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EFL Students' Critical Thinking and Their Reading Comprehension Ability: A Study Case Of Students In SMP Negeri 2 Baubau

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine whether there was a relationship between students' critical thinking skills and their capacity for reading comprehension. This study employed the ex-post facto research design as a quantitative approach, and the population of this study consisted of 345 eighth graders from SMP Negeri 2 Baubau, the sample consisted of 50 EFL students from the overall population, which was drawn using a straightforward random sampling procedure, tests and questionnaires served as the research's instruments. The findings of the investigation can be concluded that there was a strong relationship between the capacity of EFL students to think critically and their comprehension of reading. It is suggested that EFL students develop their critical thinking skills because they are necessary for reading comprehension as well as other language skills in language learning.

Keywords: EFL Students', Critical Thinking, Comprehension of Reading, Ability

1. Introduction

One of the most crucial abilities for EFL students is reading, they can improve their comprehension of the material or what they have read through the reading activity to expand their vocabulary and knowledge. Therefore, EFL students' reading ability must be developed, another interactive communication mechanism is reading, the text makes it possible for the writer and reader to communicate with one another. When the author puts their thoughts on the page, the reader will attempt to read and comprehend the message.

Tarihoran & Miftahul (2019) state that reading is private, It is a mental, or cognitive, process that involves a reader in trying to follow and respond to a message from a writer who is distant in space and time. It is an interaction with the text. In other words, readers should be able to comprehend what they are learning in addition to thinking about what they are reading. It can be said that reading is always coming along with comprehension. Lenz (2005) states that constructing meaning from a text is the process of reading comprehension.

Concerning the above statement, Meo (2008) that reading comprehension is a major challenge for many children and a critical skill for academic success in many subject areas, even in high school. Then, Baier (2005) states that reading comprehension is a skill that is essential to everyone's success in school. Students may find it difficult to succeed in many subjects if they lack the necessary reading comprehension abilities. Contrarily, reading comprehension is a crucial skill required in every aspect of school. Science, social studies, and math are three subjects besides reading or literature where understanding abilities are crucial.

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When learning to read, EFL students must understand that the goal is to develop this talent so that they can understand texts and draw conclusions from them, some EFL students believe that reading comprehension is highly challenging since there are so many factors to take into account, such as reading the material properly and efficiently, comprehending each paragraph, and connecting ideas between paragraphs. Typically, the teacher gives the students the reading material, asks them to read it, and then gives them a task, such as translating the text, identifying tricky terms, or responding to a question based on the reading text, before asking them to turn in the assignment. The method used by this teacher is less efficient in raising EFL's critical thinking in comprehending a text in reading.

Devenport (2007) asserts that there are many common forms of reading comprehension questions, such as recognizing the passage's primary idea, key point, or author purpose, Identifying the passage's tone or its writing style Understanding the information that is expressly mentioned in the passage, answering relational questions about the researcher's viewpoint, recognizing the structural technique, and utilizing inference to extend the researcher's restricted information to a logical conclusion (inference meaning).

Concerning critical thinking, Paul (2004) states that the practice of critically analyzing one's thoughts is known as critical thinking. In three interconnected stages, critical thinkers try to enhance their thinking. They examine thought, they evaluate reasoning, and they also improve thinking (as a result). The third step is when creative thinking is used, which comprises replacing weak thinking with strong thinking or strong thinking with stronger thinking, critical thinking naturally leads to creative thinking since it enables one to elevate thought to a higher level through analysis and evaluation, healthy critical thought produces new and improved thinking.

Bassham et al. (2011) also state that effective identification, analysis, and evaluation of arguments and truth claims call for a variety of cognitive skills and intellectual tendencies. Critical thinking also entails identifying and overcoming one's own biases and preconceptions, formulating and presenting compelling arguments in favour of conclusions, and coming to rational, informed decisions regarding what to believe and do.

