

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This chapter presents the research findings and discussion. This study was designed to answer two main research questions, which are addressed based on the data collected. Specifically, this chapter provides an overview of the teaching strategies employed by lecturers to improve students' critical reading skills in an academic context using instructional materials such as articles and scientific journals. Additionally, this chapter explores the challenges students face when critically reading articles and scientific journals used as teaching materials for implicit critical reading in the classroom. This discussion is organized systematically and supported by data obtained from relevant interviews.

#### **A. Findings**

This chapter presents the research findings and a discussion of the strategies taught by lecturers and the challenges faced by students. These findings are based on two research questions:

1. What types of lecturers strategies in helping students develop critical reading skill through article and scientific journal?
2. What challenges do students face when applying critical reading skill in the classroom?

This study involved two lecturers who are currently teaching in the Department of English Language Education, as well as four students from the 2024 English Language Education program at Antasari State Islamic University in Banjarmasin. Each participant had previous experience, and the participants were assigned the following initial codes: Lecturer 1 (L1), Lecturer 2 (L2), Student 1 (S1), Student 2 (S2), Student 3 (S3), and Student 4 (S4). The findings are presented in detail based on themes followed by discussion:

### **1. Teaching Strategies Used by Lecturers to Improve Students` Critical Reading Skills**

Based on the lecturers' understanding of critical reading in an academic context, the researcher then focused the findings on the strategies lecturers used in their teaching to help students improve their critical reading skills in the classroom. The following are the results of interviews conducted with two lecturers from the English Language Education program; the following strategies are used in teaching critical reading:

#### **a. Using Academic Texts as The Primary Teaching Material in The Classroom**

Based on lecturers' experienced teaching critical reading skills in the classroom, they used teaching materials that include academic texts such as stated below:

**P:** *In your classroom teaching, what types of texts have you used to support the learning process?*

**L1:** *“In academic reading, the texts read are all academic materials; journals are the most common, but books are actually included as well....”(Lecturer 1)*

**P:** *“So, does that mean the journal or article is for one semester, or are there several articles, sir?”*

**L1:** *“We cover a lot in a single session because this is still in the third semester—if I’m not mistaken, is it 3 or 5? Yes, 3. In the third semester, we assess their strengths. Even with just one article, we don’t cover it all in a single session. Usually, in the first and second sessions, we start with one article to see how they handle it, but in the next sessions, they’ll be able to cover two or three—though not all in one class session; maybe two, and the rest will be added later. So it’s not just one article per session over the course of 16 sessions; in a single session, they can cover 1 to 3 articles.” (Lecturer 1)*

Based on L1’s explanation above, the instructional materials used to develop students’ critical reading skills include academic texts such as journals and books, with journals being the most frequently used primary learning resource. In addition, the number of articles discussed in each session is gradually adjusted to students’ abilities, whereby in the early

sessions of the course—particularly in the third semester—the lecturer used only one article to assess students’ readiness and initial ability to read academic texts, before subsequently increasing the number to two to three articles per session as the 16 sessions of the semester progress.

**P:** *“In your classroom lessons, what types of texts do you use to support the learning process?”*

**L2:** *“Yeah, usually the first sources are books—textbooks, reference books, and so on—and then journals. That’s because books usually provide comprehensive explanations—starting with definitions, then examples, and so on—and they include research findings. However, books are typically updated only every few decades or every few years. Journals, on the other hand, are constantly being published, and they’re shorter and easier to get through. I usually prefer journals over books, though I might also use websites if necessary based on my needs—but those two sources are definitely my main ones.”(Lecturer 2)*

Meanwhile, L2 stated that textbooks and reference books are typically used as initial sources because they provide comprehensive explanations, including definitions, examples, and research findings . However, since books are updated only at relatively long periods, L2 prefers to use journals as the primary source because they are more up-to-date,

concise, and easy for students to understand, although other sources such as websites are also occasionally used as needed.

Therefore, both lecturers showed a consistent preference for journals as the primary teaching material for teaching critical reading in a step-by-step process of introducing students to the complexity of academic texts.

### **b. Step by Step Teaching Reading Techniques**

Based on the interviews conducted, the two lecturers' approach to teaching critical reading skills begins with an understanding of the structure of academic texts, followed by the gradual teaching of reading techniques.

