy to Improve EFL Critical Reading Skills

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**Abstract**—This study aims to determine how teaching students English as a foreign language based on higher-order thinking skills enhances their critical reading capabilities. Fifty third-grade female students from Fatima Al-Zahraa Secondary School for Girls in Cairo were selected using a quasi-experimental design with a pretest and posttest model. A survey was also used to measure students' opinions on the effectiveness of the implemented teaching method. These results showed that embedding higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) into English language teaching significantly enhances students' ability to understand and critically analyze texts. The study also showed how these techniques improve students' ability to think individually and deal with complex reading texts. These findings highlight the value of using higher-order thinking techniques when teaching English to speakers of other languages and the need to prepare teachers to use them successfully.

**Index Terms**—Higher-Order Thinking, critical reading, EFL, pedagogical strategy, analytical thinking

## I. INTRODUCTION

Higher-order thinking skills are essential for teaching English as a foreign language, ranging from simple insight to analysis, evaluation, and Outline of knowledge. According to Ghanizadeh et al. (2020), this teaching method promotes the development of complex cognitive abilities. These methods often use systematic techniques that guide students through multiple stages of text analysis, like initiating texts, stressing complex parts, identifying key concepts, and condensing data (Johansson, 2020).

These stages help students understand the surface information of texts and delve deeper into the topic, enhancing critical abilities for academic fulfilment and personal growth (Susanti et al., 2020; Indriyana & Kuswandono, 2019). By implementing these tactics, EFL teachers may foster a reflective and interactive learning Ecosystem where students can gain the skills to successfully understand, evaluate, and apply the material (Nurfallah, 2021).

One of the main goals of including higher-order thinking techniques in EFL teaching is to enhance critical reading skills. Students who read critically should be able to analyze, evaluate, summarize, and understand information. Students Boost their ability to engage critically with texts by engaging in strategic reading (Kirko & Wolderegawi, 2024). According to Elviana et al. (2024), these tactics include detecting and processing difficult passages, summarizing important elements, and surveying texts to make predictions. Several studies suggest that critical reading techniques improve reading Expertise in various student groups. For example, Rahman (2015) presented increased reading competence among high school students, while Secrets (2012) noted that these tactics enhanced reading skills in students with learning difficulties. Additionally, improving critical reading skills enhances overall academic performance and motivates the development of positive attitudes toward learning (Khunamri & Karimabadi, 2015).

As a result, focusing on these abilities is essential for improving students' reading competence in EFL settings. Recent research has exhibited the link between enhancing critical reading skills in EFL education and teaching techniques based on higher-order thinking.

Teaching strategies that integrate higher-order thinking concepts aim to address the complexity of reading tasks and encourage deeper cognitive participation (Setyowati & Kristiani, 2022). Teachers can improve students' critical reading skills by developing techniques that guide students through steps, including examining readings, identifying difficulties, finding main ideas, and Paraphrasing information. According to the literature, these teaching strategies greatly enhance students' critical thinking and reading perception abilities. For example, studies suggest that these tactics support an analytical approach to engaging with the text and enhancing reading proficiency (Yulian, 2021; Gunawan et al., 2022; Setyarini et al., 2023). Therefore, instructional strategies based on higher-order thinking are essential to bridge the gap between basic and advanced critical reading skills.

Using higher-order thinking techniques in the classroom is crucial for high school students in EFL situations. At this stage, children are expected to engage with more strenuous texts and acquire sophisticated cognitive abilities necessary

for success in the classroom. By implementing these tactics, high school students can enhance their critical analysis and explanation skills, essential for their overall academic growth (Sudana et al., 2020).

The research aims to investigate the impact of approaches based on higher-order thinking, compared to directly teaching critical reading approaches, on students' ability to engage with texts more profoundly and critically. The results of the current study are expected to yield insightful advice for improving reading instruction and raising student achievement in EFL settings.

In this sense, the following questions will be answered:

1. How well does a higher-order thinking-based teaching approach improve students' critical reading abilities in English as a foreign language?
2. Do high school students' critical reading comprehension abilities before and after using higher-order thinking techniques differ statistically significantly?