The above statements mean that, when reading, EFL needs to exercise critical thinking. Norris and Phillips in Aloqaili (2012) thinking is involved in reading, not just repeating what is written on the page. They go on to say that critical thinking offers a way to describe the ability to decipher confusing language by generating alternate interpretations, considering them in light of experience and general knowledge, holding off on making conclusions until more information is available, and adopting alternate explanations, they conclude that the reader's comprehension process involves critical thinking.

Consequently, to address the issue, Paul (2004) assumes that understanding what you read plays a big part in critical thinking. He points out that one might mirror the viewpoint of the reader by giving a certain topic more thought. It indicates that a learner can better and more quickly understand a text by considering how to interpret it.

The previous researchers had tried to solve the phenomena as research conducted by Wijayanti et al. (2015) in their study on the link between students' reading comprehension skills and critical thinking. The study's findings indicated that students' scores on tests of their reading comprehension and critical thinking skills were 0.746. Thus, it can be said that there was a strong relationship between students' critical thinking and their capacity for reading comprehension. It implies that students' reading comprehension skills increase as their critical thinking does.

The results of the previous study, which were also supported by a study by Hidayati et al. (2020) showed that (1) there was a significant correlation between reading comprehension

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and critical thinking skills, with an R-value of 0.810; (2) there was a significant correlation between critical reading skills and reading comprehension, with an R-value of 0.844; and (3) there was a significant correlation between the predictor variables (critical thinking skills and critical reading skills), which gave 7 (reading comprehension). According to this study, the students' reading comprehension and critical thinking skills were highly associated. In other words, pupils' reading comprehension improves when they apply more critical thinking to their reading. Second, there was a strong correlation between the students' critical reading and their reading comprehension, therefore, it may be claimed that students' reading comprehension improves as they engage in more critical reading. Third, there was a strong correlation between the students' critical thinking, critical reading, and reading comprehension skills, these findings imply that students' critical thinking and critical reading skills had a substantial impact on their ability to understand what they were reading.

The problems of this research were based on the above phenomenon that critical thinking skills have contributed to their reading comprehension ability, which means that students who have high reading comprehension, they were critical thinkers, they can use their minds to comprehend a text. Then what about the critical thinking skills possessed by EFL students of SMP Negeri 2 Baubau, do those who have good critical thinking skills also have good reading comprehension abilities? The above phenomena make the researcher's curiosity about the connection between EFL students' reading comprehension skills and critical thinking EFL students of SMP Negeri 2 Baubau. In light of the study's history and the aforementioned problem identification, the researcher formulates the following problem statement, "Is there any significant correlation between EFL students' critical thinking and their reading comprehension ability?"

2. Methodology

This research used a quantitative approach by applying the ex post facto method. Sugiyono (2013) explains that the ex post facto method is a study conducted to study an event that has occurred and then traced back to determine the factors that can cause the event to occur. This study sought to determine whether critical thinking and reading comprehension skills are significantly correlated in EFL students, the independent variable in this study was EFLs' capacity for critical thinking, whereas the dependent variable was their level of reading comprehension, this study employed two independent and dependent variables, all eight grade levels of SMP Negeri 2 Baubau students made up the research's sample. The sample size for this study, which consisted of 50 students overall and 345 students across eleven classes, was determined by simple random sampling.

The questionnaire and test were used in this study as the research's instruments for data collection, the questionnaire entails a specific type of interview in a formal setting, where the discourse is controlled by the language and sequencing of the instrument's questions. Octaviani & Sari (2022). The critical thinking of the EFL students' was evaluated in this study using a questionnaire. The 30-item Pratiwi (2018) questionnaire served as the basis for this one, whereas a multiple-choice test with 30 questions was used to gauge pupils' reading comprehension skills.

Following data collection, it underwent two steps of analysis: The data for the components of the instruments must first be analyzed, and the examination of the research questions comes next. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics are the methods of data

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analysis used in this study, the scores of students are calculated by using SPSS program version 21.0.