As stated by L1 and L2 below:

**P:** *Is there a specific activity or instruction that you give first? before the students critically read the journal to identify its main ideas or general themes?*

**L1:** *“First off, we definitely provide this—they’re not yet familiar with academic writing, meaning academic texts; most of them aren’t familiar with journals either, since they’re still new to this. So we introduce them to the concept: reading is part of college life; as students pursuing academic studies, they must read academic texts—scientific papers. We explain that the components of a scientific paper are like this, and its structure is like that, which is the same everywhere; once they understand the basic structure, we then cover everything from the title to the references, as well as the various components—the content and*

*structure of a scientific article—and how to cite references, even if it's just a brief overview. This serves as an initial introduction to the structure of such articles. And as for the abstract, summary, or conclusion—well, those can actually be learned during the intensive reading course at the beginning; We've already taught the techniques at the very beginning, which is why the intensive reading course in the first semester focuses on reading techniques. Then, in the academic reading course, they use those techniques—starting with things like scanning, skimming, previewing, and summarizing—and apply them in their academic reading.”(Lecturer 1)*

**L2:** *“It really depends on the goal here. The goal is to provide the text based on the time available—for example, if there's enough time but the journal is quite difficult, then I usually guide them through that journal in a previous class—not your class, but a class from a few years ago when I was teaching. Back then, they could choose their own titles from there; they'd already thought about which one was the most suitable, the most comfortable, and the most challenging—after all, everyone has different preferences. After that, I'd have them read the abstract—depending on the situation, they might read the abstract, then take turns: this group reads the abstract—and explains it; this*

*group reads the findings—and explains them--- this group reads the conclusion—and explains it, and so on.”(Lecturer 2)*

Based on the explanation in L1 above, before students engage in an in-depth critical reading process, the lecturer first introduces the concept that reading is an important part of academic life, given that most students at the early stages are not yet accustomed to academic texts or scientific journals. This introduction is then followed by an explanation of the general structure of a scientific article—from the title to the reference list—including a brief overview of how to cite references, so that students gain a basic understanding of the components and structure of a scientific article before reading it critically. Furthermore, L1 explained that technical reading skills such as scanning, skimming, previewing, and summarizing had actually been taught since the first semester through an intensive reading course; thus, in the academic reading course, students were asked to apply these techniques in the context of more complex academic texts.

L2 also explains that this is done by having students take turns reading and explaining specific sections of the text—such as the abstract, findings, and conclusion—with the aim of training students to understand each component of the text in a more focused and in-depth manner. Thus, it can be concluded that the process of critical reading is not taught directly but is built gradually through an initial understanding of text structure, mastery of basic reading techniques, and their application in a more critical analysis and evaluation of academic texts.

### c. Encouraging Contextual Thinking

Another teaching strategy employed by lecturers is to encourage students to contextualize texts, where students are asked to relate the content of the text to real-life situations and other relevant experiences.

**P:** *When reading texts critically, do you ask students to contextualize, which is the process of understanding a text by relating it to the author's background, the situation when the text was written, or real-world conditions?*

**L1:** *"Of course, that's what's called critical reading—once you get into it, it's linked to critical thinking. So students who think critically will read critically; what they read and understand isn't just the text itself but also the context—what is the context of that? Well, context means that once you're used to it, when you read something, you connect it to other events or to the context in the classroom or in that situation. So they'll start thinking, "Oh, if this is like this, then that must be like that." They'll definitely make those connections. Even after reading this journal article, if they're asked to read another article, they'll find—without being told or having to search for it themselves—articles related to this topic. Then they'll read a bit of the next article and make the connection: "Oh, that article says this and that; oh, this part here is like that." So, once they're given one article to read—say, this one—and then we*

*give them another, they'll remember, "Oh, that's about that topic," for example. So, based on the journal or article they read previously, they'll connect it to the current situation."* (Lecturer 1)

**L2:** *"Yes, I'll definitely put it into context. If I have time, I'll explain it using an example like this—a similar situation that's closer to our own reality. After all, the situation described in the journal might be different from what we're facing. So, I'll ask the students to think about what our actual situation looks like."* (Lecturer 2)

This statement indicates that L1 employs a contextual teaching strategy, in which students do not read texts as separate pieces of information, but rather as texts that relate to their own reality and can be connected to it. Another perspective comes from L2, which has also implemented this strategy. If time permits, L2 provides explanations of similar situations and then asks students to connect the content of academic texts to real-life situations. By applying this strategy, the aim is to avoid students reading passively, so that the process of critical reading becomes a process of making sense of the text based on relevance—not merely reading to find information, but reading to understand its meaning.