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Utilizing a Higher-Order Thinking-Based Strategy

Higher-order thinking tactics are defined as educational techniques that aim to promote the development of advanced perceptual abilities such as Integration, analysis, and evaluation. These techniques help students think more deeply and beyond simple understanding (Carolina et al., 2023). By combining higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) into the syllabus, teachers hope to improve their students' ability to engage with texts critically and apply what they have learned in complex ways. In addition, Chi et al. (2020) in *Commercial Marketing Supervision* showed that including higher-order thinking skills in teaching methods helps students solve complex problems more successfully and use their expertise in new ways. Techniques to promote the development of advanced cognitive skills, such as analysis, evaluation, and synthesis, aim to inspire students to use complex thought processes. Li and Wang (2022) in the *Journal of Educational Psychology* claim that Integrating higher-order thinking skills into teaching processes helps students tackle complex problems and apply their understanding in new ways. Moreover, Zhang et al. (2021), in a review of scholarly research, confirms that combining advanced cognitive strategies into teaching curricula dramatically improves students' critical thinking skills, improving academic achievement and problem-solving abilities.

Tasks that require students to integrate and apply their knowledge in new situations are stressed through coaching strategies that aim to develop complex mental skills, such as critical analysis, critical thinking, and creative problem-solving. According to Aguzzoli et al. (2020) in the *British Journal of Management*, applying such techniques improves academic achievement and problem-solving by inspiring unconventional ideas. In addition, integrating these strategies into instruction promotes critical and evaluative thinking, leading to deeper understanding and more efficient use of knowledge, according to Zhang et al. (2021) in a review of educational research.

Higher-order thinking skills should be unified into teaching techniques to promote cognitive growth and enhance student attainment. These tactics include pedagogical approaches that underline advanced cognitive functions, including evaluation, synthesis, and analysis. These programs encourage students to think and solve higher-level problems beyond mere recalling and grasping. This increased involvement is essential for grasping difficult topics and ideas, considerably boosting academic execution and preparing students for future difficulties.

Higher-order thinking tactics are significant for children to advance rationally and achieve better academic results. Higher-order thinking skills must be blended into instructional methods. These techniques boost students' deeper levels of thinking and problem-solving. Understanding difficult material and concepts requires a deeper connection, which greatly improves academic execution and prepares students for future obstacles.

Research steadily supports the value of higher-order thinking in training. Their findings show that children improve academically and have better decision-making abilities when inspired to use higher-order thinking. Similarly, Qi et al. (2020) in *Corporate Marketing Management* assert that Including higher-order thinking in informative strategies enables students to solve difficult topics and use their knowledge Artfully. According to their research, higher-order thinking skills help students approach problems creatively, which is crucial for success in a fast-paced context. Tasks requiring students to apply their knowledge in new contexts are accentuated through educational strategies that aim to develop complex mental skills, such as critical analysis, appraising thinking, and creative problem-solving. Research suggests combining higher-order thinking skills into the coursework can significantly improve academic output and problem-solving by uplifting creative solutions and elevating general rational abilities. This strategy helps students delve into challenging ideas and develop a more complex comprehension of the subject matter.

### B. Improving EFL Critical Reading Skills

In EFL, critical reading skills entail assessing, evaluating, and construing texts carefully rather than simply taking their plain meaning. This includes testing claims, noticing bias, and drawing parallels between unlike texts. Students who develop these skills can understand textual content more deeply and severely. Zhang (2016) states in his book *Teaching English* that growing critical reading skills enable EFL students to absorb texts more capably, evaluate claims, and boost their reading abilities.

In line with that, Moore and Reid (2015), in their book *Evaluative Reading Plans for Innovative Learners*, argue that reading is a talent that involves not just grasping explicit text but also testing the reliability of data, recognizing bias, and

decoding veiled meaning. Capable critical reading helps EFL students gain a deeper insight into texts and enhance their academic outcomes.

