EXPLORING CRITICAL READING SKILL AMONG ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDENTS AT IAIN LANGSA: STRATEGIES AND CHALLENGES

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MINISTRY OF RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS

STATE INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC STUDIES

LANGSA

2024 M / 1446 H

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EXPLORING CRITICAL READING SKILL AMONG ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDENTS AT IAIN LANGSA: STRATEGIES AND CHALLENGES

Submitted to the Tarbiyah and Teachers Training Faculty
State Institute of Islamic Studies Langsa as Fulfilment of the Requirements
For the Degree of *Sarjana Pendidikan (S.Pd)* of English Education

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EXPLORING CRITICAL READING SKILL AMONG ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDENTS AT IAIN LANGSA: STRATEGIES AND CHALLENGES

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9 Jumadil Awal 1446 H

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Menyatakan dengan sebenarnya bahwa skripsi yang di tulis dengan judul **Exploring Critical Reading Skill Among English Education Students At IAIN Langsa: Strategies And Challenges** merupakan hasil karya sendiri. Apabila di kemudian hari terbukti bahwa skripsi in adalah hasil jiplakan, maka saya bersedia menerima segala sanksi yang di beri atas perbuatan saya tersebut.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

I want to express my gratitude to the presence of Allah SWT who has given me the ability to complete my thesis entitled 'Exploring Critical Reading Skill among English Education Students at IAIN Langsa: Strategies and Challenges' I offer my prayers and greetings to the great prophet Muhammad SAW who has guided humans towards the right path of life. Additionally, I would like to thank the following parties:

1. Prof. Dr.Ismail Fahmi Arrauf Nasution, M.A as the rector of the State Institute of Islamic Studies Langsa
2. Dr. Amiruddin, MA as the dean of the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training at the State Institute of Islamic Studies Langsa
3. Mr. Fachrurrazi, M.Hum as chair of the English Department of Tarbiyah Teachers Training Faculty at the State Institute of Islamic Studies Langsa
4. Mr. Ruly Adha, MS was my first supervisor who always supported and directed me as well as very thorough guidance for the perfection of this thesis writing.
5. Mrs. Fadhillah Wiandari, MS is my second supervisor who always supports, motivates, and directs me, providing very valuable suggestions in perfecting this thesis.
6. For my first love and role model, my beloved father Alm. T Zulfikar, many painful things I have gone through, without a battered father figure beaten by a reality that is sometimes not in line. envy and longing that often makes me fall slapped by reality. but it all does not reduce my pride and gratitude for the life my father has given. I dedicate this paper to my guardian angel in heaven. And for my heavenly door, my beloved mother Syafrida NST. The author expresses his deepest gratitude to her for all forms of help, encouragement and prayers given so far. Thank you for the advice that is always given even though sometimes our thoughts are not in

line, thank you for your patience and greatness in dealing with stubborn writers. Mom is the most powerful reminder and strength. Thank you for being my home.

7. To my beloved sister, Emi lia Sonya Thank you for being a loyal listener every time I expressed my complaints and confusion during the writing of this thesis.
8. To my best friend Firdha Meisara Salim, thank you for being a place to share stories, ideas, and complaints during the process of preparing this thesis. Thank you for every warm chat and the enthusiasm you transmit. Thank you for never leaving the author alone. thank you for accompanying me until the end.
9. Last but not least, for myself Gina Rodhatul Jannah, thank you for surviving this far, thank you for continuing to choose to try, even though you often feel hopeless about what you are trying and have not succeeded, thank you for never giving up no matter how difficult the process of preparing this thesis is and completing it to the best of your ability.

The writer recognizes that this thesis is far from perfect. Despite putting forth my best effort during the writing process, there are still deficiencies and limitations that may be unavoidable. I hope that this thesis will still be useful and provide valuable contributions, and serve as a basis for future improvements.

Wassalammualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh

Langsa, 7 Agustus 2024

Yang membuat pernyataan

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Abstract

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This study aimed to determine the strategies used and the challenges English students face to improve critical reading skills. This type of research was a qualitative case study. The research object was 8th-semester students with 10 participants majoring in English at IAIN Langsa. The instrument used is an interview. The results of this study showed that students used various strategies such as scanning & skimming to get information quickly, questioning to actively interact with the text, paraphrasing to clarify the meaning of the text, previewing to make reading more interesting, monitoring and summarizing to improve critical understanding through group discussions and concise notes. Challenges faced by students were a lack of access to digital media and quality reading resources, an environment that is less supportive of reading interest, and limited time for in-depth reading due to the large number of courses. Lack of interesting reading materials and low reading habits are also significant obstacles and difficulties in developing critical and analytical thinking.

Keywords: *Critical Reading Skill, Reading Strategies, Reading Challenges*

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of Study

The development of critical reading skills is an important part of higher education, especially in an academic environment that values a deep understanding of English texts. At IAIN Langsa, lecturers prepare students to have critical reading skills, crucial for developing analytical and reflective thinking necessary to face the challenges of the times. One of the categories in reading skills is critical reading skills. Critical reading skills are skills that will help students to be able to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate what is read.[1] When teachers expose students to critical reading skills, they will also make students see the cause – and – effect or comparing relationships in the text, or adopting critical stance toward the text. In other words, when we teach critical reading skills to students we will develop them to be critical thinkers as well because when they do critical reading it will lead to critical thinking (critical reading will come first before critical thinking). What is meant here, students need to have fully understood a text where they would analyze, synthesize, and evaluate it, then only they would think critically about the text – choose or reject the ideas put forward, agree or disagree with the issues, and most important of all they know the reason(s) why they do it. There are three

[1] Muhammad A. Al Roomy, "Investigating the Effects of Critical Reading Skills on Students' Reading Comprehension," *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ)* 13, no. 1 (2022): 366–381.

personal reasons for reading: we read to survive (reading for survival), we read to learn (reading for learning), and we read for pleasure (reading for pleasure).[2]

However, many challenges hinder the efforts of IAIN-Langsa students in developing critical reading skills. First, the content of English texts is often complex and confusing for those without adequate formal education. Secondly, interpreting English texts correctly often requires an understanding of cultural, historical and theological contexts, which students may not have.Thirdly, in some cases, the development of critical reading skills does not receive enough attention in the curriculum, preferring to focus on literal understanding of texts. Finally, resource limitations, such as libraries with limited collections or limited access to critical literature, can also be an obstacle in developing critical reading skills.

Addressing these challenges requires a holistic approach. Appropriate curricula need to be strengthened, with special emphasis on developing critical reading skills. There are three distinct sets of competencies that a student must develop in order to become an effective reader: reading skills development, reading comprehension, and reading research and study skills.[3] Additional resources such as modern libraries and access to scholarly literature should also be improved. In addition, innovative teaching methods such as group discussions, collaborative text analysis, and research projects can be used to stimulate students' critical thinking. Identifying and addressing these challenges develops IAIN

[2] M. Faruq Ubaidillah Yunus, Muhammad, "EFL Teacher Educators' Experiences in Teaching Critical Reading: Evidence from Indonesia," *Journal on English as a Foreign Language* 11, no. 2 (2021): 422–441.

[3] Sofwah Md Nawi Arieff Shamida, Gurnam Kaur Sidhu, "Postgraduate Students' Perceived and Actual Performance in Critical Reading Skills," *Asian Journal of University Education(AJUE)* 17, no. 3 (2021).

Langsa students into critical readers, reflective thinkers, and open-minded leaders in an increasingly complex and diverse society.

We need to teach critical reading skills to students because we want them to not only know how to convert orthographic symbols to language (word attack skills), use context and knowledge to comprehend what is read (comprehension skills), or see larger sentences as wholes, a process which helps students to read fluently (fluency skills). Based on the problems mentioned above, the researcher is interested in conducting a study entitled **Exploring Critical Reading Skill among English Education Students at IAIN Langsa: Strategies and Challenges.**

B. Problem of Study

The researcher formulated some problems of study, as follows:

1. What are the strategies used by English students at IAIN Langsa in improving critical reading skills?
2. What are the challenges faced by English students at IAIN Langsa in improving critical reading skills?