#### **d. Encouraging Critical Discussion and Active Students**

Based on the interview results, the next strategy implemented by the instructors to develop critical reading skills is through collaborative activities among students.

**P:** *Which do you think is most effective? Presentation or discussion?*

**L1:** *“Discussions are effective; in presentations, they sometimes just read from the text to present what they’ve read, but once the discussion begins and they’ve understood the material, they can analyze it and—as mentioned earlier—offer criticism.”(Lecturer 1)*

**P:** *So, do you require them to ask questions, sir?*

**L1:** *“At the very least, there should be students asking questions... that serves as an evaluation...”(Lecturer 1)*

**L1:** *“Usually, we start the class off in a relaxed way... once they understand the basics, we ask more in-depth questions. Then we give them a chance to ask their own questions... and once they’ve grasped the concept, they’ll ask even more in-depth questions.”(Lecturer 1)*

Based on the results of the interview, the next strategy implemented by the lecturers to develop students’ critical reading skills was through active class discussions, rather than merely one-way presentations. L1 emphatically stated that discussions are more effective than presentations, because in presentations students tend to simply read the text

aloud without further critical thinking, whereas discussions encourage students to truly understand the material so they can analyze and critique the text they have read. To ensure student engagement in discussions, L1 uses the number of questions asked by students as an indicator to evaluate the success of the learning process.

In another interview, L2 also implemented teaching strategies focused on presentations and discussions among students.

**P:** *Which do you think is most effective, Miss? Presentation or discussion?*

**L2:** *“So, out of all that, the most effective way is a presentation, but not just a presentation on its own—it has to include a Q&A session.”(Lecturer 2)*

**L2:** *“So we ask each other questions. The presenter asks questions, and the audience asks questions too. Then I also set aside time for questions after the presentation, in case there are any unanswered questions.”(Lecturer 2)*

According to L2, the most effective activities are presentations and Q&A sessions. It is clear that students do not merely act as deliverers of material rather in-depth discussions also take place among them. Therefore, L1 emphasizes open discussion and L2 emphasizes presentations combined with Q&A sessions, both share the same goal to encourage active student engagement and to motivate students not merely to passively receive

information, but to be able to evaluate, question, and critically analyze the texts they read in depth.

#### **e. Facilitating Evaluatif, and Comparative Approaches**

In the process of teaching critical reading, another strategy that both lecturers have implemented, as revealed in the interviews, is asking students to evaluate reading materials and compare ideas from various sources.

**P:** *To ensure that students not only read the texts but also evaluate the authors' arguments, do you provide them with instructions?*

**L1:** *“since this is the learning phase, the first step is understanding. Once they understand, we can move on to a more in-depth evaluation. If we ask them to evaluate right away, they won't be able to...”*

**P:** *Do you ask students to analyze the differences by comparing two journal articles?*

**L1:** *“Yes, I provided an example of an article on Gardner's theory, and Krashen also proposed a theory; it relates to external and internal factors in foreign language learning. So, they were asked to compare the two texts.”*

L1 explains that in the teaching process, students are asked to first understand the content of the text before gradually moving on to a more in-depth analysis. In addition, students are also asked to compare two texts they have read so that they can identify similarities and differences and

understand that a single topic in academic study can be viewed from various perspectives that may complement or differ from one other.

**P:** *How do you ensure that students not only understand the content of the text but also critically evaluate the author's arguments?*

**L2:** *“Usually, when it comes to journals, it goes something like this: “In your opinion, how is this research useful, or what are its shortcomings?” They can answer freely— “Or what are its shortcomings? And what suggestions do you have?”*

**P:** *Do you ask students to analyze differences in methods, arguments, or results by comparing two texts?*

**L2:** *“Yeah, you've had them compare two reading passages before, right? Yeah, we split them into groups with different tasks, and then they shared their findings with each other—they shared their insights, and we helped clarify the comparisons. So basically, since they're college students now, let them show what they're made of—let them show their abilities.”*

Based on L2's explanation above, students are also asked to evaluate the quality, strengths, and weaknesses of the research findings presented in scientific journals. L2 also asks students to compare two texts by dividing them into groups to share information with one another, because, according to L2, critical reading essentially involves questioning

both the information that has been obtained and the information that has not yet been obtained.

## **2. The Challenges Faced by Students in Critical Reading Skills**

In this section, the researcher will focus on identifying the challenges students face in applying critical reading skills during classroom learning. To that effect, each section presents a structured response to the interview questions posed by the researcher to four students from the English Language Education Program at Antasari State Islamic University in Banjarmasin.