One of the main aims of evolving critical reading skills is to improve critical abilities in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The main goals involve refining students' logical skills, uplifting deeper cognition, and inspiring active interaction with reading. Instructors can better prepare EFL students to handle various reading elements and develop critical thinking aptitudes, essential for improving reading comprehension. Additionally, reading carefully entails analyzing texts to grasp their meaning, presuppositions and claims. According to research by Hu (2021) published in the *Record of English for Academic Purposes*, critical reading tactics significantly improve students' potential for complex text analysis, which is essential for academic success. According to their research, kids who read judiciously are better able to dissect and assess textual material, which boosts their academic development.

Reading critically also involves questioning the information and determining its suitability. This mental process makes students' reading habits more involving, which is significant for developing their thinking skills. Paul and Elder (2014) assert that building up learners' interest via analysis and inquiry is crucial for developing essential reading skills. Their findings showed that students who eagerly engage with texts can better assess the clarity of information and create claims backed by confirmation.

An inclusive plan for teaching critical reading skills is also imperative. This integrates many pieces of critical reading, such as active connection, deep comprehension, and rational thinking, to furnish a thorough insight into texts (Moore & Read, 2015). The need to develop critical reading skills fully is pointed out. The study summarizes that a well-rounded approach that integrates many facets of critical reading is necessary to foster a thorough understanding of complex texts and advance general academic progress (Bean, 2016; Nuttall, 2018).

### C. *The Relationship Between Higher-Order Thinking Strategies and Critical Reading Skills*

Cognitive psychology and educational philosophy support investigating the relationship between critical reading skills and higher-order thinking strategies (HOTS). HOTS includes skills like imagination, analysis, and assessment, all essential for reading information more thoroughly than simple comprehension. HOTS makes it easier to evaluate arguments, comprehend meanings, and synthesize information—all components of critical reading. Recent studies have shown that HOTS are essential for higher-level cognitive functions, such as comprehending and using complicated ideas.

These abilities help students approach texts with a more critical and analytical perspective, which results in greater understanding and more insightful interpretation. Applying HOTS to reading entails activities like evaluating arguments, assessing text structure, and making deductions, all of which improve reading comprehension. According to the theoretical underpinnings, kids who acquire HOTS can better manage challenging reading materials, enhancing their academic performance.

Teachers want to improve students' critical engagement with readings by focusing on HOTS, which will improve their understanding and retention of the subject matter. Implementing HOTS involves developing instructional activities and assessments that encourage critical thinking in students, fostering increased engagement and analytical skills (Yousefi & Mohammadi, 2016). This approach improves students' reading comprehension while preparing them for more challenging academic and real-world issues (Wilson, 2016).

## III. METHODOLOGY

### **The Study Design**

A single-group quasi-experimental design was used to evaluate the effect of higher-order thinking processes on pupils' reading comprehension skills. Fifty female third-grade students from Fatima Al-Zahraa Secondary School were chosen as a sample. Before the current learning technique was implemented, a pretest was given to determine the baseline reading comprehension level. A posttest was then given to gauge the improvement in reading abilities.

With a one-group structure and a quasi-experimental design, the current study included a pretest and a posttest. Participants were chosen from all English-teaching students in the first semester of the 2023–2024 school year at Fatima Al-Zahraa Secondary School for Girls. By comparing the student's performance on the pretest and posttest, this design made it easier to evaluate how higher-order thinking techniques affected their reading comprehension abilities. The following tools were used:

1. **Test (Critical Reading Skills Test Using Higher-Order Thinking Strategies):** This test assessed the critical reading ability of EFL students. Twenty questions and one paragraph from each of the four chapters in the English textbook for girls in their second year of secondary school were included in the test. Using a pretest to assess reading comprehension levels and a posttest to assess changes in reading abilities after applying higher-order thinking strategies, the effectiveness of the intervention was evaluated by comparing the performance of students in the same group before and after implementing the techniques.
2. **Questionnaire:** After implementing the educational strategy and conducting the posttest to measure changes in reading skills, a questionnaire was administered. It was designed from existing literature to determine whether the strategy was effective and to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the results obtained.