C. Purpose of study

The purposes of the study are as follows**:**

1. To find out the strategies used by English students at IAIN Langsa in improving critical reading skills.
2. To find out the challenges faced by English students at IAIN Langsa in improving critical reading skills.

D. Significance of Study

Theoretically, this study has the benefit of opening up opportunities for more detailed investigations into specific strategies and interventions that could be used to address the challenges identified as well as possibly having wider implications for other academic institutions in similar situations. Practically, this study provides useful information and can also improve critical thinking skills as well as academic achievement.

E. Terminology

To anticipate different interpretations of the terminology used in this study, the following operational definitions need to be stated:

1. Critical Reading skills are skills that will help students to be able to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate what is read
2. Critical Reading strategy are Students must comprehend a book before they can apply higher-order thinking skills to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate it to improve comprehension while reading.
3. These obstacles may seriously impair students' ability to engage with, understand, and critically analyze academic content, which may affect their capability to fully absorb and assess that content. A large amount of research demonstrates that one major element influencing pupils' comprehension of reading content is their lack of metacognitive techniques.

CHAPTER IV
FINDING AND DISCUSSION

A. Finding

The researcher interviewed 10 eighth-semester students of the English Department who had taken the critical reading course. The researcher asked them 10 questions. The results of the interviews were as follows:

1. What is the level of your critical reading skills among English education students at IAIN Langsa?

   Student KAG said, “I think my ability is quite good because I quickly get the information in a text or a news story”. Student NI said, “In my environment, reading is lacking, let alone criticizing it. I personally also lack critical reading because of the influence of the environment”. Student KH said, “I think my ability to read is quite critical because I can understand the text I read well”. Student FR said, “My ability level is not very critical”. Student FMS said, "I lack critical reading due to environmental influences, and also I lack reading journals, and books, especially in English”. Student IKS said, “My level of critical reading skills is quite good, especially in analyzing and evaluating texts”. Student PP said, “I think my critical reading has improved because I easily get and understand the information I read and even I easily find solutions to the problems of the text I read”. Student FRD said, “My level of critical reading skills is at a fairly good level. I have attended various trainings and workshops that helped me develop this ability. However, there are still some things I need to improve”.

Student AR said, “In my opinion, the level of my critical reading skills is arguably lacking, I feel that I still need to learn a lot to improve my critical reading skills”. Student CR said, “My critical reading skill level is quite good”.

2. What strategies do you use as an English education student at IAIN Langsa to develop your critical reading skills?

Student KAG said, “I often use scanning and skimming because it is easier to understand the text and faster sometimes I also like to use questions because I can be more active with the text and gain more knowledge. The strategy I use depends on the text I am reading”. Student NI said, “The strategy I use is more to scanning and skimming, as a student of IAIN Langsa, I diligently go to the library to skim and take the essence of the reading. I have always liked reading so I am quite critical”. Student KH said, “I use paraphrasing techniques to clarify the text I read, thus I know the meaning of the reading”. Student FR said, “I use monitoring strategies to improve critical reading skills. analyze the text in depth and conduct group discussions to confirm whether the understanding of the text read is by the understanding of other group members”. Student FMS said, “The strategy I use is usually more to preview because I am more interested in reading by looking at pictures”. Student IKS said, “That I often use the strategies of monitoring group discussions, reading academic journals, and conducting in-depth text analysis. I also utilize technology such as digital reader apps and online discussion forums to enrich my understanding”. Student PP said,

"The strategies I often use are monitoring, analyzing texts in-depth and group discussions to share perspectives". Students FRD said, "That I used summarizing and monitoring strategies by making notes and reading summaries that helped me understand the essence of the problem, discussing with friends and lecturers to exchange ideas and get new perspectives". Student AR said, "I used the summarizing strategy by noting important points". Student CR said, "That I use the paraphrasing strategy because it can enrich the language The more sentences that are paraphrased, the more new vocabulary we get so it hones our critical thinking to make new sentences with sentences that are more pleasant to read".