### **a. Difficulty Understanding Academic Reading Journal Structure**

Based on the interview results, the students reported having difficulty understanding the structure of the scientific articles or journals assigned by their lecturers, as the following S1 and S3 stated:

**P:** *Tell me about your experience when you had trouble understanding a reading text given by your lecturer.*

**S1:** *“At that time, we were asked to read academic journals written entirely in English, and back then I rarely—or almost never—read academic journals written entirely in English like that, so it’s fair to say I had a very hard time understanding them...”(Student 1)*

**S2:** *“I still remember very clearly the first time I was asked to read a journal. I was really confused because the English used was so unfamiliar—I’d never even come across it before,”(Student 2)*

Based on the explanation above, student 1 found difficulty when first reading the academic text provided by the lecturer in the form of a scientific journal because she had almost never read such texts before. Meanwhile, student 2 also felt confused by the academic text, which she found to use unfamiliar and complex language.

**P:** *What has your experience been like when you've felt confused about the structure of scientific articles or journals (e.g., abstract, methods, results, discussion)?*

**S3:** *"I wasn't very familiar with scientific articles or journals before starting college, so my knowledge in that area is still limited." (Student 3)*

**S4:** *"When reading scientific journals, I often find myself confused by their structure. For example, I don't fully understand the difference between the results and discussion sections. Sometimes I also don't understand the purpose of the research methods described or the coherence between the paragraphs presented." (student 4)*

Additionally, based on other interview results, student 3 stated that before entering the academic world, she was not accustomed to reading articles or scientific journals, so her knowledge of the components and content of journals remained limited. The same was expressed by student 4,

who felt confused about distinguishing between the results and discussion sections and understanding the research methods used in scientific journals. These findings indicate that the difficulties experienced by the students stem from their limited experience in reading scientific journals, particularly those written in English; this is why some of them still struggle to understand the structure of the various sections within scientific journals.

### **b. Students` Difficulties in Critical Thinking Skills**

Another challenge faced by students is the difficulty in developing critical thinking skills when reading scientific articles and journals. As S1 and S2 below:

*P: Explain the difficulties you faced when asked to use critical thinking or evaluate the author's arguments in the scientific article or journal assigned by your lecturer.*

**S1:** *"I often have trouble determining whether an argument is strong or not, because I'm still trying to understand its underlying points myself. And while I do have some understanding, I'm afraid of making a mistake when expressing my opinion."*(Student 1)

**S2:** *"I'm not sure what to evaluate because, in my opinion, everything is correct."*(Student 2)

Based on their explanation, Student 1 stated that she always struggles to analyze whether an argument in a journal is strong or not because she is still trying to understand the point of the argument. She also

expressed fear and anxiety about making mistakes when expressing an opinion on the text's content, indicating that students lack confidence in critically analyzing academic authors' arguments. Meanwhile, Student 2 expressed confusion when asked to evaluate a scientific journal because, in her view, all the information within it seemed correct. Other reasons were also mentioned by S3 and S4 below:

**S3:** *“Critical thinking was pretty difficult there because my focus was divided between trying to understand those terms.”(Student 3)*

**S4:** *“I just read and accepted the content of the text without questioning whether the arguments were strong or not.”(Student 4)*

Student 3 explained that what makes critical thinking difficult for her is that her focus is divided between trying to understand unfamiliar vocabulary and terms in the text rather than trying to understand the content of the reading itself. Meanwhile, student 4 stated that he simply reads the text literally without critically evaluating the author's arguments. Based on the results of the interviews, some students still struggle to critically evaluate academic texts. They also tend to accept the content of the text at face value without critically questioning it because they lack confidence in their own skills.

### c. Vocabulary Limitations Hinder Students` Critical Reading

In this section, one of the main challenges that hinders students from understanding and critically analyzing texts is a limited vocabulary when it comes to academic terms.

**P:** *Have you ever felt overwhelmed or confused by the many academic terms or specialized vocabulary in a text that you found unfamiliar?*

**S1:** *“I often feel overwhelmed because there are so many academic terms I’ve never encountered before.”(Student 1)*

**S1:** *“When I don’t understand the key terms in a text, it becomes difficult for me to analyze it or provide an appropriate response.”(Student 1)*

From the statements above, student 1 revealed that she often had difficulty understanding academic terms that were unfamiliar to her. Student 1 also said that her limited vocabulary made it difficult for her to offer critical responses to the text.

