



**UNIVERSIDAD ESTATAL PENÍNSULA DE SANTA ELENA
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND LANGUAGES
PEDAGOGY OF NATIONAL AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

**“THE CRITICAL READER” TO ENHANCE ENGLISH
READING SKILL
RESEARCH PROJECT**

As a prerequisite to obtain a:

**BACHELOR’S DEGREE IN PEDAGOGY OF NATIONAL AND
FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

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La Libertad – Ecuador

2026

ADVISOR'S APPROVAL

In my role as advisor of the research paper entitled "THE CRITICAL READER" TO ENHANCE ENGLISH READING SKILL prepared by, GUALE SANTISTEVAN JOSELYN ARIANNA and ROSALES TOMALÁ IRIS JAILYNE undergraduate students of the Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages Major at School of Educational Sciences and Languages at Universidad Estatal Península de Santa Elena, I declare that after oriented, studied, and reviewed the project, I approve it in its entirety, because it meets the requirements and is sufficient for its submission to the evaluation of the academic tribunal.

Sincerely,

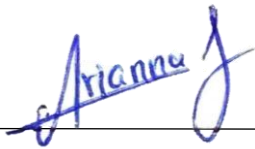
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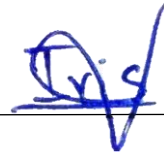
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We, Guale Santistevan Joselyn Arianna, with ID number 2450882986 & Rosales Tomalá Iris Jailyne with ID number 2400197576, undergraduate students from Universidad Estatal Península de Santa Elena, School of Education Science and Languages, as a prerequisite to obtaining a bachelor's degree in Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages in our role as authors of the research project "THE CRITICAL READER" TO ENHANCE ENGLISH READING SKILL, certify that this study work is our authorship, except for the quotes, statements, and reflections used in this research paper.

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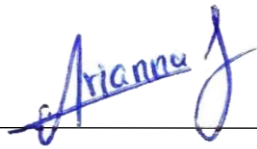
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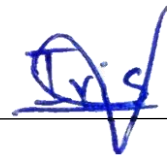
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Acknowledgment I

I want to express my sincere gratitude to all the people who accompanied and supported me during my academic path.

To my mother, Jessenia, thank you for always supporting me, especially when my studies began, for motivating me every day to keep going and give my best.

To my dear friend and thesis partner, Iris, thank you for allowing me to develop this research project with you, for the great teamwork we achieved together, and for your support not only during this project, but also throughout all these years together at university.

To my beloved Eric, thank you for joining me on this academic adventure, for always supporting me in my studies and giving me strength when I need it.

To my teachers, thank you for your constant guidance and for sharing your knowledge throughout these semesters.

Finally, to my friends, for their support, laughter, and friendship, which made this journey a memorable experience that I will cherish with all my heart.

- Gualé Santistevan Joselyn Arianna

Acknowledgment II

I want to thank God, thank you for guiding my steps along this journey and allowing me to grow while developing a mindset of continuous improvement to achieve my goals despite all the circumstances. Thank you for giving me the strength and wisdom to face the challenges and changes I have experienced. To my family, thank you for your unconditional support, love, patience and the valuable advice you gave me. Thank you for giving me strength to never give up during the most difficult moments, as well as for being by my side in the most special ones.

To my thesis partner, Joselyn, thank you for your companionship and patience during every moment of this process, I truly appreciate your commitment and responsibility in carrying out this project together.

To Angely and Daniel, thanks for your constant support, friendship, and for being there during unforgettable moments that made this journey truly special.

Finally, to the university and the professors for the education and guidance provided throughout this academic journey.

- Rosales Tomalá Iris Jailyne

Dedication I

I want to dedicate this project to my beautiful sister, Daniela, whose memory continues to inspire me to keep going, even on the most discouraging days.

- With all my heart, Gualo Santistevan Joselyn Arianna.

Dedication II

I want to dedicate this achievement with all my heart, first to God, to my father Danilo, and to my sister Jeanella, for showing me their unconditional love and support throughout this academic journey. To my beautiful angels, my mother Cecilia and my brother Luis (Lalo), whom I always keep present in my life and carry in my heart. They have become my greatest motivation to keep striving and stay strong through every circumstance. And to a special being who stood by my side in moments of solitude and was my warmest companion while I wrote this thesis.

- With all my love, Rosales Tomalá Iris Jailyne

Abstract

The project explores how a group of university students use the website “The Critical Reader” as an educational resource in their English language development. This study explored the effects of using this resource in independent learning, with students consistently practicing the activities provided by the website to strengthen their reading skills. This benefits their academic and personal performance, this means, in everyday situations, that require decision-making and critical thinking. A qualitative method was used to develop this project, allowing for the collection of opinions that contribute to this research through interviews with five students of the PINE degree. They shared their knowledge and point of view on the influence of using “The Critical Reader,” on their English language learning, as well as the benefits and challenges they encountered during their independent reading comprehension process. The results showed that the students improved their reading comprehension, critical thinking, and confidence using “The Critical Reader.” However, their limited vocabulary and the use of advanced terms in long texts posed a challenge for them. Despite this, through the application of appropriate strategies and techniques, they managed to overcome these difficulties and achieve better comprehension of the texts. In conclusion, this research demonstrates that “The Critical Reader” is an educational resource that has positive effects on students and supports their learning process to improve their overall reading skills. It also empowers students to become independent critical readers, encouraging them to take greater responsibility for their own learning and committing to constant practice.

Keywords: The Critical Reader, didactic resource, reading comprehension, practice, independent learning.

Resumen

El siguiente proyecto explora cómo un grupo de estudiantes universitarios hacen uso del sitio web “The Critical Reader” como un recurso didáctico educativo dentro de su desarrollo en el aprendizaje del idioma inglés. Este estudio exploró los efectos que tiene el uso del recurso en el aprendizaje independiente, con estudiantes que han practicado constantemente las actividades que brinda la página web para su fortalecer sus habilidades de lectura, lo cual beneficia su rendimiento académico y personal, es decir, en situaciones de la vida diaria que requiere la toma de decisiones y pensamiento crítico. Para el desarrollo de este proyecto se utilizó el método cualitativo, permitiendo recolectar opiniones que aportan en esta investigación, a través de entrevistas realizadas a cinco estudiantes de PINE, quienes expresaron sus conocimientos y puntos de vista sobre la influencia que tuvo el uso de “The Critical Reader” durante su desarrollo del aprendizaje del idioma inglés, los beneficios y desafíos que se tuvieron durante el proceso independiente para mejorar la competencia lectora. Los resultados obtenidos evidenciaron que los estudiantes mejoraron su comprensión lectora, pensamiento crítico y confianza usando “The Critical Reader.” Sin embargo, su vocabulario limitado y el uso de términos avanzados en textos extensos llegaban a ser un desafío para ellos. Pese a ello, mediante la aplicación de estrategias y técnicas adecuadas lograron superar esas dificultades y obtener una mejor comprensión en los textos. En conclusión, esta investigación demuestra que “The Critical Reader” es un recurso educativo que tiene efectos positivos en los estudiantes y acompaña su proceso de aprendizaje para mejorar sus habilidades de lectura en general. Además, les permite ser lectores críticos independientes, animándome a ser más responsables con su propio aprendizaje y comprometiéndose con una constante práctica.

Palabras claves: The Critical Reader, recurso didáctico, comprensión lectora, práctica, aprendizaje independiente.

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Introduction

Strengthening reading skills allows students to expand their knowledge, think critically, and express their ideas more clearly. By improving this ability, they can not only understand texts more easily but also use English more effectively in different academic and personal situations. Considering this context, the use of “The Critical Reader” is regarded as a useful didactic resource that can help in the English learning process. Through their autonomous learning and constant practice using didactic resources and applying strategies, they are valuable for the correct development of reading proficiency skills that help students to face the challenges in academic reading in English. The structure of this project consists of five chapters organized in the following order:

Chapter I introduces the research problem, explaining the context in detail of the problem being explored in order to establish the research questions. Also, it defines the general and specific objectives that determine the direction of the project and what it seeks to achieve by the end. In addition, it justifies the importance of the research for English learning.