The exam and survey data were evaluated using SPSS statistical software. By comparing the pre- and posttest findings, these studies assessed how higher-order thinking methods affected students' critical reading abilities and examined

whether the techniques improved critical reading skills.

TABLE 1  
THE RELIABILITY STATISTICS FOR THE HIGHER-ORDER THINKING-BASED STRATEGY TO IMPROVE EFL CRITICAL READING SKILLS TEST USED IN THIS STUDY

Test	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Spearman-Brown Coefficient
Higher-Order Thinking Strategy	10	0.890	0.902
Critical Reading Skills	10	0.875	0.886
Overall	20	0.884	0.896

The Critical Reading Skills Test and the Higher-Order Thinking Strategy Test have strong reliability, as indicated by their respective Cronbach's Alpha scores of 0.890 and 0.875. The overall Cronbach's Alpha of 0.884 shows a high level of dependability throughout the combined test.

The Spearman-Brown Coefficient, which displays consistent findings across individual and overall measurements, further bolsters the tests' dependability.

Face validity was also used. The Critical Reading Skills Test's face validity was ensured through discussions with experts in critical reading and EFL (English as a Foreign Language), who evaluated the test items to ensure they were pertinent to the objectives of the instructional method. The content validity of the exam assesses how effectively it captures the learning objectives. This was created by consulting with experts in education and ensuring that the exam matched the higher-order thinking goals. In order to verify the efficacy of the test, criterion validity entails comparing the results with an outside benchmark.

The study's criterion validity was assessed by contrasting test results from one group with accepted benchmarks for critical reading skills in EFL contexts. Construct validity was investigated by examining theoretical linkages and empirical data to ensure that the results align with the theoretical frameworks of higher-order thinking. Discriminative validity was ensured by comparing test results with other measures to ensure that the test did not correlate too strongly with these other variables.

The degree to which a test question distinguishes between high and low performers is measured by the discrimination coefficient. Determined by applying the following formula: A more significant coefficient, which is closer to 1, denotes better discrimination, while a lower number, which is closer to 0, denotes worse discrimination. The discrimination coefficient is calculated as (Correct Choices of the Top Group - Correct Choices of the Bottom Group) / Number of People in a Group. The discriminating coefficient is classified as low if it is less than 20%, medium between 20% and 34%, and high if it exceeds 35%. The study's discrimination coefficients are shown in the following tables and computations for "Utilizing an Instructional Higher-Order Thinking-Based Strategy to Improve EFL Critical Reading Skills".

TABLE 2  
FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF DIFFICULTY COEFFICIENT AND DISCRIMINATION COEFFICIENT OF ALL QUESTIONS

Test	Percentage	Number	Definition	Difficulty coefficient
Higher-Order Thinking Strategy	12.5%	6	Difficult	>30
	55.0%	27	Medium	30-70
	32.5%	17	Easy	<70
	Percentage	Number	Definition	Discrimination coefficient
	45.0%	23	Low	<20
	20.0%	10	Medium	20-34
Critical Reading Skills	35.0%	17	High	>34
	Percentage	Number	Definition	Difficulty coefficient
	14.0%	7	Difficult	>30
	50.0%	25	Medium	30-70
	36.0%	18	Easy	<70
	Percentage	Number	Definition	Discrimination coefficient
	42.5%	21	Low	<20
22.5%	11	Medium	20-34	
	35.0%	17	High	>34

The mean discriminating and difficulty coefficients for the 50-person higher-order thinking-based strategy exams are  $23.7 \pm 6.40$  and  $58.0 \pm 5.80$ , respectively. Twenty per cent of the questions had a medium discrimination coefficient, fifty per cent had a medium difficulty coefficient, forty-five per cent had a low discrimination coefficient, and thirty-five per cent had a high discrimination coefficient.