**S2:** *“Scientific journals and articles use very academic language, and that kind of language is rarely—or never—heard in everyday conversation. Sometimes a single word can have multiple meanings depending on the context, and I often find that difficult.”(Student 2)*

Similar to student 1's statements, student 2 also noted that the academic language in scientific journals is more difficult and even different from everyday English, which makes it hard for her to understand the texts. S3 and S4 also shared similar views:

**S3:** *“Scientific articles and journals are difficult because of the many new scientific terms, which can sometimes distract me.”(Student 3)*

**S4:** *“On a single page alone, there can be many words that are unfamiliar to me.”(Student 4)*

**S4:** *“I once misunderstood the text because I didn't understand a certain term. As a result, I drew the wrong conclusion about the journal's content.”(Student 4)*

In the explanation above, Student 3 stated that unfamiliar academic terms often cause them to lose focus while reading journals. Meanwhile, Student 4 noted that even a single page of a journal contains vocabulary that is unfamiliar to him, and that misunderstanding a single academic term can lead him to draw the wrong conclusion. Therefore, some students rely mostly on Google Translate or AI to help them identify academic terms they are unfamiliar with, while others ask their peers and lecturers. This limited vocabulary is one of the challenges students face when critically reading English-language scientific articles and journals.

#### **d. Emotional and Motivational Challenges Affect Critical Reading**

Another challenge students face in critical reading is their emotional state and motivation. As student 1 noted, the complexity of academic texts tends to make student 1 feel tired and lose focus quickly.

**P:** *When you read a journal critically, does it feel too difficult or boring?*

**S1:** *“Sometimes it feels difficult and boring, especially if the text is long and full of difficult terms; I usually get tired quickly and lose focus while reading. I’ve felt frustrated when I’ve read something over and over again but still can’t understand the text well; it feels like I’m stuck and don’t know where to start again.” (Student 1)*

**P:** *Based on your experience, what makes you feel less motivated when reading articles or scientific journals in English?*

**S1:** *“What makes me less motivated is that I feel I’m not yet capable enough to understand the text, so I feel lazy or afraid before even trying.” (Student 1)*

From Student 1’s statement above, it is seen that she is experiencing emotional difficulties and low motivation when it comes to critical reading, such as getting tired quickly, feeling lazy and anxious, losing focus, and feeling frustrated because she cannot understand the text even after reading it repeatedly. Student 2 and student 4 also shared similar views:

**S2:** *“I once got so frustrated working on that assignment that I cried.”*

*(Student 2)*

**S4:** *“Reading academic journals critically often feels difficult and tedious to me. Especially when the text runs on for pages and pages and uses complex language. I usually get tired quickly and lose interest in continuing to read. Another reason I lack motivation is that I often don’t understand the content, due to my limited English proficiency and a lack of support from those around me.”*(Student 4)

Another emotional experience was shared by student 2, who admitted to having cried while working on an assignment because she found it difficult to understand what she was supposed to analyze from the scientific journal article she had been given. Student 4 also stated that critical reading feels difficult and makes him quickly tired and lose interest in continuing to read due to the complex writing style and language. He also mentioned that his lack of motivation in critically reading journals is caused by his limited English proficiency and lack of support from his surroundings.

**S3:** *“My motivation to read scientific articles or journals decreases when I’m not in an environment where people enjoy reading.”*

*(Student 3)*

Meanwhile, Student 3 explained that her surroundings and feelings influence her motivation to read scientific journals critically. When she is not in an environment that supports reading habits, her interest in reading also decreases. Therefore, these findings indicate that students' challenges in critical reading are related to their motivational and emotional states—such as feeling easily tired, frustrated, afraid to try, and also lazy—as well as being influenced by their language proficiency and comprehension of the text.

## **B. Discussion**

This section focuses on discussing the research findings obtained from interviews with two lecturers from the English Language Education Program and four students from the class of 2024. This section relates these findings to the theoretical framework and relevant previous studies outlined in Chapter 2.

This discussion is organized into two main sections. The first section explores the lecturers' experiences with teaching strategies used to develop students' critical reading skills by using articles and scientific journals as primary teaching materials. The second section examines the difficulties students faced in applying critical reading to articles and scientific journals in the classroom.