Chapter II provides three different backgrounds of the study, they are International, Latin-American and National in which have been used didactic resources to enhance and foster reading skills in English learning. Moreover, embrace the pedagogical approaches and theoretical concepts that are based on the variables that are focused on being studied in this research project. In addition, the legal basis is a fundamental part to highlight.

Chapter III describes the methodology used in this research, including the methods chosen for data collection and analysis. This section also mentions the instruments used and the sample of participants selected for this research.

In Chapter IV, the answers provided by the interviewees are analyzed and interpreted. In addition, the collected information was organized into tables that present a brief analysis of the participants' responses. Additionally, an author that supports the findings and variables related to this research.

Lastly, Chapter V shows the conclusions and offers recommendations related to the information provided by the interviewed participants.

The purpose of this study was to explore the use of "The Critical Reader" and how this didactic resource can support English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in their process of enhancing reading skills. A qualitative approach was used in this research to collect essential data through an interview.

Chapter I

Research Topic

Didactic resources to enhance reading skill.

Title of the project

“The Critical Reader” to Enhance English Reading Skill

Problem Statement

Reading skill play a fundamental role as one of the essential skills in learning the English language, a fact that has been widely supported by numerous studies over the years (Rama, 2020). These skills are valuable for university students, because if they develop a broad comprehension capacity, they will have greater ease of understanding academic texts that can be challenging due to their complexity. In other words, they would be able to analyze content, extract meanings and information in a straightforward way.

A study by Allehyani (2025), demonstrated that many undergraduates show low level in English reading skills, even when working with academic texts containing complex ideas or concepts. They often struggle to understand and critically analyze such material for their academic assignments. Literary work is the type of writing that EFL university students find most challenging, they continue to face difficulties when they have to interpret arguments, identify relevant points, and make inferences when they read.

These challenges are linked with the knowledge of necessary didactic resources for the proper development of English reading skills. As referenced by Soisuwan et al. (2022), reading strategies are a fundamental part of developing reading skills, and college students need to use them to achieve their goals. However, technology provides a variety of didactic resources that

can be integrated into the learning process to guide the students in enhancing their comprehension skills through constant practice and interaction. As noted by Ordoñez Procel et al. (2024), the use of digital tools in English language learning has transformed educational practice by facilitating more personalized, interactive, and motivating learning experiences.

As a part of this research, the use of “The Critical Reader” website as a resource in the process of improving reading skills, becomes vital to developing variables such as reading comprehension and critical thinking. According to Julianti et al. (2024), critical reading is important for EFL learners because it is a process that emphasizes the interaction between the reader, the text, and the author through different thinking skills. As a result, it guides analysis and reflection, creating reflective and interactive reading experiences, as well as active participation in pedagogical activities.

It is important to note that this obstacle not only hinders adequate learning in this area, but also in academic performance due to limited ability in reading skills. In accordance by Cahyani (2023), the English language proficiency has become essential in the educational field, therefore highlighting students' reading skills because they can think critically and enhance their performance. It also allows them to understand educational content more broadly.

This study explored how “The Critical Reader” contributed to the development of reading skills in a group of students in the Pedagogy of Foreign and National Languages (PINE) program. Students' perspectives on using the resource were also analyzed to identify its usefulness.

Problem questions

General question

- How does The Critical Reader enhance English reading skills of students in the Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros (PINE) at Universidad Estatal Península de Santa Elena (UPSE)?

Specific Questions

- What are learners' experiences with the use of the didactic resource in their English reading skills?
- What are university students' perspectives with the usefulness of "The Critical Reader" in reading proficiency?
- What strategies are applied and how do they influence the development of reading skills in English learners?

Objectives

General Objective

- To explore the use of "The Critical Reader" as a resource to enhance reading skills through the experiences of students in Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros (PINE) at Universidad Estatal Península de Santa Elena (UPSE).

Specific Objectives

- To describe students' experiences when using "The Critical Reader" in their reading learning.

- To analyze students' perspectives of the usefulness of "The Critical Reader" in their reading proficiency.
- To identify the strategies that students apply in the development of reading skills.

Justification

For EFL higher education students, reading is a skill that supports all other English language learning skills. Many of them still lack well-developed reading proficiency, and they can have a negative effect on the learning process and performance in college activities, both in class and independently. Emphasizing this problem helps to become English learners more independent, reflective and critical readers. However, the process of enhancing reading skills results complex and can lead to them feeling frustrated about reading in English.

Undergraduates need useful techniques or tools that help and facilitate the development of their reading skills. According to Arifin (2020), Critical Reading and Reading Comprehension skills are essential to the learning process, especially for undergraduates who must read any type of writings in English. These skills are achieved through the proper use of strategies for more effective development. But EFL learners do not have a good command of the techniques or by the application of poor techniques that are not optimal, so reading skills are not applied correctly.

It is essential to use didactic resources that allow students to continually practice reading skills and achieve their academic goals. For this reason, the use of "The Critical Reader" is an available resource to benefit students and improve their performance in reading skills with sections that present writings requiring analysis, critical thinking, and comprehension. In addition, it is a resource that requires the attention of students, so it motivates them to stay focused on reading and find the answer to each activity.

According to Al Roomy (2022) stated that reading is considered a dynamic process in which students are required to associate previous knowledge to create new knowledge. Also allowing different skills at the same time and reading comprehension proved to be more effective after the introduction of critical reading skills.

Reading skills are vital and require an appropriate development process. “By actively engaging with texts, annotating key points, summarizing main ideas, and applying critical thinking skills, readers can deepen their understanding, retain information more effectively, and become more proficient in extracting meaning from written material” (Bakhtiyorovna, 2024, p.103).

Likewise, it is important to highlight the constant interaction with academic reading material and the appropriate application of techniques, strategies and resources such as “The Critical Reader,” because they are a necessary complement to improving reading skills. In the words on Yasin et al. (2024), The use of strategies has become an important foundation for students to improve both their reading efficiency and comprehension skills.

Chapter II

Theoretical Framework

Background

This chapter describes the theoretical framework that support strengthening undergraduates' reading skills using "The Critical Reader". This chapter highlights its relevance as a strategy to improve the understanding of English texts and for supporting learners in handling diverse reading materials, especially in the academic context. It provides an approach in which the research problem is analyzed, offering a clear perspective on how structured reading resources can promote critical immersion with texts and activities related to the skill. The research studies the use of "The Critical Reader" as an academic didactic resource, focusing on how its activities and exercises help learners develop comprehension and critical reading skills in English. Furthermore, the potential of this didactic resource will be examined based on established theories to support learners in navigating and understanding a variety of English texts.

International Background

According to Sari et al. (2024), in digital age learning is no longer to printed books. A wide range of digital resources now supports the study of the English language. Educational materials available online, such as e-books and websites are accessible in any devices facilitating reading learning. In the current world, there is a need to develop technological literacy skills in university students because they become essential to achieve success.

According to a study by Rinantanti et al. (2024), nowadays, technology is considered a fundamental tool for promoting the development of reading skills. Furthermore, this publication

mentions that thanks to the internet, students can access various digital educational resources and use them as their primary source of learning. It is worth noting that there is also a wide range of accessible reading materials that encourage students to apply their already acquired skills and improve them through practice.

These skills are essential in the digital age, the internet has turned reading material into a complex process that encompasses skills such as analyzing, synthesizing, and assessing information through a variety of activities to acquire new knowledge but at the same time reinforce it. These activities include recognizing key issues, locating pertinent information, critically incorporating it, evaluating it, and effectively disseminating the information. It is emphasized that the use of technological resources contributes to greater enhancement in reading skills among EFL learners due to the complexity of completing the activities and exercises.

In a study conducted by Kalsoom and Ahmad (2022), demonstrate that college students showed significant improvement in reading comprehension skills by using the new competencies characterized by inquiring, identifying, assessing, consolidating, and conveying information, and which are part of the Online Reading Comprehension Assessment (ORCA-I) test. In this test they measured the reading comprehension of university students who prepared using online resources. And they showed a radical increase in their post-test scores. In addition, this study also highlights the effectiveness of using technology and its resources to improve reading skills in a world where learning revolves around technology.