3. What challenges do you face as an English education student at IAIN Langsa in developing your critical reading skills?

Student KAG said, "There is a lack of digital reading media that can make it easier for students, including me, to read more academic texts". Student NI said, "Apart from an unsupportive environment, another challenge is that access to books is difficult. In the library still lacks interest in reading". Student KH said, "There was a lack of interesting reading material". Student FR said, "There was a lack of interest in reading and the surrounding environment so I got carried away and became lazy to read". Student FMS said, "The challenges I face are various, such as the lack of interesting books to read and also an unsupportive environment". Student IKS said, "The main challenges I face are limited access to quality reading sources, lack of time to delve into the material, and basic reading skills that still need

to be improved". Students PP said, "The challenges I often face are a limited time to read, and environmental influences that are less supportive of reading interest". Student FRD said, "The challenges I face Getting used to thinking critically and analytically when reading because sometimes I still get stuck in superficial understanding". Student AR said, "The challenge I face is lack of time. With many college assignments and activities, it is often difficult to take enough time to read deeply and analyze texts". Student CR said, "Lack of interest in reading media about knowledge".

4. How do you perceive the importance of critical reading skills in your studies?

Student KAG said, "There are still many students who have difficulty getting information contained in the text they read, even though the ability to read critically is an important skill in the scope of lectures". Student NI said, "In learning, it is necessary to read critically. It is based on the fact that our learning space is trained to think quickly. That's why if we don't read a lot, our ideas will get stuck". Student KH said, "Critical reading is very necessary, but most students are too lazy to read texts". Student FR said, "That reading ability is very important in every learning, especially English learning because as an education student, it is very important and without reading there will be no additional insight". Student FMS said, "I think it is very important because it trains the mind to think critically as well, helping in understanding the lecture material in depth". Student IKS said, "I realized the importance of critical reading skills in my studies, especially in helping me understand the material more deeply and develop stronger arguments in

assignments and research". Student PP said, "I as a student recognize the importance of critical reading skills for academic and professional success". Student FRD said, "That critical reading ability is very important in my studies, it helps me understand academic texts in depth, develop critical thinking, and present strong arguments. critical reading helps me a lot in completing assignments and achieving good academic performance". Student AR said, "Critical reading skills are very important to me, especially in English Education studies. It allows me to understand academic texts in depth, evaluate various theories, and develop critical thinking skills needed in the learning and teaching process". Student CR said, "Very important because with good reading skills, I can not only develop ideas but also explain with more interesting and varied language".

5. To what extent were the strategies you used effective in improving your critical reading skills?

Student KAG said, "Basically students can use scanning and skimming strategies in general, but the resulting output is not what is expected". Student NI said, "It's not that far away. It's just limited to reading articles and news every morning to train critically". Student KH said, "It was quite far away because as a person who easily forgets, I think this method is effective even though it is repeated". Student FR said, "The strategy I used was quite effective". Student FMS said, "In my opinion, the previewing strategy is very effective in helping me in critical reading, I am also a person who is easily bored so that by looking at the pictures in the text makes me

more interested in reading". Student IKS said, "The effectiveness of the strategies I used was quite good. Group discussions and in-depth text analysis are very helpful, while the use of technology still needs further guidance so that it can be utilized optimally". Student PP said, "The strategy I used was quite effective in improving critical reading skills'. Student FRD said, "The strategy I used was quite effective in improving my critical reading skills". Student AR said, "The strategies I have used so far are quite effective in helping me improve my critical reading skills". Student CR said, "The strategy I used was good enough".