## **1. Teaching Strategies Used by Lecturers to Improve Students` Critical Reading Skills**

### **a. Using Academic Texts as The Primary Teaching Material in The Classroom**

In the research findings, the two lecturers demonstrated that critical reading skills do not focus merely on understanding the text literally, but rather on a process that involves analysis, evaluation, interpretation, and connecting information in a broad and in-depth manner. Critical reading requires active cognitive engagement, not merely passive reading. Participant L1 noted that critical reading is closely linked to critical thinking, as students are expected not only to understand the surface-level content of a text but also to look beyond it. This finding aligns with Wallace's theory, which states that the critical reading process involves identifying key issues, identifying the text's strengths and weaknesses, critiquing the text's content and arguments, and analyzing the text in depth. This finding also aligns with Zhang's (2018) perspective that critical reading differs from critical thinking, although the two are interrelated. Critical reading is a technique for discovering information and ideas within a text, whereas critical thinking involves evaluating ideas and information to determine what is acceptable or credible.

Another perspective from L2 participants suggests that without critical reading skills, students are at risk of drawing erroneous

conclusions amid information overload, where the abundance of information demands critical analytical and evaluative abilities. This finding aligns with Amalia's (2024) research, which likens critical reading to that of an "information detective," meaning that students, as readers, play an active role in questioning information, connecting it to their own knowledge, and building a deep understanding.

Other research findings indicate that during classroom instruction, both lecturers use academic texts such as articles and scientific journals as primary teaching materials to support students' critical reading skills. Participant L1 stated that instruction in the Academic Reading course generally utilizes articles and journals aligned with learning objectives. Participant L2 also added that compared to books, journals are more efficient because they are regularly published and their content is shorter and easier to read. This finding aligns with Arifin's (2020) research, which states that critical reading skills are crucial to introduce at the university level so that students can become proficient and accustomed to reading academic texts with complex structures and research-based content.

Based on research findings, theories, and previous studies, the results of this study indicate that critical reading is understood as a higher-order thinking skill whose process involves analyzing, evaluating, and connecting information, and is closely related to critical thinking,

because without critical reading, there can be no critical thinking. Furthermore, in the classroom teaching context, both lecturers use primary teaching materials such as articles and scientific journals to develop critical reading skills, aiming to encourage students to read academic texts critically and, it is expected, to be able to understand, analyze, and evaluate information accurately and in depth.

#### **b. Step by Step Teaching Reading Techniques**

Both lecturers indicated that the critical reading teaching strategies they employed were implemented in a gradual and systematic manner. L1 and L2 participants highlighted that before engaging in in-depth critical reading, students were first introduced to the basic components of scientific articles and journals, such as the title, abstract, methods, content, and conclusion—a technique known as previewing. Other specific reading techniques used by L1 in class include scanning, skimming, and summarizing, which aim to help students navigate academic texts and identify key sections relevant to the purpose of critical reading.

These findings are consistent with Nasrolahhi et al. (2015), as cited in Indiongco (2025), who state that before reading a text in depth and critically, previewing helps students gain an overview of the text by identifying basic elements such as the title, abstract, and others. Another study by Megiana (2024) also supports the idea that previewing helps

students understand the topics discussed in the text, as well as using scanning and skimming to locate other elements.

The findings of these studies indicate that one of the teaching strategies used by lecturers in developing critical reading is carried out gradually and systematically by first introducing the structure of academic texts before moving on to the critical evaluation stage. Thus, these findings do not focus solely on previewing but also integrate other reading techniques such as scanning, skimming, and summarizing which help students in navigating academic information critically.

### **c. Encouraging Contextual Thinking**

Further research findings indicate that one of the critical reading teaching strategies used by L1 and L2 participants is to encourage students to think contextualize when reading academic texts, meaning to connect their understanding to reality or experience. L1 explained that students need to connect information in scientific journals with other situations, such as real life or the classroom learning context, to gain a deeper meaning. L2 did the same by asking students to think of similar situations that are closer to their lived experiences. This strategy aligns with Perin's theory that contextualization is the process of linking texts to real-life contexts, thereby building students' deep understanding and engagement. This finding is also consistent with research by Ramaila et al. (2025), which explains that the application of contextualization makes

learning meaningful. Another consistent study by Hayati et al. (2024) also states that contextualization in critical reading enhances students' critical thinking skills because it involves the analysis and reflection of information.

Thus, these findings suggest that teaching strategies for critical reading that emphasize analysis and context help students analyze implied meanings and connect information to real-world contexts, ensuring that students do not merely interpret texts literally; consequently, these strategies make the process of critical reading more meaningful and in-depth.