A study conducted by Zhang (2023), states that the evolution of education and technology are linked to provide more enriching learning for learners. Therefore, this study highlights the educational platform known as Archieve3000 as the main resource of autonomous learning that accompanies the process of improving students' reading competence, besides providing them

with greater motivation through personalized learning. Furthermore, students achieve significant progress in developing reading proficiency and expanding their knowledge, improving their reading levels. Therefore, the results obtained demonstrate the effectiveness of its use.

Latin-American Background

A research in Colombia by Gómez et al. (2025), mention that today critical reading continues to be a challenge for students in the process of learning English as a foreign language. Many learners struggle with reading comprehension, and it is very common for them to initially create a superficial understanding. As a result of this practice, the participants encounter obstacles to analyzing arguments, identifying ideas, and connecting information with the main knowledge, which limits their ability to comprehend texts in depth.

Rodríguez (2021), indicates that implementing reading strategies can significantly enhance students' reading comprehension by helping them activate prior knowledge, understand main ideas, and acquire new vocabulary. The study *Critical Reading With Undergraduate EFL Students in Colombia: Gains and Challenges*, reinforces these findings by showing that having good reading comprehension and moving to critical reading help undergraduates go beyond literal comprehension while still facing challenges such as limited vocabulary (Castaño & Correa, 2021).

Latin American studies highlight that reading comprehension as a foreign language is one of the most important skills for learners, especially in the current educational context where the use of English is necessary. Research shows that reading comprehension involves more than understanding words, it requires connecting ideas, and building knowledge that can be applied in academic and everyday life (Zapata et al., 2024). Developing critical reading skills helps students

analyze texts independently and make connections with their own experiences, transforming reading into a meaningful learning process.

In this way, these studies support the idea that promoting critical reading is fundamental for EFL learners in Latin American, because it helps students become more independent, reflective, and confident in their learning. Critical reading not only enhances comprehension, it develops significant cognitive skills enabling students to assess their own understanding, adjust strategies and set personal learning goals (Al Roomy, 2022).

National Background

A research by Sevy-Biloon (2022), with the title; *Extensive Reading: A Strategy to Improve Vocabulary, Reading Skills and Motivation in an EFL B2 Course at the National University of Education (UNAE) in Ecuador*, demonstrates that extensive reading allows students to improve their reading skills and gain motivation because the more they read texts according to their own preferences, the more easily they can interpret the meaning of new words in context, improving their vocabulary and overall reading skills. Furthermore, students feel more motivated to learn independently and, above all, improve their English skills. Additionally, it is important to mention that they create a connection with the real world through extensive reading, which is linked to the use of authentic strategies.

In a research by Aguayo (2025), *SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review) Method for Reading Comprehension in EFL Students*, mentions that the application of strategies benefits the process of developing reading comprehension skills. The research was carried out at the Technical University of Cotopaxi, with a sample of 33 undergraduates in the career of Pedagogy in National and Foreign Languages (PINE), who responded to an interview based on

their experience using methods to enhance their reading comprehension skills. Therefore, the use of the SQ3R method seeks to improve the skills that involve reading in general, due to a structured process of steps to complete a more effective analysis and interpretation of the reading. As a result, it promotes student motivation and performance.

Pedagogical Basis

Cognitivist Learning Theory

Cognitivist learning theory explains learning as an internal process where the mind plays an active role. A research by Pakpahan and Saragih (2022), mention that according to Piaget (1952) findings, learners build knowledge through stages of cognitive development, and each stage allows them to understand more complex ideas. In education, a study by Lefa (2014), says that Piaget highlights that learners obtain better results when educational activities are designed according to their development stage. Similarly, Bandura (1982) explains that learning is more effective when students discover concepts by themselves and organize information in a meaningful way.

Moreover, cognitive perspectives are reflected in how learners develop reading skills in their learning process, encouraging them to build knowledge instead of just receiving it. As pointed out by Ali and Kumar (2025), working through ideas step by step, learners can connect new information with what they already know, which helps them understand and remember in a better way. Furthermore, it is highlighted that designing learning activities according to the students' cognitive development stages allow them to improve more effectively, solve problems, and reflect on their own thinking.

In this context, cognitivism relates to critical reading by understanding a text to analyze and interpret a text for themselves. This process makes them more independent, confident, and conscious of their own learning. It also connects directly with critical reading, since after understanding words in a text, they also think about the meaning, ask questions, and make a conclusion based on reasoning and personal experiences.

E-Based Flipped Learning

According to Khonamri et al. (2020), demonstrate that students learn independently using the flipped classroom model, which allows them to be the protagonists of their own interactive learning using technology. This learning model motivates them to become more autonomous, investigative, and lifelong learners, these qualities are necessary for all students. As a result, through the resources, tools, and educational resources provided by technology, students improve their critical reading, critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Project-Based Learning

According to Guo et al. (2020), mention that Project-based learning is a model that enables the construction of learners' knowledge through participation in projects in real contexts. This means that while they research a large amount of information through online sources, articles, magazines, and books to contribute to the development of projects based on reality, it also helps them improve overall reading skills and enrich knowledge. Thus, elaboration demands that students collaborate to develop solutions to real-world problems through integration, construction, and application of knowledge.

Theoretical Basis

The Critical Reader

Niculescu and Dragomir (2023), argues that critical reading involves a dynamic process with written material that allows a person not only to understand, but also to doubt, ask questions, make inferences, analyze, and assess. This is a powerful skill that paves the way for the development of other English language skills and becomes essential in contexts outside of academic settings. Therefore, the development of critical reading individuals is essential for making sound decisions and forming well-founded opinions based on a text. Therefore, it is necessary to embrace a critical mindset to activate the intellectual capacity to think beyond what is just written.

According to Nurhayati (2023), Critical reading involves understanding from a critical perspective and questioning the arguments contained in a text. In this sense, it focuses on deeper and more analytical knowledge. Therefore, the use of strategies guides the development and improvement of students' critical reading skills. As a result, learners become critical readers with strong abilities to process information from different texts easily and pleasantly.

Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is a crucial skill that allows learners to understand written texts, associate ideas, and expand information in different academic contexts. A research by Hezam et al. (2022), expresses that effective comprehension enables learners to engage with texts, enhance vocabulary, and helps them to organize concepts clearly and effectively. This skill supports learning by allowing students to reflect on new theories, relate them prior knowledge and apply the information in different situations. It also fosters confidence in reading and

understanding advanced writings, making the learning process more interactive and dynamic (Aynalem & Tesmand, 2023).

Reading comprehension is reinforced when learners also practice critical reading, as it helps them notice how ideas are connected through the text. The model from “The Critical Reader” supports this process by offering strategies such as highlighting important information, identifying the paragraphs functions, and following transitions to see how ideas are developed. Therefore, reading comprehension and “The Critical Reader” promote improving understanding, active participation, and confidence with different types of compositions.

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is a vital ability in the education context. It encourages undergraduates to approach learning in a deeper and meaningful way. According to Maab et al. (2024), learners examine content carefully, compare perspectives, and recognize the main idea of what they are studying. In language learning, this skill helps understand not only the literal meaning of a text but also examining meaning and making sense of what is learning. Studies also show that learners who practice critical thinking become more active in their role in the learning process. This makes critical thinking a key element in education, as it supports language development and prepares students to face academic situations with clarity (Jumariati et al., 2024).

Reader Response Theory

Reader Response Theory focuses on the interaction between the reader and the text, considering reading as a process where meaning is constructed. Rather than viewing a literary work as something already finished and independent, this perspective emphasizes that each reader contributes their background, emotions, and experiences when approaching a text, which

leads to diverse interpretations (Temitayo, 2022). Through this dynamic, reading can also strengthen critical thinking, promote deeper comprehension, and encourage students to become more engaged and active in their own learning process.

Within Reader Response theory, the reader is considered an important role that involves a community with a way of understanding literary texts by consciously applying their own developed reading skills. Furthermore, it does not focus on autonomous learning, but rather on an interpretive society, in which they share the reading of texts with awareness and general knowledge of language and literature (Kulkarni, 2024).