6. What is the role of lecturers in helping students develop critical reading skills?

Student KAG said, "In my opinion, every lecturer must teach critical reading strategies because these skills are not only useful during lectures but are also useful in life outside lectures". Student NI said, "The lecturers are actually quite helpful but lecturers alone are not enough to help". Student KH said, "Some lecturers suggested reading using the recommended app, so I think the app is suitable for beginners who want to read texts". Student FR said, "The lecturer has a critical reading facility for students, before entering the course the lecturer provides material to students and is told to read and understand the material and then it will be tested, so students will automatically improve their reading skills". Student FMS said, "That the role of lecturers is also important, but it is not enough to rely on lecturers alone, so you have to be independent too". Student IKS said, "Lecturers play a very important role by providing guidance, providing reading

sources, and directing class discussions towards critical discussions. Lecturers also provide suggestions to help improve critical reading skills". Student PP said, "Lecturers play a big role by providing guidance and feedback. Teaching critical analysis methods". Students FRD said, "Lecturers have an important role in developing critical reading skills. Lecturers share effective critical reading strategies and techniques with students". Student AR said, "Lecturers have a very important role in helping students develop critical reading skills. Lecturers can provide challenging reading tasks, provide feedback, and facilitate class discussions that stimulate critical thinking". Student CR said, "Lecturers have an important role in helping students. Lecturers can provide quality reading and then invite students to discuss to encourage students to become critical readers".

7. How does the use of technology and digital resources affect students' critical reading skills?

Student KAG said, "The technology that exists now should be further developed and utilized because, in this day and age, humans are dependent on technology, and students must use technology as well as possible to improve critical reading skills". Student NI said, "This is advanced. We can access information with the cell phone in each hand". Student KH said, "That technology is now sophisticated so it can be accessed anywhere, it just depends on whether the student wants to read or not". Student FR said, "Technology is very influential because with technology, students are now lazy to read books, but with technology, it makes it easier for us to read

from other media such as from TikTok and Instagram". Student FMS said, "The use of technology is very helpful because now everything is all about technology so it is more helpful if you read on your cellphone, especially since there is already a platform for reading, making it easier for me to read anytime and anywhere". Student IKS said, "The use of technology and digital resources is very helpful in enriching my reading experience, although there are still challenges in their optimal utilization. With digital resources, I can more easily access various scholarly works and perspectives". Student PP said, "The use of technology and digital resources can provide access to extensive and diverse resources, such as online journals, e-books, and discussion forums. The use of apps and reading aids can also help improve critical reading skills". Students FRD said, "There is an influence of the use of technology and digital resources on reading ability. easy to get reading material from various sources". Students AR said, "Technology and digital resources provide easier access to various information. On the other hand, this can also lead to information overload and make it difficult for us to distinguish relevant and quality information. Therefore, we need to have strong critical reading skills to be able to filter and evaluate the information we get from digital sources". Student CR said, "There is a positive influence in it for example I feel that the existence of technology makes it very easy for me to find reading material without the need to bother carrying books wherever I go besides the many free reading forums or applications make it easier for me to improve my reading skills".

8. What factors affect students' ability to read critically?

Student KAG said, “In my opinion, the task demands factor where they have to quickly get an answer or information in a text. and environmental factors also influence in improving critical reading skills”. Student NI said, “Reading books, a reading environment”. Student KH said, “It might be because the text is long and in English, also usually in the text there is vocabulary that is sometimes still unfamiliar so it might be boring to read”. Student FR said, “The factors that influence reading progress are having friends who are diligent can influence us to read diligently, then the basic interest in reading becomes an influencing factor so that it can become more advanced, then the factor of lack of interest in reading is influenced by a less supportive environment and lack of books or reading facilities”. Student FMS said, “That intention and interest, as well as the surrounding environment, can make us motivated to read”. Student IKS said, “Factors that influence my critical reading skills include previous educational background, personal interest and motivation, support from lecturers, and adequate facilities”. Student PP said, “The factors that influence critical reading ability are educational background, motivation, and interest in learning, quality of teaching, and guidance received”. Students FRD said, “The factors that influence critical reading skills are interest and motivation in reading, availability of reading sources, and guidance from lecturers”. Student AR said, “The influencing factor is reading interest The greater a

person's interest in reading, the greater the likelihood that he will develop critical reading skills, then educational background Previous education can provide a strong foundation for developing critical reading skills". Student CR said, "In my personal opinion, the most important factor is awareness or willingness from oneself".

9. What is the relationship between critical reading skills and academic achievement of English education students at IAIN Langsa?