#### **d. Encouraging Critical Discussion and Active Students**

These findings indicate that another critical reading teaching strategy employed by both lecturers was to encourage critical discussion and active student engagement. L1 stated that, compared to presentations, discussions are the most effective way to ensure that students not only convey the content of the text but also provide analysis and critique of the information they have read. Furthermore, L1 also encouraged students to actively ask questions as an indicator of their level of understanding of the scientific journal they had read. Meanwhile, L2 also highlights that presentation sessions and two-way discussions between presenters and the audience are effective, as they provide students with space to discuss the text's content more deeply with one another. This

finding indicates that students are actively engaged through social interaction and the exchange of ideas during learning, rather than being positioned merely as passive readers.

This aligns with Vygotsky's perspective, which emphasizes that meaningful learning occurs through social interaction between lecturers and students, and that questioning serves as a form of scaffolding that assists students in understanding academic texts. So, the lecturer explains subject matter, gives questions, directions, and criticism, then students respond to what the lecturer does and also provide responses, as supported by (Fadillah et al., 2022). It is also consistent with Hamiloglu & Temiz's view that the questions posed by students help evaluate how they comprehend, make connections, and foster deeper cognitive processes.

These findings are also consistent with Damansky's (2023) research, which states that questions can direct attention and enhance students' thinking processes by linking prior knowledge with new information. This is also related to outlining and summarizing in the discussion and presentation process, where students do not merely read the text but also organize and re-identify key ideas and explain them in their own words as a form of deep understanding of the text, as explained by (Sucita & Hukom, 2022).

Thus, the findings of this study indicates that the critical reading teaching strategies used by lecturers through critical discussions, presentations, and active student engagement in questioning encourage students to analyze, evaluate, and express their opinions critically through social interaction and collaboration among students.

**e. Facilitating Evaluatif, and Comparative Approaches**

The research findings indicate that both lecturers used critical reading teaching strategies—specifically evaluative and comparative approaches—when analyzing academic texts such as articles and scientific journals. L1 states that in the learning phase, the first step is understanding. This is followed by a more in-depth evaluation. The intention is that the process of developing critical reading skills is carried out gradually, as students are not yet capable of moving directly to the evaluation stage. L2 also applied a similar strategy through the evaluation of the quality, strengths, and weaknesses of research journals. Not only that, but both lecturers also conducted discussions to compare two academic texts discussing similar topics and exchanged insights so that students could identify similarities, differences, and various perspectives in the analysis of those texts.

These findings are consistent with research by Megiana (2024), which states that critical readers analyze the author's arguments to determine whether they agree with them. In this research, students were

asked to evaluate the benefits, weaknesses, and strengths of the scientific journal and develop a critical assessment of the text. This aligns with Wallace's view that critical reading involves comparing various perspectives as well as the strengths and weaknesses of a text.

Nurhayati's (2023) research also indicates that this activity can enhance students' analytical skills. These findings suggest that through evaluative activities and the strategy of comparing two texts—as facilitated by lecturers—students can better understand that a single academic topic may involve different approaches, methods, and research outcomes.

## **2. The Challenges Faced by Students in Critical Reading Skills**

### **a. Difficulty Understanding Academic Reading Journal Structure**

The results of this study indicate that some students are not yet familiar with reading academic journals and therefore tend to have difficulty understanding the text structure. Student 1 stated that they rarely read English-language scientific journals before starting college, which is why they struggled to understand the scientific journals assigned by the lecturer. Student 2 expressed a similar view, saying that they were confused by vocabulary that was unfamiliar and more complex than that found in ordinary texts. In addition, Student 3 and Student 4 stated that they had difficulty understanding the structure of scientific journals, such

as distinguishing between the results and discussion sections, research methods, and the relationships between paragraphs.

These findings align with the Bloom's Taxonomy perspective by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001), which states that students remain at a lower cognitive level—specifically, the “understanding” stage—and thus are not yet capable of reaching the “analyzing,” “evaluating,” and “synthesizing” stages. This results in students becoming passive readers due to their limited ability to critically assess the information found in scientific journals.

Furthermore, this finding aligns with research by Ha Van, L. et al. (2024), who found that students' challenges in critical reading are also influenced by their limitations in language proficiency and their ability to understand the structure of academic texts and the characteristics of the language used. This highlights that students still require guidance and practice in critically reading and understanding the structure of scientific journals.