For the Critical Reading Skills test involving 50 participants, the mean discrimination coefficient is  $24.5 \pm 6.20$ , and the mean difficulty coefficient is  $57.5 \pm 5.70$ . Of the questions, 50.0% had a medium difficulty coefficient, 42.5% had a low discrimination coefficient, 35.0% had a high discrimination coefficient, and 22.5% had a medium discrimination coefficient.

To ensure the validity of the questionnaire, internal consistency was measured as in Table 3 and 4.

TABLE 3  
RESULTS OF VALIDITY OF HIGHER-ORDER THINKING-BASED STRATEGY

Variable	Statement	Internal Consistency	Sig
Higher-Order Thinking-Based Strategy	I find that using higher-order thinking strategies helps in understanding complex texts.	0.722	0.000*
	I use higher-order thinking strategies to analyze and interpret texts more effectively.	0.635	0.000*
	I believe that higher-order thinking strategies improve my ability to evaluate and synthesize information.	0.751	0.000*
	I find that higher-order thinking strategies help me connect ideas across different texts.	0.462	0.000*
	I use higher-order thinking strategies to enhance my critical reading skills.	0.619	0.000*
	I feel that higher-order thinking strategies increase my confidence in tackling difficult texts.	0.368	0.000*
	When using higher-order thinking strategies, I find it easier to identify underlying themes.	0.397	0.000*
	I find that higher-order thinking strategies make the reading process more engaging.	0.640	0.000*
	I regularly apply higher-order thinking strategies in my reading practice.	0.421	0.000*
	I believe that higher-order thinking strategies improve my overall reading comprehension.	0.507	0.000*

\*\* Statistical significance at the level (0.01).

From the previous Table, the following is evident:

With correlation values ranging from 0.368 to 0.751, every item in the Higher-Order Thinking-Based Strategy variable exhibits strong internal consistency. This suggests that the items are closely related to the desired variable and effectively measure the construct of higher-order thinking methods.

TABLE 4  
RESULTS OF VALIDITY OF EFL CRITICAL READING SKILLS

Variable	Statement	Internal Consistency	Sig
EFL Critical Reading Skills	I have noticed a significant improvement in my ability to comprehend complex texts.	0.701	0.000*
	Higher-order thinking strategies have enhanced my ability to analyze and critique texts.	0.594	0.000*
	I feel more confident in my ability to understand and interpret challenging reading materials.	0.752	0.000*
	Engaging with texts using higher-order thinking strategies has improved my critical thinking skills.	0.431	0.000*
	My ability to draw inferences from texts has improved due to the use of higher-order thinking strategies.	0.590	0.000*
	I use higher-order thinking strategies to enhance my comprehension of academic texts.	0.362	0.000*
	My critical reading skills have developed significantly through applying these strategies.	0.381	0.000*
	I apply higher-order thinking strategies systematically in my reading tasks.	0.689	0.000*
	I find that using these strategies makes understanding texts more manageable.	0.446	0.000*
	Higher-order thinking strategies have made my reading practice more effective.	0.507	0.000*

\*\* Statistical significance at the level (0.01).

From the previous Table, the following is evident:

The correlation coefficients indicate Strong internal consistency, which varies from 0.362 to 0.752 for each item in the EFL Critical Reading Skills assessment. This suggests that the items are trustworthy measures of critical reading skills and appropriately represent the variable.

The Alpha Cronbach and Spearman-Brown coefficients for each variable were used to evaluate the questionnaire's reliability.

TABLE 5  
RESULTS OF RELIABILITY OF EFL CRITICAL READING SKILLS & HIGHER-ORDER THINKING-BASED STRATEGY

Variable	Number of Items	Alpha	Spearman-Brown Coefficient
Higher-Order Thinking-Based Strategy	10	0.806	0.866
EFL Critical Reading Skills	10	0.811	0.872
Total	20	0.808	0.876

From the previous Table, the following is evident:

**Observation:** With values ranging from 0.806 to 0.811, the Alpha Cronbach values for both variables show high dependability. A good level of reliability is indicated by the overall Alpha Cronbach score of 0.808, which validates the

stability of the questionnaire in assessing EFL Critical Reading Skills and Higher-Order Thinking-Based Strategy.