Student KAG said, "By having critical reading skills students get more and wider information compared to students who do not have critical reading skills so critical reading skills are influential in the academic achievement of English students". Student NI said, "There is a connection and it is very close. the achievements I have gotten so far are due to my hobby of reading". Student KH said, "That critical reading skills can increase creativity". Student FR said, "There is a relationship between critical reading and academic achievement because on average, people who excel are diligent readers or smart except if their achievements are like sports achievements, but if reading is very related because books are windows to the world so they can add insight". Student FMS said, "The connection I feel is that my academic grades have improved". Student IKS said, "There is a positive relationship between my critical reading skills and my academic performance. With good critical reading skills, I have a deeper understanding of the subject matter and can produce higher quality academic work". Student PP said, "Critical reading ability has a positive

correlation with academic achievement". Student FRD said, "There is a close relationship between critical reading skills and academic achievement, students who have good critical reading skills tend to get better grades in assignments, exams, and final assignments". Student AR said, "I believe that there is a strong relationship between critical reading skills and academic achievement. Students who have good critical reading skills tend to understand course materials more easily, write assignments well, and solve complex problems". Student CR said, "Very closely related, for me having good reading skills makes us an insightful person not only that reading also helps in structuring words when we are talking or explaining something or presenting".

10. What are the recommendations to overcome the challenges faced by students in developing critical reading skills?

Student KAG said, "My recommendation is not to be allergic to academic texts or texts that contain important information because from there we get new knowledge and new knowledge". Student NI said, "To start reading books, starting from novels is fine". Student KH said, "To use social media to get more reading information". Student FR said, "My recommendation is to provide a library that is comfortable for students, provide many novels but insert info that is not too old-fashioned or an invitation to literacy". Student FMS said, "I advise you to read diligently, and use technology to get reading material easily".Student IKS said, "I recommend further improving access to quality resources, practicing deep critical reading skills,

and support from lecturers and developing learning communities are also very important". Student PP said, "My recommendation is to provide specialized training for critical reading skills, and improve access to quality reading materials". Student FRD said, "Building collaboration between students, lecturers, and librarians to enrich reading and reference sources". Student AR said, "I suggested forming a study group, and attending workshops or training". Student CR said, "There must be willingness and awareness in oneself, instill in oneself if you want to have good public speaking skills must increase vocabulary most easily is by reading".

B. Discussion

Based on the results of the interview, there are several strategies used by students to improve critical reading skills, as follows:

1. Scan & Skimming

According to Mambua, scan skimming is finding out the key features of the reading and reading to get only the gist of the text.[31] Those who use this strategy are KAG and NI. From the interview data, the researchers concluded that those who used the scan & skimming strategy said that this strategy worked well, allowing them to absorb what they read quickly, and did not take long to read.

[31] Yanti Mambua, "The Effectiveness of Skimming and Scanning Techniques in Improving Student's Reading Comprehension of Grade Eleven Students of SMA Negeri 1 Tana Toraja," *Journal of Sosial Science* 1, no. 3 (2020): 93–99.

2. Questioning

According to Fahmi, et.al. questioning is written questions while you read a text for the first time, you will understand the material better and remember it longer if you write a question for every paragraph or brief section.[32] The one who uses this strategy is KAG. From the interview data, the researcher concluded that the questioning strategy can make students actively participate in the text and gain a deeper understanding of the concepts and material presented.

3. Paraphrasing

According to Isabel, et.al. paraphrasing is to restate and clarify the meaning of a few sentences from the text. Reread the passage to be paraphrased and look up unknown words. Translate information into your own words.[33] Those who use the Paraphrasing strategy are KH and CR. From the interview data, the researcher concluded that they used a paraphrasing strategy because it could clarify the text being read so that they could better understand the meaning of the reading.

4. Previewing

[32] Ruba Fahmi Bataineh and Maysaa Issa Al-Shbatat, "Is Questioning a Catalyst for Critical Reading among Jordanian EFL Learners?†," *Cypriot Journal of Educational Sciences* 14, no. 3 (2019): 384–400.

