

3-15-2026

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Ayat Muthana Flaifil

English Language Department, College of Education for Women, University of Baghdad,
Ayat.Salman2303@coeduw.uobaghdad.edu.iq

Hanan Dhia Alsalihi

English Language Department, College of Education for Women, University of Baghdad,
dr.hanan@coeduw.uobaghdad.edu.iq

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Recommended Citation

Flaifil, Ayat Muthana and Alsalihi, Hanan Dhia (2026) "Critical Reading Competencies in Short Stories Among Iraqi EFL Female Students in Colleges of Education for Women," *Alustath Journal for Human and Social Sciences*: Vol. 65: Iss. 1, Article 1.

DOI: 10.36473/2518-9263.2448

Available at: <https://alustath.uobaghdad.edu.iq/journal/vol65/iss1/1>

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Critical Reading Competencies in Short Stories Among Iraqi EFL Female Students in Colleges of Education for Women

Ayat Muthana Flaifil *, Hanan Dhia Alsalihi

English Language Department, College of Education for Women, University of Baghdad

ABSTRACT

Critical reading is important for students to comprehend, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate texts effectively, but EFL students often face challenges due to a lack of linguistic knowledge and cognitive understanding, particularly with literacy texts like short stories. This study aims at identifying the level of Iraqi EFL female students' critical reading competencies (comprehension, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation) in short stories. Finding out the differences in critical reading competencies across four categories. A sample of (200) female students is selected randomly from the Iraqi EFL second-year university students in English departments in the Colleges of Education for Women: University of Baghdad and Al Iraqia University, during the academic year 2025–2024. Two instruments are used to achieve the aims of this study: Three tests designed for assessing critical reading competencies in three short stories, and critical reading rubric is used for scoring students' performance. The findings revealed that Iraqi EFL female students perform well in comprehension and analysis competencies, indicating their capacity to assimilate and break down textual information. Their synthesis and evaluation competencies are below the expected level, indicating that they have faced difficulties to integrate information and make independent judgments about text.

Keywords: Critical reading, Critical reading competencies, Short stories

Received 19 January 2025; revised 2 February 2025; accepted 17 March 2025.
Available online 15 March 2026

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: Ayat.Salman2303@coeduw.uobaghdad.edu.iq (A. M. Flaifil), dr.hanan@coeduw.uobaghdad.edu.iq (H. D. Alsalihi).

<https://doi.org/10.36473/2518-9263.2448>

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Introduction

Problem of the study and its significance

A key component of any language teaching curriculum, whether it be for a foreign or native language, is reading (Burhan, 2018). Critical reading refers to students' ability to comprehend, analyze, synthesize, evaluate, and apply their own judgment to the information they have read (Jasim, 2008). Critical reading competencies (comprehension, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation) are necessary in both academic and everyday settings. These competencies help students to assess both oral and written discourse (Nazara, 2019). Many EFL students frequently struggle to understand the meaning of a text. They have difficulty concentrating while reading and comprehending the text's purpose (Sabah & Kamil, 2023) and finding critical reading as a challenging skill (Mohamed et al., 2022). Although critical reading is crucial, some EFL teachers feel students are less likely to be critical or even not critical at all. Hence, EFL teachers with modern methods and strategies can help in improving their students' performance in reading (Hussein, 2022). EFL students' college reading needs differ significantly from those in high school. College students engage with a wider range of materials, such as textbooks, authentic documents, newspapers, magazines, academic journals, and online sources, whereas high school students may only study a few pages from a textbook every week. College students are required to read critically, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information, distinguishing them from high school students.

Regarding the reading of literary texts (Al Obaydi & AL-Bahadli, 2018), teaching literature is frequently viewed as an effective way of fostering a connection between EFL students and the language they are learning (Ja'afar et al., 2020). Reading literary works helps students improve their critical competencies. Students may be able to develop a mental attachment to the literary texts they read if appropriate teaching methods are used (Khalil, 2024). According to Al-Temimi (2000) study, the most common method for teaching literature is through lectures or extended-controlled presentations, with limited interaction between teachers and students. This prevents students from expressing themselves or demonstrating their literary abilities. In order to assist students to improve their critical reading and thinking skills, Kohzadi et al. (2014) claim that literary texts can be employed in EFL lessons. Teaching short stories is a literary and creative component in foreign language teaching methodology (Saloomi & Yahya, 2020). As a result, short stories are a popular and important literary course subject taught in English departments in Iraqi universities. Additionally, teachers choose short stories because of their unique form and expressive power, which provide students a more suitable and fluent language than other writing genres (Ja'afar et al., 2020).