2.1 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics according to Creswell (2012) are necessary to show overall tendency (mean, mode, and median), the range of scores, and other information (variance, standard deviation, and range). Besides that, the lowest and maximum scores are also shown using descriptive statistics. To determine the students' critical thinking questionnaire is administered and to determine students' reading comprehension the test is administered. The result will be analyzed by using the following steps:

2.1.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire used the Likert Scale with five optional answers; those are always, often, sometimes, rarely, and never.

Table 1. The Likert Scale

Statement	Score
Always	5
Often	4
Sometimes	3
Rarely	2
Never	1

Source: M. B. A. Riduwan (2004)

To determine the mean score for students' critical thinking score level, the researcher adapted from Sarigoz (2012). It is displayed as follows:

Table 2. Mean Score of Critical Thinking

No.	Mean Range	Interpretation	Critical Thinking Level
1	1.00-1.80	Never	Very Poor
2	1.81-2.60	Rarely	Poor
3	2.61-3.40	Sometimes	Moderate
4	3.41-4.20	Often	Good
5	4.21-5.00	Always	Very Good

2.1.2 Test

1) A multiple-choice test was used in this study's test. If the response satisfies the criteria, it receives a score of one; if it doesn't, it receives a score of zero.
2) The raw scores from the rubric were transformed into the final score using a scale of 100 by applying the following formula:

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$$\text{Final score} = \frac{\text{raw score}}{\text{ideal maximum}} \text{x } 100$$

Sugiyono (2013)

3) The researcher applies the following standards to assess the EFL's reading comprehension.

Table 3. Classifying of Scoring Reading Comprehension

No	Range	Criteria
1	86-100	Very Good
2	71-85	Good
3	56-70	Moderate
4	≤ 50	Poor

Indonesia (2014)

2.2 Assumption Testing

The assumption testing was done to clarify whether the variables had a significant relationship and whether the data population was distributed normally.

1) Normality Testing

According to Nurgiyantoro et al (2015), the term "normality" refers to the meaning of a normal distribution of the data. Normal in the sense was the following assumption of the normal distribution of data distribution. To ensure that a data distribution was normally distributed, a normality test needed to be done. Normality testing was used to know whether the data of this research had a normal or not distribution. The normality test used in this research was Kolmogorov-Smirnov because the sample in this research <50 (the data was normal if sig. >0.05) the criteria for determining whether the data was normal, used the following criteria:
The data had a normal distribution of the sign. The value was greater than 0.05.
If the sig. The value is less than 0.05, the data was not distributed normally.

2) Linearity Testing

This test is used to determine whether dependent variables and independent variables are related linearly. The correlational analysis required that this test be performed. In this investigation, the ANOVA table's variance analysis was employed. It could be viewed as the outcome of a linearity deviation to determine the degree of linearity, if there existed a linear relationship between the independent and dependent variables, then the sig. departure from linearity had to be larger than and equal to 0.05 (Sig. Value 0.05).

2.3 Inferential Statistics

According to Sugiyono (2013), a statistical method known as inferential statistics is used to analyze sample data and then extrapolate the results to the entire population. This kind of statistic is ideal to employ if the sample is taken from the obvious population and the method used to select the sample from the population is random selection. This study used Pearson Correlation Analysis to ascertain the connection

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between students' critical thinking abilities and their reading comprehension skills. The SPSS 21.0 application will be used for the analysis.

Table 4. Correlation Coefficient Interpretation

No.	Correlation Interval	Relationship Level
1	0.80 – 1.000	Very strong
2	0.60 – 0.799	Strong
3	0.40 – 0.599	Quite strong
4	0.20 – 0.399	Low
5	0.00 – 0.199	Very low

Source: S. Riduwan (2011)

3. Result and Discussion

This section presented the result of the research including quantitative and descriptive analysis, as well as a discussion of the research as follows:

3.1 Result

The questionnaire was distributed to 50 students in all eight grades at SMP Negeri 2 Baubau to measure EFL's critical thinking. The questionnaire consists of 5 indicators which consist of 30-item statements, and the questionnaire was assessed using a Likert scale. The five possible ratings on this scale, are: always, often, sometimes, rarely, and never. The following table below describes the results of students' critical thinking questionnaires after being collected.