[33] Isabel Escudero, Narcisa Fuertes, and Ligia López, "Paraphrasing Strategy in EFL Ecuadorian B1 Students and Implications on Reading Comprehension," *English Language Teaching* 12, no. 1 (2018): 56.

According to Chitrasar, previewing is getting an overview of text structure, text cues, pictures, and personal experiences before reading a text.[34] The one that uses this strategy is FMS. From the interview data, the researcher concluded that the use of the Previewing strategy does not make readers get bored quickly because they can see the images in the text, making readers more interested in reading the text.

5. Monitoring

According to Soto, et.al. monitoring is for understanding by checking to see if the text makes sense.[35] Those who use the Paraphrasing strategy are IKS, PP, FRD, and FR. From the interview data, the researcher concluded that they used this strategy because they felt it was good enough to improve their critical reading skills. Studying the material carefully and having in-depth discussions with friends and lecturers to share ideas can help them see things from a different point of view.

6. Summarizing

According to Diana, et.al. summarizing is briefly presenting the main ideas of the text. Write a paragraph or more that presents the main ideas in your own words.[36] Those who use the Paraphrasing

[34] Gayatri Chitrasar, "The Effectiveness of Previewing as Pre-Reading Activity to Improve Students' Reading Comprehension at the Eleventh Grade of Sma Negeri 7 Pinrang" (2019).

[35] F. Soto, C., Gutierrez de Blume, A. P., Rebolledo, V., Rodríguez, F., Palma, D., & Gutiérrez, "Metacognitive Monitoring Skills of Reading Comprehension and Writing between Proficient and Poor Readers," *Metacognition and Learning* 18, no. 1 (2023): 113–134.

[36] Diana Fitri Ali, Fatimah Hidayahni Amin, and Andi Anto Patak, "Improving Students ' Reading Comprehension Through Preview , Ask Question , Identify , Read , and Summarize (Pairs) Strategy," *Journal of Technology in Language Pedagogy (JTechLP)* 2, no. 1 (2023): 26–40.

strategy are FRD and AR. From the interview data, the researcher concluded that they used this strategy because it was effective for improving critical reading comprehension, evaluating and analyzing by taking concise notes and reading could help them understand the essence of the problem.

Meanwhile, the challenges faced by students in improving critical reading are as follows:

1. KAG said that there is a lack of digital media that can facilitate students to read more academic texts.
2. NI said that the environment is less supportive; access to books is still difficult; and interest in reading is also lacking.
3. KH said that there is a lack of interesting reading materials.
4. FR and FMS added that low interest in reading and a less supportive environment were also obstacles.
5. IKS identified limited access to quality reading resources, time constraints, and basic reading skills that need to be improved.
6. PP said, that time constraints and environmental influences do not support interest in reading.
7. FRD said that it is important to familiarize yourself with critical and analytical thinking when reading because you often get stuck in narrow thinking.
8. AR said that the number of assignments and college activities made it difficult to read in-depth due to lack of time.

9. CR said, that there was a lack of interest in reading media about knowledge.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

A. Conclusion

The research draw some conclusions as follows:

1. The strategies used by students were Scanning & Skimming, Questioning, Paraphrasing, Monitoring, Previewing, and Summarizing.
2. Challenges faced by students were a lack of access to digital media and quality reading resources, a less supportive environment for reading, and limited time for in-depth reading due to the sheer volume of coursework. Lack of interesting reading materials and lack of interest in reading are also significant barriers, coupled with difficulties in developing critical and analytical thinking.

B. Suggestion

The researcher provided some suggestions as follows:

1. The students should take advantage of available technology and digital resources; using apps and online discussion forums can help access a wide variety of academic reading, and build a consistent reading habit. In addition, students need to manage time well for reading even with a lot of homework.

2. Lecturers should develop students' critical reading skills by providing effective guidance and access to quality reading sources, providing relevant reading materials, and facilitating in-depth class discussions to encourage critical thinking. Providing specialized training and workshops on critical reading techniques also helps students improve their reading skills. With collaboration between students and lecturers, it is hoped that the challenges in developing critical reading skills can be overcome more effectively.