Legal Basis

Current government systems around the world recognize education as a fundamental pillar for the development of a prosperous and thoughtful society, capable of facing the challenges of the future, with special emphasis on its advancement in relation to the country's present and future needs. In this context, Constitución de la República del Ecuador and Ley Orgánica de Educación Superior (LOES) maintain the state's responsibility to guarantee access to quality education for all its citizens, a fundamental right key to the development and social advancement of our nation. Through several articles that must be incorporated into the Ecuadorian education system, the commitment to a legal basis for promoting transparent, barrier-free, and efficient education for citizens is reaffirmed.

Art. 6.1.- Deberes de las y los profesores e investigadores: Son deberes de las y los profesores e investigadores de conformidad con la Constitución: a) Cumplir actividades de docencia, investigación y vinculación de acuerdo a las normas de calidad y normativas de los organismos que rigen el sistema y las de sus propias instituciones; d) Mantener un proceso

permanente de formación y capacitación para una constante actualización de la cátedra y consecución del principio de calidad (*Ley Orgánica de Educación Superior, LOES, 2018*).

Art. 8.- Fines de la Educación Superior. - La educación superior tendrá los siguientes fines: a) Aportar al desarrollo del pensamiento universal, al despliegue de la producción científica, de las artes y de la cultura y a la promoción de las transferencias e innovaciones tecnológicas. b) Fortalecer en las y los estudiantes un espíritu reflexivo orientado al logro de la autonomía personal, en un marco de libertad de pensamiento y de pluralismo ideológico. c) Contribuir al conocimiento, preservación y enriquecimiento de los saberes ancestrales y de la cultura nacional. j) Reconocer a la cultura y las artes como productoras de conocimientos y constructoras de nuevas memorias, así como el derecho de las personas al acceso del conocimiento producido por la actividad cultural, y de los artistas a ser partícipes de los procesos de enseñanza en el Sistema de Educación Superior. k) Desarrollar, fortalecer y potenciar el sistema de educación intercultural bilingüe (*Ley Orgánica de Educación Superior, LOES, 2018*).

Art. 35.- Asignación de recursos para cultura investigación, ciencia y tecnología e innovación. - Las instituciones del Sistema de Educación Superior podrán acceder adicional y preferentemente a los recursos públicos concursables de la pre-asignación para cultura investigación, ciencia, tecnología e innovación establecida en la Ley correspondiente. Para el efecto se simplificarán los procesos administrativos para que la obtención de recursos para investigación, ciencia, tecnología e innovación sean oportunos, efectivos y permitan el desarrollo de un interés permanente de los investigadores y docentes (*Ley Orgánica de Educación Superior, LOES, 2018*).

Art. 27.- La educación estará centrada en el ser humano y garantizará su desarrollo integral, en el marco del respeto a los derechos humanos, el medio ambiente sostenible y la

democracia; será participativa, obligatoria, intercultural, democrática, inclusiva y diversa, de calidad y calidez; promoverá la equidad de género, la justicia, la solidaridad y la paz; estimulará un sentido crítico, el arte y la cultura física, la iniciativa individual y comunitaria, y el desarrollo de competencias y capacidades para crear y trabajar. La educación es indispensable para el conocimiento, el ejercicio de derechos y la construcción de un país soberano y constituye un eje estratégico para el desarrollo nacional (*Constitución de la República del Ecuador, 2008*).

Through these articles established in the Constitución de la República del Ecuador and LOES, it is possible to clearly and consistently reflect that the right to quality education seeks to guarantee a comprehensive educational process appropriate to the needs of citizens. These precepts incorporate social equity as a more inclusive principle, essential for promoting citizen participation. It is important to highlight the fundamental right to education as a key factor for the development of nations and collective well-being.

Chapter III

Methodological Framework

Methods

Qualitative Method

This research project focused on qualitative method through previous experiences using “The Critical Reader” of university students from Universidad Estatal Península de Santa Elena (UPSE), with the aim of understanding how the use of this resource can enhance English reading skills, specifically in their independent learning process. Qualitative Research is a method that thoroughly examines social experiences and perspectives. It does not focus on measuring quantities, but rather on better understanding why social phenomena occur within a context through scientific research. It is also important to highlight that qualitative research is essential due to its interpretive approach. The method is based on exploring experiences and perspectives to create a connection with each individual's subjective experience (Lim, 2025).

This research project analyzed the experiences and perceptions of a sample of university students who use “The Critical Reader” as a didactic resource that benefits their literary development, personal and academic performance. Data was collected through interviews, which were based on the experiences of the selected sample to contribute to this research project.

Type of research

Phenomenological Studies

This research project was carried out using a phenomenological study approach. According to Husserl (1913), cited by Rasid et al. (2021), phenomenology is a method that connects scientific knowledge with everyday experiences. Furthermore, due to the qualitative nature of this study, Williams (2021), explain that phenomenology focuses on describing what-experiences-are-like, meaning that researchers rely on detailed descriptions of individuals experiences, as these reveal the true essence of the phenomena studied.

In this way, this approach aligns with the purpose of the research project, as emphasized the importance of analyzing the participants' individual perspectives. By using this perspective, the study sought to interpret each participants' answer, recognizing that these experiences can provide valuable information about how this resource plays a role in the development of reading skills in an academic context.

Data Collection Techniques

Interviews

This research project interviewed UPSE students from Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros (PINE) degree, who have used “The Critical Reader” resource in their independent study to enhance their overall reading skills. Georgescu and Anastasiu (2021), argue that interviews are an essential type of instrument in the data collection process conducted by an interviewer who asks questions to a specific group of people, who then provide understandable answers. Therefore, the interview maintained a form of dialogue that sought to achieve specific objectives that focus on finding answers in a deep and detailed sense.

A qualitative interview refers to a method of detailed and thorough information gathering that involves the researcher, who is responsible for asking the questions to obtain answers, and the interviewee, who answers those questions. In this sense, both important roles fulfill the function of providing the information required based on the research. In addition, it should be noted that it refers to the qualitative method for obtaining information that involves the social area, considering the experiences of individuals and the detailed search of phenomena that occur within a given context (Mwita, 2022).

This interview was conducted with five PINE undergraduate students who have experienced improvement using “The Critical Reader” as part of their independent study to improve their reading skills. Consequently, both their answers were recorded and transcribed for analysis to gather data that contributed to the research.

Instruments

Questionnaire

In accordance with Aithal and Aithal (2020), the questionnaire includes a number of questions based on a specific problem. Its function is to collect opinions from participants that can be interpreted or to provide specific details. Consequently, in this research, the questionnaire was used as an instrument that allowed us to directly understand the participants’ ideas and to collect their responses in a more understandable and organized manner.

Type of questions

Open-ended Questions

Open-ended questions in qualitative interviews are designed to gather detailed answers from participants. They help researchers understand people's opinions, experiences, and perspectives more clearly, providing fundamental information for analyzing the topic of study (Lahmer, 2022). These questions gave participants the opportunity to express their experiences. In this study, the questions were sent out in advance so they could prepare their responses, avoid hesitation or stray from the questions, and allowing them to share examples and aspects that they considered important to transmit to the interviewer.

With the aim of gathering useful information for this research, eight open-ended questions were formulated. These were structured to understand how a set of chosen learners strengthened their reading skills through the use of the website. It is important to mention that to obtain detailed information, consideration was given to understanding the perspectives and challenges. In addition, to learning which strategies were effective in the participants' learning process.

Data Collection Processing and Resources

In this part of the research, it was argued that for effective data collection, it was essential to use appropriate methods and approaches to avoid errors that could compromise the study's validity and reliability. In other words, careful planning and proper data collection ensure that the information obtained accurately reflects data consistent with the research context and objectives (Dewi, 2021). This refers to the importance of careful planning and active engagement in

collecting data, ensuring that the information obtained truly reflects the research context and objectives.