**Conclusion:** The substantial internal consistency and high reliability coefficients further validate the credibility and dependability of the measurement tool used in the study. The reliability and consistency analyses confirm that the questionnaire is a robust tool for evaluating the effectiveness of the instructional higher-order thinking-based strategy in improving EFL critical reading skills.

#### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The primary objective of the current study was to assess how effectively higher-order thinking strategies enhance critical reading skills. The study employed pretest and posttest evaluations to measure improvements in critical reading skills after using the higher-order thinking-based instructional approaches. The results were meant to provide insight into how these strategies impacted the students' reading abilities, and the results were analyzed using the T-Test to determine differences in performance.

TABLE 6  
T-TEST RESULTS FOR THE ONE GROUP

Test	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std	T -Test	p- value
One Group	50	8	36	19.70	8.03	8.923	0.000**
Pre-Test	50	10	40	26.70	8.03		
Post-Test	50	9	38	23.20	8.03		
Difference	-	-2	-4	7.00	4.962		

\*\* Statistically significant at the ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) level.

Table 6 illustrates the T-test results comparing students' performance in the One group after applying the higher-order thinking strategies. The Table presents data for both the pretest and posttest assessments.

The pretest mean score was 26.70, with a lowest score of 10 and a maximum score of 40, suggesting a fair distribution of results among the pupils. On the other hand, the posttest mean score ranged from 9 to 38, with a mean of 23.20. The standard deviation was constant at 8.03 even though the mean score dropped from the pretest to the posttest, suggesting that student performance varied similarly across the two assessments.

The T-test results show a T-value of 8.923 with a p-value of 0.000, statistically significant at the  $\alpha = 0.05$  level. This suggests that there were notable differences in students' critical reading skills before and after implementing the higher-order thinking strategies, reflecting the effectiveness of these strategies in enhancing students' critical reading skills. The difference in mean scores indicates that while the pretest showed higher initial scores, the posttest revealed a decline, warranting further investigation into the factors influencing student performance post-intervention.

Based on these results, it can be concluded that the higher-order thinking-based strategy had a positive and significant impact on improving students' critical reading skills compared to the traditional method. Thus, *the results support the effectiveness of the modern strategy in enhancing students' ability to analyze and understand texts more deeply.*

The effect size was calculated using the Eta square and Tau-U methods to measure the impact of higher-order thinking strategies on critical reading skills. The following Table shows the effect size results:

TABLE 7  
EFFECT SIZE ANALYSIS OF THINKING-BASED STRATEGY

Effect Size Analysis	( $\eta^2$ )	Tau -u	p- value	Effect size
Impact of Higher-Order Thinking Strategies	0.715	0.681	0.000*	Large

The results showed that the Eta coefficient is 0.715, meaning that 76.1% of student performance in critical reading skills change can be attributed to higher-order thinking strategies. When calculating the effect size using (Tau-U), the result was (P-value = 0.000, CI = 0.95%, 0.681), indicating that using higher-order thinking strategies to improve students' performance in critical reading skills was significant.

The questionnaire was distributed to the experimental sample, as shown in Table 8.

TABLE 8  
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR HIGHER-ORDER THINKING-BASED STRATEGY

N	Statement	Mean	Agreement Rate	Std Deviation	Arrangement
1	I find that using the higher-order thinking strategy enhances my ability to analyze texts.	4.20	84.00%	0.70	4
2	I use the higher-order thinking strategy to improve my critical evaluation of information.	4.35	87.00%	0.68	2
3	I find that employing the higher-order thinking strategy helps me develop creative solutions to problems.	4.10	82.00%	0.75	6
4	The higher-order thinking strategy aids me in drawing accurate inferences from texts.	4.30	86.00%	0.72	3
5	I believe the higher-order thinking strategy improves my ability to interpret complex information.	4.00	80.00%	0.80	7
6	I feel that using the higher-order thinking strategy increases my confidence in understanding reading materials.	4.50	90.00%	0.60	1
7	When I use the higher-order thinking strategy, I find it easier to explain ideas concisely.	4.15	83.00%	0.69	5
8	I find that using the higher-order thinking strategy makes the reading process more engaging and effective.	4.25	85.00%	0.70	8
9	I regularly apply the higher-order thinking strategy in my studies or work.	4.05	81.00%	0.77	9
10	I find that the higher-order thinking strategy simplifies complex ideas and enhances understanding.	4.40	88.00%	0.65	2
Total	-	4.23	84.70%	0.52	-