Table 5. Critical Thinking Frequency

		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3.37	1	2.0	2.0	2.0
	3.47	2	4.0	4.0	6.0
	3.53	2	4.0	4.0	10.0
	3.57	1	2.0	2.0	12.0
	3.60	1	2.0	2.0	14.0
	3.63	3	6.0	6.0	20.0
	3.67	2	4.0	4.0	24.0
	3.73	3	6.0	6.0	30.0
	3.77	4	8.0	8.0	38.0
	3.80	2	4.0	4.0	42.0
	3.83	1	2.0	2.0	44.0

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		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	3.87	1	2.0	2.0	46.0
	3.90	2	4.0	4.0	50.0
	3.93	2	4.0	4.0	54.0
	3.97	1	2.0	2.0	56.0
	4.00	3	6.0	6.0	62.0
	4.03	2	4.0	4.0	66.0
	4.07	2	4.0	4.0	70.0
	4.10	2	4.0	4.0	74.0
	4.17	1	2.0	2.0	76.0
	4.23	1	2.0	2.0	78.0
	4.27	2	4.0	4.0	82.0
	4.30	1	2.0	2.0	84.0
	4.33	1	2.0	2.0	86.0
	4.40	2	4.0	4.0	90.0
	4.60	1	2.0	2.0	92.0
	4.67	1	2.0	2.0	94.0
	4.73	1	2.0	2.0	96.0
	4.77	1	2.0	2.0	98.0
	4.87	1	2.0	2.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

From the data above it can be concluded that the mean score of 50 respondents is 3.9676. The data were then analyzed using the SPSS 21 program (see Table 6 below). Then, the explanation of the critical thinking statistic analysis can be seen as the following:

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics of Critical Thinking

No	Statistics	
1	Mean	3.9676
2	Median	3.9150
3	Mode	3.77
4	Variance	.337
5	Std. Deviation	.36078

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No	Statistics	
6	Minimum	3.37
7	Maximum	4.87

According to the data, the mean score is 2.92, the median score is 3.00, the mode score is 3.00, the variance is 0.322, the standard deviation is 0.56, the minimum score is 2.00, and the maximum score is 4.00. Based on the scoring category, the mean score implies that the EFL's critical thinking is in the high category.

The distribution of students' critical thinking scores is then presented into categories based on the criteria given. The achievement categories distribution is shown in the following table:

Table 7. Frequency Distribution of Critical Thinking

No	Scoring Range	Criteria	Frequency	Percentage
1	1.00 – 1.80	Very Poor	0	0
2	1.81 – 2.60	Poor	0	0
3	2.61 – 3.40	Moderate	1	2
4	3.41 – 4.20	Good	37	74
5	4.21 – 5.00	Very Good	12	24

According to the above data, 12 students, or 24%, fall into the very good group, 37 students, or 74%, are considered good, 1 student, or 2%, are considered moderate, 0 students, or 0%, are considered poor, and 0 students, or 0%, are considered extremely poor. It can be inferred from the table above that EFL students' have critical thinking with good category.

To assess their reading comprehension skills, 50 students from all eight grades of SMP Negeri 2 Baubau were given the test. There are 30 questions on the test. The data were assessed by using a rubric by Permendikbud No.104.2014 as the following:

Table 8. Reading Comprehension Frequency

		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	53.00	1	2.0	2.0	2.0
	57.00	7	14.0	14.0	16.0
	60.00	6	12.0	12.0	28.0
	63.00	8	16.0	16.0	44.0
	67.00	5	10.0	10.0	54.0
	70.00	5	10.0	10.0	64.0
	73.00	5	10.0	10.0	74.0
	77.00	3	6.0	6.0	80.0

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		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	80.00	1	2.0	2.0	82.0
	83.00	5	10.0	10.0	92.0
	87.00	1	2.0	2.0	94.0
	90.00	3	6.0	6.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

It is clear from the table above that the total mean of 50 respondents from the students' reading comprehension score is 68.9800. The data is then analyzed using SPPS 21 (See table 9 below).