In this study, data collection was conducted using Zoom. This platform allows for audio and video recording, allowing for detailed information from participants. It is important to note that the host has control over the session. After the meeting, the recordings are saved to their computer, and access is restricted to ensure data confidentiality (Lobe et al., 2020). Using Zoom for data collection in this study facilitated direct interaction with participants, allowing us to capture detailed information based on their responses. The platform enables audio and video recording, ensuring that all participants' statements were accurately documented for later analysis.

This study is descriptive and exploratory, aiming to understand participants' perspectives in depth. Therefore, a qualitative research approach with a structured methodology was employed. According to Huffcutt & Murphy (2023), structured interviews provide a systematic approach to data collection in research, enhancing validity and reducing errors in participants' responses. The methodology included clearly defined steps: selecting participants, preparing interview questions, conducting via Zoom, and analyzing collected data.

Population and sample

In this Project, a delimitation of the population was taken as a sample made up of students from UPSE who have used “The Critical Reader” as a resource. From the Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages career, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Languages, belonging to the Universidad Estatal Península de Santa Elena (UPSE). The estimated time taken to develop this project was one semester in the second half of the college year.

Sample

The sample for this project consisted of five undergraduates. Subjects were selected through purposive sampling. According to Nyimbili and Nyimbili (2024), purposive sampling is a method that involves selecting participants based on their prior knowledge and experiences. Accordingly, the selected sample group were suitable as they met the established requirements of the explained method. Furthermore, they shared information based on their experiences implementing “The Critical Reader” to enhance their reading skills.

The aim was to find the correct people who were relevant to the topic and who could provide information that would ensure optimal experience. Consequently, students were selected based on their shared experiences implementing “The Critical Reader” in the process of improving reading skills.

They were chosen to explore the use of “The Critical Reader” as a support to improve reading skills of EFL college students. This resource helped them improve their English reading skills for educational or scientific publications in English in the educational field, as a result, students show notable improvements in their academic performance. Furthermore, the study demonstrated an important role in their reading comprehension by assessing their prior knowledge and the reading strategies they use.

Chapter IV

Analysis of Findings

This chapter presents the general analysis and interpretation of the data collected through interviews, which were conducted via Zoom. Open-ended questions allowed obtaining the essential information about who have used “The Critical Reader” to enhance English reading skills throughout their own independent learning process. This section highlights the significant use of didactic resources as a part of the strategies to strengthen literacy skills, focusing on how the use of “The Critical Reader” truly encourages and promotes the improvement of English reading skills.

The collection of essential data that support this research project was obtained through eight open-ended questions answered by the sample of five students of Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros (PINE) degree. Undergraduates provide information according to their experiences, perspectives and important details they have had using “The Critical Reader” and how the use of this didactic resource can be part of the learning process to improve reading skills in English language.

It is important to highlight the implementation of the most favorable method for data collection. The sample of this study was chosen according to the adequate method used for this research. It allows the sample UPSE students to contribute with their free and detailed responses about how “The Critical Reader” was used to improve their reading skills through independent learning. Interviews were carried out to help undergraduates communicate their knowledge about “The Critical Reader”, what strategies they used before, and how this didactic resource helped them face their challenges trying to improve reading proficiency.

Questions report

Table 1

Students' experiences regarding the use of "The Critical Reader" in English learning, focusing on enhancing reading skills.

Questions	How does "The Critical Reader" help you improve a feature of reading skill that you found most difficult?	What strategies do you typically use when using "The Critical Reader" and how do they help you better understand texts?	Could you describe your experience since you started using "The Critical Reader" in your English learning process?	What aspects of "The Critical Reader" do you find most challenging in strengthening your reading comprehension?
Answers	Reading comprehension in complex texts, identifying the author's point of view, tone, and details within the text that support the main idea. Students report that recognizing the text's purpose and making inferences is more practical.	Underlining key words, rereading, summarizing the text, and following word transitions are strategies that lead to a better understanding of the texts in "The Critical Reader." In addition, the use of techniques in order to improve the quality of comprehension of readings.	Students report improvements in their reading skills and increased confidence when they read any type of complex text, as well as deeper and more conscious understanding and the ability to form their own critical opinions over time throughout their English learning process.	Analyze long and complex texts, understand advanced vocabulary, and complete grammar activities related to text comprehension. Students also mentioned that it was challenging to consistently apply techniques to each reading.
Authors	For university students, it is important to use didactic resources and strategies that strengthen reading skills to address the challenges they face during the learning process (Kelderak, 2023).	Reading strategies are a fundamental part of understanding and analyzing any type of texts written in English. In addition, to develop critical thinking skills (Zila & Septiana, 2024).	The use of didactic resources promotes reading skills that benefit the English language learning process (Javorčíková et al., 2021).	Reading comprehension is a fundamental skill to knowledge and learning through written educational material, and college students can engage with academic text more easily (Suhaila et al., 2025).

Note: This table presents the results collected from interviews conducted with PINE students who had used "The Critical Reader" in their English learning practice.

Table 2

Students' experiences regarding the use of “The Critical Reader” in English learning, focusing on enhancing reading skills.

Questions	How have you enhanced your reading comprehension by using “The Critical Reader” for complex texts?	Based on your experience, how do you think your critical thinking skills have progressed using “The Critical Reader” during your independent process?	What other didactic resources have you used in developing English reading skill as part of your independent learning, and why? Mention one or more.	Do you believe “The Critical Reader” can benefit students' academic and personal performance? If so, why?
Answers	Students have improved their understanding of complex texts by focusing on main ideas, connections, and overall meaning. This approach develops confidence and allows a more independent reading process.	Using “The Critical Reader” allows learners to analyze ideas, question assumptions, and connect texts to real-life situations, strengthening independent thinking and improving their ability to interpret information critically.	Independent reading with online articles, audiobooks, and educational platforms helps learners encounter different writing styles, practice comprehension, and strengthen critical thinking alongside “The Critical Reader.”	Students reported that their academic and personal performance improve by practicing careful reading, which helps them develop critical reading, focus and problem-solving skills.
Authors	Reading comprehension improves when learners apply strategies that encourage critical reflection and connection of ideas within the text (Farid et al., 2021).	Careful and thoughtful reading promotes critical thinking, improving students' ability to analyze, evaluate, and reflect on information (Morales et al. 2023).	Using digital platforms can significantly support EFL students' reading comprehension by providing accessible texts and adaptable environments that encourage independent practice (Dinda et al., 2025).	Using critical reading strategies helps learners strengthen comprehension, reasoning, and reflection, supporting in both academic and personal contexts (Le et al., 2024).

Note: This table presents the results collected from interviews conducted with PINE students who had used “The Critical Reader” in their English learning practice.

Interpretation of Data from the Interview

Question #1.- How does “The Critical Reader” help you improve a feature of reading skill that you find most difficult?

The answers revealed that one of the principal features of reading skills that students found difficult, but they have significantly improved using “The Critical Reader” has been identifying the author's main idea. They have also more easily recognized details and clues that help decode the authenticity of the author's point of view, the purpose of the text, and what it seeks to convey to the audience. In addition, students will improve their reading skills in specific areas such as making inferences and reading comprehension in the argumentative logic of texts.

Didactic resources help students make more appropriate use of their reading skills. Kelderak (2023), states that students struggle when reading, especially academic readings in English. Then, taking notes, analyzing the author's point of view, and finding details that facilitate comprehension can be a process that requires skills that undergraduates find complex but are undoubtedly more effective when reading. For this reason, the importance of using didactic resources and applying strategies that allow an active interaction with reading material.

Question #2.- What strategies do you typically use when using “The Critical Reader” and how do they help you better understand texts?

The data showed that students used a set of strategies in a specific order to understand the main idea of each passage. This also helped them stay focused on the text’s content and avoid distractions caused by misinterpretation. Among the most frequently reported practices was

underlining essential parts of a text, as this allowed them to more easily connect ideas and meticulously understand the entire reading when reviewing the material.

Reading strategies allow for a better understanding of a text through information comprehension, analysis, and the development of critical thinking. Furthermore, since students can practice different strategies to choose the one that best suits their learning, because it is a necessary aid to facilitate the process of obtaining information and learning any educational material written in English (Zila & Septiana, 2024).