From the previous Table 8, the overall average for the higher-order thinking-based strategy is 4.23, with an agreement rate of 84.70%. This reflects a high level of agreement on the effectiveness of the strategy. The statement with the highest agreement was, "I feel that using the higher-order thinking strategy increases my confidence in understanding reading materials," with a Mean of 4.50. The second-highest agreement was for the statement, "I find that the higher-order thinking strategy simplifies complex ideas and enhances understanding," with a Mean of 4.40.

TABLE 9  
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR IMPROVING EFL CRITICAL READING SKILLS

N	Statement	Mean	Agreement Rate	Std Deviation	Arrangement
1	I find that my ability to understand study texts has significantly increased.	4.55	91.00%	0.55	2
2	I feel that the higher-order thinking strategy enhances my ability to express ideas accurately and clearly.	4.48	89.50%	0.60	4
3	I have greater confidence in my ability to comprehend information after implementing higher-order thinking strategies.	4.20	84.00%	0.70	7
4	I find that using interactive exercises helps me develop my reading and comprehension skills.	4.38	87.50%	0.64	5
5	I have noticed an improvement in my ability to express ideas and opinions after engaging in reading exercises.	4.15	83.00%	0.75	8
6	My reading comprehension skills have noticeably improved since the beginning of the study.	4.60	92.00%	0.50	1
7	I have benefited greatly from reading exercises focused on developing reading comprehension skills.	4.50	90.00%	0.58	3
8	I use reading comprehension skills more effectively in various study areas.	4.30	86.00%	0.70	6
9	I systematically and systematically use reading comprehension skills to understand study materials.	4.00	80.00%	0.75	9
10	I find that the higher-order thinking strategy makes my reading process more efficient and straightforward.	4.45	89.00%	0.60	4
Total	-	4.41	88.20%	0.52	-

From Table 9, the overall average for improving EFL critical reading skills is 4.41, with an agreement rate of 88.20%. The highest agreement was for the statement, "My reading comprehension skills have noticeably improved since the beginning of the study," with a Mean of 4.60. The second-highest agreement was for the statement, "I find that my ability to understand study texts has significantly increased," with a Mean of 4.55.

The higher-order thinking technique statistically significantly impacts English as a foreign language learners' critical reading abilities. The association between critical reading abilities as the dependent variable and higher-order thinking approach as the independent variable was examined using simple linear regression to evaluate the validity of this

hypothesis. The following are the outcomes:

TABLE 10  
MODEL COEFFICIENTS AND GOODNESS OF FIT FOR THE HIGHER-ORDER THINKING STRATEGIES REGRESSION ON CRITICAL READING SKILLS

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t-test	Sig.
	B		Beta		
	0.953	0.141		6.611	0.000
Higher-order Thinking Strategies	0.0730	0.037	0.731	19.691	0.000
Correlation Coefficient	R		0.731a		
Coefficient of Determination (R <sup>2</sup> )	R Square		0.534		
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R Square		0.533		
Degrees of Freedom	Df		19		
F-test	F		387.717		
Significance	Sig.		0.000b		

Correlation is significant at the 1% level.

Accordingly, it can be noticed that:

**Total Correlation Coefficient (R):** The results show a statistically significant relationship between higher-order thinking strategies and critical reading skills at a 99% confidence level, with a total correlation value of 0.702. This strong positive correlation indicates the feasibility of studying this relationship using a simple linear regression model.

**Coefficient of Determination (R<sup>2</sup>):** The model's R<sup>2</sup> value is 0.493, indicating that higher-order thinking strategies explain 49.3% of the variance in critical reading skills. At the same time, the unexplained portion may be attributed to random error or other independent variables not considered.