### **b. Students' Difficulties in Critical Thinking Skills**

Student 1 said that she had difficulty judging the arguments in journal articles because she was still trying to understand the meaning of the arguments. She also felt afraid and less confident to share her opinion in class. A similar view was expressed by Student 2, who felt confused when asked to evaluate the content of a journal because, in her opinion,

all the information in the text seemed correct. Another opinion from Student 3 explained that she had difficulty applying critical thinking because her focus was divided between understanding difficult academic terms and understanding the overall content of the reading. Student 4 also stated that he often only reads the text literally without evaluating the author's arguments. This shows that some students lack critical thinking skills and tend to accept information without questioning it deeply, as well as having low confidence in expressing their opinions.

The findings of this study are in line with the Sociocultural Theory proposed by Lev Vygotsky, which states that students can develop critical thinking skills through teacher support, discussion activities, question-and-answer sessions with peers, and classroom interaction. However, in this study, students did not actively participate in classroom activities, which limited their analytical and evaluative abilities.

In addition, these findings are also consistent with the study by Janah et al. (2024), which highlights that students have difficulties in identifying main ideas and evaluating arguments in reading texts. This shows that students' critical thinking skills are still weak. Another study by Samsudin et al. (2024) also emphasizes that students' perceptions of text difficulty influence how they critically read, because students who consider academic journals too difficult tend to avoid deep analysis and only focus on literal understanding. This indicates that the main

challenge faced by students in critical reading is their lack of critical thinking skills, especially in evaluating and analyzing arguments in academic texts.

### **c. Vocabulary Limitations Hinder Students Critical Reading**

The results of the study show that one of the main challenges faced by students is limited vocabulary in understanding and critically analyzing English-language journals. Student 1 said that she often felt overwhelmed by many unfamiliar academic terms, which made it difficult for her to analyze the text and give opinions. Student 2 also pointed out that the academic language used in journals is very complex and different from everyday vocabulary, so it is difficult to understand. Meanwhile, Student 3 stated that new academic terms often made her lose focus while reading. Student 4 also said that in just one page of a journal there are many words that he does not understand, which leads him to draw incorrect conclusions. Therefore, some students rely more on Google Translate or artificial intelligence (AI) to help them identify unfamiliar academic terms.

The findings are in line with the Cognitive Processing Theory, which states that reading focused on text comprehension depends on students' ability to connect word forms with their meanings in context. However, when vocabulary is limited, cognitive load increases, which then hinders the process of text analysis and evaluation. In addition,

based on Bloom's Taxonomy, limited vocabulary places students at lower cognitive levels, namely remembering and understanding.

These findings are also supported by Le & Ha (2023) and Tong et al. (2023), who emphasize that mastery of academic vocabulary is very important, and limited vocabulary can hinder students from reading academic journals critically, which affects their understanding and analysis.

#### **d. Emotional and Motivational Challenges Affect Critical Reading**

One of the challenges experienced by students in critical reading is emotional and motivational factors. Student 1 stated that she often feels tired and anxious, lacks confidence in her abilities, and feels frustrated because she cannot understand the text even after reading it repeatedly. Student 2 also admitted that she once felt very frustrated and even cried because she had difficulty completing an assignment that required analyzing an academic journal. Another opinion from Student 4 stated that reading academic journals critically feels exhausting and boring, especially due to his limited ability to understand complex language and long texts, which makes him easily lose interest in continuing to read. He also mentioned that a lack of support from his environment affects his motivation. Meanwhile, Student 3 also explained that her motivation decreases when she is not in an environment that supports reading habits.

The findings align with the Self-Regulated Learning Theory proposed by Barry J. Zimmerman, which explains that learning success is influenced by students' ability to regulate their own learning process, including managing motivation and emotions. Students who have strong self-regulated learning skills are better able to control feelings of frustration and maintain their focus in learning. On the other hand, students with low levels of self-regulation tend to give up easily and struggle to maintain engagement in critical reading activities. In this study, some students considered reading journals to be difficult, boring, and full of unfamiliar academic vocabulary.

Another study by Maab et al. (2024) also stated that EFL students experience difficulties in critical reading because of low reading motivation, lack of independent learning strategies, and mental pressure when dealing with complex academic journals. Purnama (2022) also found that academic anxiety in reading English texts becomes a challenge that causes students to lose concentration, avoid reading activities, and lack confidence when asked to evaluate the content of a text. This is also supported by Fadillah (2014), who stated that motivation is one of the factors that becomes a challenge for students in critical reading, because motivation plays an important role in students performance in the classroom. This indicates that students need motivation and emotional support in critical reading activities in the classroom.