Question #3.- Could you describe your experience since you started using “The Critical Reader” in your English learning process?

According to students' answers, they mention that the experience gained using “The Critical Reader” has led to significant improvement in their reading skills. Over time, they have developed more confidence in reading complex texts in English and they understand the readings more deeply, not just stay on the surface. They felt their brains were trained to read more intelligently. In addition, they become aware of what they are reading and forming their own opinions through reading analysis and accuracy are important aspects that students have developed in their English learning process.

Then, college students have acceptable general reading skills, but with certain limitations in their critical thinking and reading skills. Therefore, they must learn to read more effectively, identifying both explicit and implicit information, and making inferences about the author and the relevance of the text. Through didactic resources that, above all, strengthen reading skills (Javorčíková et al., 2021).

Question #4.- What aspects of “The Critical Reader” do you find most challenging in strengthening your reading comprehension?

Through the answers, students highlighted different aspects of this didactic resource, which each of them found challenging in strengthening reading comprehension skills, such as analyzing long and complex texts containing advanced vocabulary to relate with the context, also it was a bit complex for them to complete activities on grammar logic that test their comprehension. Besides, the lack of consistency in using techniques to strengthen reading comprehension. Consequently, learners demonstrated responsibility for the practice required to efficiently improve their reading of English texts with “The Critical Reader.” Likewise, patience and perseverance were key to the process’s success and positive development.

It was notable that the proper development of reading skills led to successful learning. Therefore, the students were able to acquire broader knowledge through English language educational material. There are phases that complement each other such as previewing, reading and reviewing, which contribute to fostering students' engagement as active readers. Therefore, superficial reading does not contribute to effective learning and improved reading comprehension (Suhaila et al., 2025). The authors imply that it is essential to rely on interactive learning strategies that are best suited for each student and practice them consistently.

Question #5.- How have you enhanced your reading comprehension by using “The Critical Reader” for complex texts?

According to the responds, each student practiced with “The Critical Reader”, they used a different set of strategies suited to their study style and helps them tackle texts ranging from the simplest to the most complex. Among the tactics mentioned were diving the text into manageable

sections appropriate to their level, identifying the main topic, distinguishing essential parts of the passage, and even identifying small supporting details that contribute to their reading comprehension. Additionally, when they employed their learning strategies, they mentioned that they were helpful in building confidence by recognizing what they were reading and reducing anxiety during difficult and lengthy readings with advanced vocabulary.

Comprehension improves when learners not only focus on isolated words in a text but also understanding its structure and meaning. This means that reading is not just about word recognition, but also about using critical think thorough the process to connect the text with each person's prior knowledge. Farid et al. (2020), explain that reading is not just about vocabulary, but also about using thinking strategies to connect the text with what the reader already knows.

Question # 6.- Based on your experience, how do you think your critical thinking skills have progressed using “The Critical Reader” during your independent process?

From the interviewers, practicing with “The Critical Reader” has helped them develop stronger critical thinking skills. They question ideas more deeply instead of just reading superficially or memorizing parts of the text. There is a clear focus on connecting what they read with real-life situations, evaluating the author's perspective, recognizing assumptions, and considering the reliability of the information. This process makes learners more analytical and reflective, allowing them to better understand the meaning behind a text and develop independent thinking skills.

These responses indicated that practicing with “The Critical Reader” reinforces analytical and reflective thinking by encouraging learners to justify their interpretations, consider multiple perspectives, and apply their understanding. A research by Medranda-Morales et al. (2023),

demonstrates that students who read carefully and thoughtfully develop stronger critical thinking skills, which enhances their ability to comprehend, analyze, and evaluate information, leading to more independent and reflective reading practices.

Question #7.- What other didactic resources have you used in developing English reading skill as part of your independent learning, and why? Mention one or more.

The findings indicated that, through self-directed learning, students typically use various resources to improve their reading abilities. Among the most frequently mentioned resources were educational platforms, due to their interactivity, and online articles, as they are the most accessible on any website. Learners are able to encounter different writing styles, apply skills in real-life contexts, and complement the strategies learned with “The Critical Reader,” making reading practice more diverse, engaging, and effective.

In addition, students benefit from incorporating digital platforms that provide adaptable environments where they can practice at their own speed with content that is interesting for them. A study by Dinda et al. (2025), mention that even if traditional resources are variable, there is evidence that technological resources can significantly support comprehension when learners interact with texts in accessible ways. Hence, students are encouraged to combine these resources and control their own learning, a process that leads them to develop critical reflection and strengthen their reading skills more effectively in independent learning.

Question #8.- Do you believe “The Critical Reader” can benefit students' academic and personal performance? If so, why?

Results explained that students believe “The Critical Reader” both academic and personal development. It helps learners read more carefully, think critically, and understand texts deeply.

These skills are useful not only for exams and academic tasks, but also for everyday life, such as interpreting information, making decisions, and evaluating sources. Students also note that practicing with this resource can improve language skills, focus reasoning, and problem-solving, which are valuable in many different situations.

Likewise, students may strengthen their academic and personal performance through “The Critical Reader,” since it trains them to read carefully, analyze arguments, and reflect on what they understand. Applying strategies in critical reading helps expand and enhance areas such as reasoning, decision-making, and adequate preparation when evaluating information in different contexts (Le et al., 2024). This means that with continued practice using this learning resource, along with a combination of self-assessment strategies, learners strengthened certain abilities. Among the comments they made were reading comprehension, concentration while reading, and finally reflecting on the reviewed text. In the end, everyone concluded that thanks to these activities, they noticed an improvement in both academic tasks and every common situation.

Chapter V

Conclusion and Recommendations

This section presents the conclusions based on the interviews conducted for the research project titled “The Critical Reader” to enhance English reading skills. Based on the analysis of the collected answers, conclusions were obtained regarding the use of the use of didactic resources to support English language learning, with an emphasis on strengthening English reading skills.

In addition, this chapter provides several practical recommendations aimed to enhance students’ English reading skills by incorporating didactic resources such as “The Critical Reader” that foster improvements in both academic and personal performance, it is important to promote the use of technology among university students as a key tool for developing English language learning in the current world. Moreover, students considered the importance of using didactic resources and effective strategies to benefit reading proficiency development in their independent learning process. As the main objective of this research project indicates, it seeks to explore how the use of the “The Critical Reader” can enhance reading skills in different texts that are complex for undergraduates. Then, based on students’ experiences and perceptions, “The Critical Reader” encourages English reading skills and helps college students address reading through consistent practice and apply strategies correctly.

Conclusion

Starting with the analysis conducted for the students’ experiences, the use of “The Critical Reader” has become a useful learning didactic resource to strengthen English reading skills. Based on the information gathered from interviews, it is reasonable to suggest that

students perceive this didactic resource as an effective reference to support their increasingly engaged reading practice. The answers to the interviews suggest that the strategies in “The Critical Reader”, such as identifying main ideas, recognizing transitions in the text and considering the author's purpose, enhance the growth of both reading comprehension and critical thinking.

According to students' perspectives from the data gathered, the usefulness of “The Critical Reader” has a crucial role in students' autonomous learning and benefits in reading skills. It also contributes to both academic and personal development. Moreover, its effectiveness depends on how they use it in their own control and students state that it is important to maintain a constant process of discipline for independent practice that encourages achieving goals related to improvements in reading. As a result, they had a progressive process enhancing some features that before were complex to resolve or complete absolutely.

Based to the data obtained, applying strategies while using “The Critical Reader” proved to be a valuable support for students to face difficulties with long and complex readings that were often complicated to understand at the beginning. As they became more familiar with the material, they started to approach reading in a more organized and focused manner, which helped them improve their comprehension and strengthen their English reading skills. It is important to note that each learner selected and adapted the strategies that best suited their learning style, which made the reading experience more effective and meaningful. To sum up, using strategies play a key role in helping students develop a deeper understanding of texts, become more independent readers, and strengthen their overall performance in English reading.