Then, the results of the reading comprehension test are displayed in the following table in the form of descriptive statistics:

Table 9. Descriptive Statistics of Reading Comprehension

No	Statistics	
1	Mean	68.9800
2	Median	67.0000
3	Mode	63.00
4	Variance	103.734
5	Std. Deviation	10.18500
6	Minimum	53.00
7	Maximum	90.00

Based on the data distribution score of reading comprehension above, it can be explained that the mean score is 68.9800, median 67.0000, mode 63.00, variance 103.734, standard deviation 10.18500, minimum score 53.00, and maximum score 90.00. Based on the assessment category, the mean score indicates that reading comprehension ability is in the moderate category.

Table 10. Frequency Distribution of reading comprehension ability

No	Scoring Range	Criteria	Frequency	Percentage
1	≤50	Poor	1	2
2	56-70	Moderate	31	62
3	71-85	Good	14	28
4	86-100	Very Good	4	8

According to the above data, 4 students, or 8%, fall into the very good category, followed by 14 students, or 28%, in the good category, 31 students, or 62%, moderate category, and 1 student, or 2%, poor category. It is clear from the table above that the

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student's reading comprehension abilities are moderate. Because most students get the moderate category.

3.1.2 Prerequisite Analysis

The prerequisite analysis is carried out before testing the hypothesis. If each variable meets the analysis prerequisite, then the test can proceed. The normality test and the linearity test are part of this prerequisite analysis test.

1) Normality Testing

To determine whether the data was regularly distributed, normality testing was used. Kolmogrov-Smirnov (S-W) analysis was used to analyze the data for the statistical analysis. In the case when the Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value was larger than, the data was regularly distributed (0.05).

Table 11. Normality Testing

		Unstandardized Residual
N		50
Normal Parameters[a,b]	Mean	.0000000
	Std. Deviation	7.72472072
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.105
	Positive	.105
	Negative	-.064
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		.740
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.645

a. Test distribution is Normal.

b. Calculated from data.

Based on the table above the value of Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z was 0.740 and Asymp. Sig. (2-Tailed) was 0.645. Because of the value of Asymp. Sig. was greater than α (0.799 > 0.05), which means residual data have a normal distribution.

2) Linearity Testing

Linearity testing is used to determine the data's linearity, whether two variables have a linear relationship or not. If the Sig. deviation from linearity was greater than and equal to 0.05 (sig. > 0.05), and the correlation between independent variables toward dependent variable was linear. The following table shows the results of the statistical analysis of the linearity test:

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Table 12. Linearity Testing Statistical Analysis

	Critical Thinking* Reading Comprehension				
	Between Groups			Within Groups	Total
	(Combined)	Linearity	Deviation from Linearity		
Sum of Squares	3885.563	2159.086	1726.478	1197.417	5082.980
Df	29	1	28	20	49
Mean Square	133.985	2159.086	61.660	59.871	
F	2.238	36.062	1.030		
Sig.	0.32	.000	.481		

Considering the preceding table, the significant value of linearity was 0.481 because the significant value was greater than α (0.05). It implies that the correlation between the variable of critical thinking and reading comprehension was linear.

3.1.3 Inferential Statistic

The inferential statistics presented the data as the result of hypothesis testing using SPSS version 21 by using bivariate correlation analysis. It is used to prove whether the hypothesis is rejected or accepted. The following table displays the findings of the statistical analysis :

Table 13. Correlations Table

		Critical Thinking	**Reading Comprehension**
Critical Thinking	Pearson Correlation	1	.652**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	The sum of Squares and Cross-products	6.378	117.348
	Covariance	.130	2.395
		Critical Thinking	**Reading Comprehension**
Reading Comprehension	N	50	50
	Pearson Correlation	.652**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	The sum of Squares and Cross-products	117.348	5082.980
	Covariance	2.395	103.734
	N	50	50

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

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Considering the preceding table, it can be explained that the Sig. (2-tailed) is 0.000. The value was below the meaningful of (α) 1% and the correlation coefficient of 0.652 was higher than the point of meaningful of significant (α) 5 %. Based on the table of correlation levels presented in the previous chapter, the score is in a strong category. This means that there is a positive correlation with the strong category between EFL's critical thinking and their reading comprehension ability.