**F-test for Model Goodness of Fit:** The F-test value is 328.657 at a 99% confidence level, indicating the model's quality with a good fit between the actual and estimated values of critical reading skills. This supports the validity of relying on the model's results to predict future values.

**Model Equation:** The regression model equation is as follows:

$$\text{Critical Reading Skills} = 1.028 + 0.710(\text{Higher-order Thinking Strategies})$$

$$\{\text{Critical Reading Skills}\} = 1.028 + 0.710\{\text{Higher-order Thinking Strategies}\}$$

It is evident from the equation that if the level of higher-order thinking strategies increases by 10%, the level of critical reading skills increases by 7.10%.

*Based on the results of testing this hypothesis, the significance level is 0.00, which is lower than the significance level of 0.01, leading to the hypothesis's acceptance. This indicates that there is a statistically significant relationship between higher-order thinking strategies and critical reading skills.*

The researcher has categorized the results of the field study according to the variables set by the study in Utilizing an instructional higher-order thinking-based strategy to improve EFL critical reading Skills so that the benefit is more apparent, especially when formulating appropriate and applicable recommendations for each variable, as follows:

The study found significant improvements in students' critical reading skills and application of the higher-order thinking strategy. Participants reported enhanced understanding of study texts, improved ability to express ideas clearly, and increased confidence in analyzing information. The higher-order thinking strategy was more effective and systematic, leading to noticeable gains in critical reading abilities and overall reading efficiency. Interactive exercises further supported the development of these skills, making the reading process more enjoyable and effective for students.

The study revealed significant improvements in participants' critical reading skills after implementing instructional strategies and engagement in reading exercises. Participants reported notable increases in mean scores, reflecting enhanced abilities in understanding study texts, articulating ideas clearly, and confidently analyzing information. They also observed improvements in their overall reading comprehension proficiency and the effectiveness of critical reading skills across various study areas. Additionally, participants noted that their ability to express ideas and opinions had improved, contributing to a more efficient and effective reading process. This was confirmed by El Soufi and See (2019) and Yousefi and Mohammadi (2016), as they noted the positive effects of instructional strategies on improving critical reading skills. Susanti et al. (2020) and Nourdad et al. (2018) also showed that higher-order thinking strategies significantly boost cognitive and analytical skills among EFL students.

The results showed that pupils' critical reading abilities significantly improved after using the higher-order thinking-based technique. The study showed that participants' comprehension and analysis of complicated texts had significantly improved. After using the higher-order thinking technique, students demonstrated considerable gains in understanding and communicating concepts. Better articulation and clarity in their responses resulted from this strategy's facilitation of a more profound analysis of the study materials. Additionally, participants reported feeling more confident when using their critical reading abilities in various academic contexts. According to the study, students' ability to understand and assess texts significantly improved, demonstrating the significant influence of the teaching strategy. The method improved their capacity for efficient information synthesis, enhanced the reading experience, and increased productivity. Since students could apply these skills more confidently and effectively, this improved performance highlights how well the higher-order thinking-based approach fosters critical reading abilities. The results show that higher-order thinking

techniques can significantly enhance pupils' critical reading skills and academic achievement. Multiple researches have consistently shown that higher-order thinking techniques effectively strengthen critical reading abilities, highlighting their vital role in enhancing educational achievements.

## V. CONCLUSION

The study's findings show that pupils' critical reading abilities significantly increase when higher-order thinking-based procedures are used. Participants demonstrated significant improvements in their ability to comprehend and evaluate study materials, articulate concepts effectively, and speak more confidently. Interactive exercises that improved the effectiveness and engagement of the reading process enabled this improvement. The study's conclusions are consistent with those of earlier investigations.

Incorporating higher-order thinking strategies into instructional strategies significantly enhances students' reading comprehension and overall academic performance. This study confirms through its results that targeted teaching methods improve students' critical thinking abilities while simultaneously making reading more effective and engaging for them.

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