Recommendations

In order to enhance their English reading skills and promote autonomous learning, it is recommended that students are encouraged to use “The Critical Reader” regularly as part of their independent study. Students are free to choose the strategies that allow them to understand more easily and carry out the reading process in a organized manner agreeing to their own criteria, while also benefiting their comprehension and the development of critical thinking. Strategies with greater emphasis include analyzing the author’s purpose in a passage, identifying main ideas, and making inferences during the reading and comprehension process. Activities that also influence this process include summarizing, reflecting, and noting essential or key points that are most relevant in a text.

To strengthen autonomous learning and consistent reading practice, it is proposed that learners establish a structured reading routine for independent study with “The Critical Reader.” Learners can plan regular reading sessions and define what they want to achieve, they can observe their progress over time and stay motivated. It is also recommended that students reflect on their achievement and identify areas that need enhancement, helping them become more conscious of their own English learning process. This practice encourages persistence, discipline, and a long-term commitment to improve their English reading skills.

With the purpose of promoting students' enhancement and independence in English reading, it is suggested that learners actively involve themselves in their learning not only with “The Critical Reader” but also implement the use of digital platforms and online resources that offer a variety of reading materials and interactive tools. By exploring different types of reading such as articles, stories, or essays, students can discover new styles, tones, and structure of texts for them. This variety allows learners to adapt to different reading approaches, expand their

vocabulary, and improve their comprehension in multiple contexts. In conclusion, regular practice with a variety of readings fosters flexibility in the strategies that students use to approach new and complex texts.

Finally, this research project reinforces the effectiveness of using “The Critical Reader” on students’ English reading skills in their process of independent learning, with the objective of achieving both personal and academic goals. Furthermore, this teaching resource provides texts that require deeper understanding and analysis, with the goal of putting into practice the general skills involved in reading complex texts. It is important to emphasize that reading skills are not only vital in academic settings but also for daily life, and that all situations that require the use of critical thinking, decision-making, and it allows students to be truly critical readers, requiring good preparation with appropriate resources and strategies that fosters meaningful learning outcomes.

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Annexes

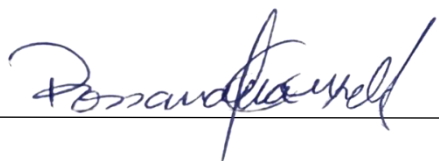
Annex A: Certified Anti-Plagiarism System

La libertad, 30 de octubre de 2025

Certificado Sistema Anti-Plagio

En calidad de tutor/a del Trabajo de Integración Curricular denominado “THE CRITICAL READER” TO ENHANCE ENGLISH READING SKILL elaborado por las estudiantes GUALE SANTISTEVAN JOSELYN ARIANNA y ROSALES TOMALÁ IRIS JAILYNE de la Carrera de Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros, de la Facultad de Ciencias de la Educación e Idiomas, de la Universidad Estatal Península de Santa Elena, me permito declarar que una vez analizado en el sistema anti plagio COMPILATIO, luego de haber cumplido los requerimientos exigidos de valoración, el presente trabajo de investigación, se encuentra con 2 % de la valoración permitida, por consiguiente se procede a emitir el informe, para proceder a la revisión por parte del especialista.

Atentamente,



Lcda. Rossana Vera Cruzatti, MSc.

TUTOR



CERTIFICADO DE ANÁLISIS
magister

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Nombre del documento: GUALE SANTISTEVAN JOSELYN ARIANNA,
ROSALES TOMALÁ IRIS JAILYNE 1.docx
ID del documento: 9f04d7dadbd7c3cb03314da19b345cfe137c4a97
Tamaño del documento original: 27,83 kB

Depositante: ROSSANA NARCISA VERA CRUZATTI
Fecha de depósito: 30/10/2025
Tipo de carga: interface
fecha de fin de análisis: 30/10/2025

Número de palabras: 4224
Número de caracteres: 29.129

Ubicación de las similitudes en el documento:

Rossana Vera Cruzatti

Annex B: Questionnaire

“The Critical Reader” to Enhance English Reading Skill

Questionnaire:

1. How does "The Critical Reader" help you improve a feature of reading skill that you find most difficult?
2. What strategies do you typically use when using “The Critical Reader” and how do they help you better understand texts?
3. Could you describe your experience since you started using “The Critical Reader” in your English learning process?
4. What aspects of “The Critical Reader” do you find most challenging in strengthening your reading comprehension?
5. How have you enhanced your reading comprehension by using “The Critical Reader” for complex texts?
6. Based on your experience, how do you think your critical thinking skills have progressed using "The Critical Reader" during your independent process?
7. What other didactic resources have you used in developing English reading skill as part of your independent learning, and why? Mention one or more.
8. Do you believe "The Critical Reader" can benefit students' academic and personal performance? If so, why?

Annex C: Transcripts of interviews

Interviewee #1

Question #1: How does "The Critical Reader" help you improve a feature of reading skill that you find most difficult?

"The Critical Reader" has helped me improve in identifying main ideas and making inferences, which were the most difficult for me.

Question #2: What strategies do you typically use when using "The Critical Reader" and how do they help you better understand texts?

I usually underline, take notes, and reread. These strategies help me organize the information and understand texts better.

Question #3: Could you describe your experience since you started using "The Critical Reader" in your English learning process?

Since I started using it, I feel more confident reading in English, and I can understand texts more deeply. It has become a useful tool to measure my progress over time.

Question #4: What aspects of "The Critical Reader" do you find most challenging in strengthening your reading comprehension?

The most challenging part is analyzing long and complex texts because they require focus and advanced vocabulary. However, this challenge pushes me to expand my knowledge and improve step by step.

Question #5: How have you enhanced your reading comprehension by using "The Critical Reader" for complex texts?

I have improved by practicing with challenging readings, learning to divide the text into parts and focusing on the author's logic. This has made me more independent and effective when reading.

Question #6: Based on your experience, how do you think your critical thinking skills have progressed using "The Critical Reader" during your independent process?

My critical thinking skills have progressed because now I question ideas more and don't just read superficially. I try to connect what I read with real-life situations and my own opinions.

Question #7: What other didactic resources have you used in developing English reading skill as part of your independent learning, and why? Mention one or more.

I have also used academic articles, online dictionaries, and audiobooks, because they complement learning with different approaches. Each one has given me new perspectives to understand English better.

Question #8: Do you believe "The Critical Reader" can benefit students' academic and personal performance? If so, why?

Yes, because it promotes analysis, deep comprehension, and develops skills that are useful both academically and personally. It prepares students not only for exams but also for daily communication. In addition, it helps to form more critical readers who are able to reflect on what they read and apply that knowledge in different contexts of their lives. It also helps us improve grammar, since by practicing with the exercises we better understand the structure of the language and how to apply it correctly.

Interviewee #2

Question #1: How does "The Critical Reader" help you improve a feature of reading skill that you find most difficult?

For me, The Critical Reader helped me improve how I analyze sentence structure and meaning under pressure. Before, I used to read everything too fast and miss important details, but now I have learned to slow down and focus on logic and grammar within each sentence, which makes comprehension easier.

Question #2: What strategies do you typically use when using "The Critical Reader" and how do they help you better understand texts?

I usually read the whole passage first and then look at the question instead of the other way around. Sometimes I also underline keywords or transitions like "however, although or therefore" done that helps me understand the relationship between ideas and avoid choosing answers that only sound right.

Question #3: Could you describe your experience since you started using "The Critical Reader" in your English learning process?

At first, it was frustrating because the question is very specific and sometimes tricky. But over time I got used to the style and realized I was understanding more of what I read, not just vocabulary.

Question #4: What aspects of "The Critical Reader" do you find most challenging in strengthening your reading comprehension?

Definitely the grammar-based question that looks simply but test your understanding of sentence logic. Sometimes two answers seem correct, and you have to pay attention to punctuation or small differences in its meaning.

Question #5: How have you enhanced your reading comprehension by using "The Critical Reader" for complex texts?

It trained me to look for context clues and pay attention to the main argument instead of every single word. When I face longer or more complex texts now, I can identify what's essential and what's just supporting detail, which makes reading faster and more efficient.

Question #6: Based on your experience, how do you think your critical thinking skills have progressed using "The Critical Reader" during your independent process?