3.2 Discussion

Based on the finding above, it is indicated that the value of sig. (2-tailed) = 0.000 and the value of the correlation coefficient between variable X and variable Y with the number of correlation = 0.652. This means that the two variables have a strong correlation with an interval of 0.60 - 0.799. This shows that the gravitational correlation in this study is strong. It can be inferred that EFL critical thinking and their capacity for reading comprehension are highly correlated. This means that the alternative research hypothesis is accepted.

In addition, a questionnaire was performed to identify the critical thinking style employed by the EFL students. The questionnaire asks several questions about the many aspects of EFL critical thinking that were looked at in this study, including interpretation, analysis, assessment, inference, explanation, and self-regulation. The results of the questionnaire obtained a mean value of students' critical thinking 3.9676. This means that students' critical thinking is categorized as "good" because the mean score is in the interval 3.41 – 4.20.

The second is the reading comprehension ability. The type of test carried out in this study is narrative text. The fact that the mean reading comprehension ability score is 68.98, means that reading comprehension ability is categorized as "moderate" because the average score is in the 56-70 interval.

The findings presented above are consistent with those of Wijayanti et al (2014) study which found a connection between students' critical thinking skills and their reading comprehension abilities. They found that reading comprehension and EFL's critical thinking skills were closely related, it was Based on Pearson Product Moment's data analysis, the students' critical thinking and reading comprehension test scores had an r of 0.746.

Even though the result of the research was the same as the previous research that showed the relationship between EFL's critical thinking skills and reading comprehension. However, the difference can be seen in the instrument applied to measure EFL's critical thinking. The previous research used a test as the instrument of research, whereas, this research applied a questionnaire as the instrument of critical thinking skills that became something different from the previous one.

According to Day & Park's (2005) theoretical framework, it was discovered that students successfully understood the texts they were reading. According to Grabe & Stoller (2013), comprehension is the process of reading text, creating a mental model of the major concepts, and incorporating that model into new understanding. It implies that understanding is attained when a reader correctly extracts the pertinent information from a text and integrates it into a fresh, original understanding.

The ability of students to think critically and logically based on their knowledge will be tested by critical thinking, it is clear from the aforementioned statement that reading comprehension and critical thinking are crucial skills to examine a book more easily than

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using a dictionary. Additionally, the students understand the material. Students need to develop their critical thinking skills. When reading a manuscript with challenging terms, pupils who used critical thinking were better able to decipher the content without consulting a dictionary. Thus, Critical thinking and readers' reading comprehension abilities are related.

4 Conclusion

The study's findings indicate that EFL students' critical thinking and reading comprehension skills had a significant and positive correlation with the strong category. Based on the findings of statistical analysis, it can be concluded that the correlation value (R) was 0.652, falling into the strong category. Additionally, the correlation coefficient was higher than the point of meaningful of significant (α) 5% and the significant value was 0.000, which was below the meaningful of (α) 1%. Based on the results, it may be said that there was a strong relationship between the capacity of EFL students to think critically and their comprehension of reading. It indicates that at SMP Negeri 2 Baubau, either the alternative hypothesis (Ha) is accepted or the null hypothesis (Ho) is rejected because there is a substantial correlation between the critical thinking and reading comprehension of EFL students.

In light of the foregoing conclusion, the researchers make the following recommendations: (1) It is advised that students develop their critical thinking skills because they are necessary for reading comprehension as well as other language skills in language learning. Critical thinking is the capacity to comprehend, formulate, and critique arguments as well as to communicate ideas clearly and effectively. (2) The researchers suggest that English teachers pay attention to their students' problems acquiring the language.

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