It's improved a lot. Since the site forces you to justify why an answer is correct or incorrect, you start thinking more deeply about how writers build meaning.

Question #7: What other didactic resources have you used in developing English reading skill as part of your independent learning, and why? Mention one or more.

First, I've used ReadTheory for quick reading practice and the second one is Grammarly Blog to understand grammar rules better. ReadTheory helps me train speed and comprehension, while The Critical Reader focuses more on accuracy and reasoning, so both complement each other.

Question #8: Do you believe "The Critical Reader" can benefit students' academic and personal performance? If so, why?

Absolutely, because it trains your mind to read carefully and think logically. It's not just about English, it improves focus, reasoning, and problem-solving, which are useful in any academic subject or even in daily life when you need to interpret information correctly.

Interviewee #3

Question #1: How does "The Critical Reader" help you improve a feature of reading skill that you find most difficult?

It helped me work on identifying the author's main point and tone, which I often found difficult. The book breaks down strategies step by step, showing me how to recognize important clues in the passage instead of getting lost in detail.

Question #2: What strategies do you typically use when using "The Critical Reader" and how do they help you better understand texts?

I usually underline keywords, summarize each paragraph in a few words, and practice eliminating wrong answer choices as suggested in the book. These strategies help me stay focused on the structure of the passage and avoid distractions from tricky wording.

Question #3: Could you describe your experience since you started using "The Critical Reader" in your English learning process?

Since I started using it, I've become more confident in approaching long and complex texts. At first, it felt overwhelming, but with regular practice, I began to see patterns in the questions and gained more control over my reading speed and accuracy.

Question #4: What aspects of "The Critical Reader" do you find most challenging in strengthening your reading comprehension?

The most challenging part is applying the strategies consistently under time pressure. Sometimes I understand the concepts in theory, but when I'm timed, I still fall into old habits of reading too quickly or misinterpreting key details.

Question #5: How have you enhanced your reading comprehension by using "The Critical Reader" for complex texts?

I've learned to slow down and look for transitions, shifts in tone, and signal words. These techniques allow me to break down complex arguments into smaller parts, making them easier to analyze and understand.

Question #6: Based on your experience, how do you think your critical thinking skills have progressed using "The Critical Reader" during your independent process?

My critical thinking has improved because I now question why an answer is correct rather than just memorizing it. I also consider the author's perspective, hidden assumptions, and the relationship between ideas, which has made me a more analytical reader overall.

Question #7: What other didactic resources have you used in developing English reading skill as part of your independent learning, and why? Mention one or more.

I have also used online practice platforms like Khan Academy and authentic materials such as news articles from The New York Times. These resources expose me to different writing styles and provide practice outside of test-prep books, which helps me apply skills in real-life contexts.

Question #8: Do you believe "The Critical Reader" can benefit students' academic and personal performance? If so, why?

Yes, I believe it can. Academically, it teaches students how to approach texts strategically, which is useful not only for exams but also for reading academic articles. Personally, it encourages patience, focus, and the ability to think critically about information, skills that are valuable in everyday life.

Interviewee #4

Question #1: How does "The Critical Reader" help you improve a feature of reading skill that you find most difficult?

The Critical Reader helped me improve my understanding of argumentative logic. Before, I found it difficult to identify the structure of a text, how an author introduces an idea, supports it with evidence, and refutes counterarguments. The book taught me how to break down paragraphs to see the function of each sentence, which allowed me to follow the author's train of thought and understand the purpose behind each claim.

Question #2: What strategies do you typically use when using “The Critical Reader” and how do they help you better understand texts?

I primarily use two strategies: Paragraph function analysis: Instead of just reading, I ask myself, "What is this paragraph doing? Is it introducing a point, giving an example, or refuting an idea?" This forces me to be an active reader and not just a passive consumer of information.

Identification of "keywords" or "transition signals": The book made me aware of words like "however", "therefore", or "additionally," which indicate a change in the argument's direction or the addition of new information. Recognizing these helps me anticipate the author's next idea.

Question #3: Could you describe your experience since you started using “The Critical Reader” in your English learning process?

My experience has been very positive. At first, I felt like I was reading in a very mechanical way, but over time, I've developed a more critical mindset. Now, when I read an article or a book, I don't just stay on the surface. I can identify the author's intentions, evaluate the quality of their arguments, and form my own opinions. I feel like my brain has been trained to read more intelligently.

Question #4: What aspects of “The Critical Reader” do you find most challenging in strengthening your reading comprehension?

The biggest challenge has been maintaining the discipline to apply the techniques consistently with every reading. At first, it's easy to fall back into old, passive reading habits. It requires a conscious and repetitive effort to turn the strategies into a natural practice. It's a gradual process that demands patience.

Question #5: How have you enhanced your reading comprehension by using “The Critical Reader” for complex texts?

The Critical Reader has taught me how to simplify what's complex. For difficult texts, I focus on identifying the main thesis and the supporting arguments. This allows me to temporarily ignore confusing details and focus on the central structure. Once I have that foundation, it's much easier to go back and understand the text's details and subtleties.

Question #6: Based on your experience, how do you think your critical thinking skills have progressed using "The Critical Reader" during your independent process?

My critical thinking skills have improved significantly. Now, when I read, I don't just accept information as fact. I ask myself questions like, "What evidence does the author present?" "Are these sources reliable?", or "Is there any bias in this argument?" This process of questioning has made me a much more demanding and analytical reader, both in English and in Spanish.

Question #7: What other didactic resources have you used in developing English reading skill as part of your independent learning, and why? Mention one or more.

In addition to The Critical Reader, I've used opinion articles from newspapers like The Guardian or The New York Times. These resources are excellent because they present well-structured arguments on current topics, allowing me to practice identifying the thesis and arguments in a real-world context. I've also used the adaptive reading platform Newsela, which adjusts the difficulty of articles to my level, letting me practice comprehension in a more accessible way.

Question #8: Do you believe "The Critical Reader" can benefit students' academic and personal performance? If so, why?

Yes, absolutely. Academically, it helps students improve their performance on standardized tests and with the complex texts required in college. On a personal level, students become more discerning consumers of information. In the age of fake news and information overload, knowing how to evaluate what you read is a vital life skill. "The Critical Reader" isn't just a test prep book; it's a tool for life.

Interviewee #5

Question #1: How does "The Critical Reader" help you improve a feature of reading skill that you find most difficult?

It helped me mainly with identifying the main idea and supporting details. Before, I used to get lost in too much information, but now I can focus on what is really important in the text.

Question #2: What strategies do you typically use when using "The Critical Reader" and how do they help you better understand texts?

I usually underline keywords, take notes, and reread the questions before looking back at the text. These strategies make me more organized and help me connect the ideas more easily.

Question #3: Could you describe your experience since you started using "The Critical Reader" in your English learning process?

At first, it was a little difficult because the exercises seemed long and demanding, but with practice I started to feel more confident. Now, I can read faster and understand better without translating every single word.

Question #4: What aspects of "The Critical Reader" do you find most challenging in strengthening your reading comprehension?

The most challenging part is analyzing inference questions, because they require me to think beyond what is written. I still need more practice in this area.

Question #5: How have you enhanced your reading comprehension by using "The Critical Reader" for complex texts?

I have learned to break down the text into smaller parts, recognize the structure, and pay attention to transitions. This helps me not to feel overwhelmed when the vocabulary or ideas are difficult.

Question #6: Based on your experience, how do you think your critical thinking skills have progressed using "The Critical Reader" during your independent process?

I think my critical thinking has improved because I don't just read for the answer anymore. I ask myself why the author wrote something and how each paragraph connects to the whole passage.

Question #7: What other didactic resources have you used in developing English reading skill as part of your independent learning, and why? Mention one or more.

I have also used online articles, YouTube educational channels, and short stories. They help me practice with different types of texts and make reading more enjoyable.

Question #8: Do you believe "The Critical Reader" can benefit students' academic and personal performance? If so, why?

Yes, I do. It teaches students to read with more attention, analyze deeply, and think critically. These skills are not only useful for exams but also for understanding information in real life and making better decisions.