Although using short stories in EFL lessons has several benefits, such as enhancing students' motivation, critical reading competencies, awareness, and cultural background of the language, Rjoub (2021) pointed out that they are unfortunately not used in EFL classes often enough. Numerous researchers and academics with experience in the English language employ short stories as a sort of practical method in the classroom.

The problem of the study centers on the inadequate critical reading competencies observed among Iraqi EFL female students in colleges of education for women. However, due to the essential role of these competencies in achieving academic success, students do not always master the competency of comprehending, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating short stories well. This limitation is a constraint on their general language proficiency and critical engagement with texts. Therefore, this research seeks to identify the areas where students need improvement in order to enhance their educational experience and improve their critical thinking ability.

Aim

This study aims at:

1. Identifying the level of Iraqi EFL female students' critical reading competencies (comprehension, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation) in short stories.
2. Finding out the differences in critical reading competencies across four categories.

Questions

The present study will try to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of Iraqi EFL female students' critical reading competencies (comprehension, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation) in short stories?
2. What are the differences in critical reading competencies across four categories?

Value

It is hoped that the results of this research will be valuable to:

1. Teachers to develop more efficient teaching methodologies which will ultimately allow them to teach critical reading competencies effectively to the EFL students.
2. Students to be more engaged in reading short stories as well as other forms of literary texts to improve their language proficiency analytical and evaluative abilities.
3. Researchers to conduct further studies by exploring interventions to improve the synthesis and evaluation competencies in EFL contexts.

Limits

This study is limited to:

1. The Iraqi EFL second-year university students in English Departments in the Colleges of Education for Women: University of Bagdad and Al Iraqia University.
2. The first course during the academic year 2025–2024.
3. The prescribed short story textbook entitled “A book of Short Stories “compiled by [Abdul Razzak and Al-Muttalibi \(1991\)](#).
4. Three tests designed for assessing critical reading performance and competencies in three short stories (The Open Window by Saki, The Happy Prince by Oscar Wilde, and The Black Cat by Edgar Allan POE).
5. Critical reading rubric.

Theoretical framework

Critical reading

By reading, writing, speaking, and listening, EFL learners strive to become more proficient in the English language. They also make an effort to understand spoken and written discourse rather than just utterances ([Alsalihi, 2020](#)). Since critical reading varies from reading for information in that it necessitates using reason to create conclusions about a text, it is seen to be a high-level reading skill. Critical reading, according to [Tierney and Pearson \(1994\)](#), is a dynamic activity that involves the interaction between readers and texts because the reader's previous knowledge and experiences are crucial to the careful inspection and interpretation of the text. It takes questioning, analyzing, and assessing

the information one has gathered to arrive at a logical conclusion about a text. Critical reading helps readers use data and analyze information while determining whether or not the content they are reading is accurate, useful, or reliable.

However, critical reading is a “critical” method of reading. As stated by [Kurland \(2000\)](#), it refers to a precise, engaged, reflective, and analytical reading. It is a method of reading that helps one comprehend the entire context of the text, to put it another way. After fully comprehending a piece of literature, readers may choose their favorite side of the text.

[Despita \(2020\)](#) states that individuals participate in this interaction for a number of reasons:

- A. To ascertain the actual information or relevance of the text;
- B. To ascertain the meaning implied by the language of the text;
- C. To consider how the text may be more significant and appropriate for various real-world contexts.

Reading critically and thinking critically are two different things. Critical thinking is the process of evaluating information and ideas to determine what to accept and believe, whereas critical reading is the process of identifying information and ideas in a text ([Kurland, 2000](#)). Compared to critical reading, critical thinking is a more difficult task. It discusses the emotional component after the critical reading. However, they are linked because critical reading is necessary for critical thinking.

For EFL students who need to work on their vocabulary and decoding skills, critical reading is very important in helping them understand the text and enhance their reading comprehension. Furthermore, critical reading promotes emotional growth, which is absent in many educational institutions.

Application of bloom's taxonomy in critical reading

The taxonomy's methodical classification of cognitive abilities into lower-order (knowledge, comprehension, application) and higher-order (analysis, synthesis, evaluation) categories provides a framework for evaluating and developing methods of instruction for critical thinking ([Bloom et al., 1956](#)).

At the knowledge level, the emphasis on remembering facts and definitions is consistent with the first stages of critical reading, in which students identify important textual components. This level concentrates on knowledge recognition and retention in order to understand how students interact with texts at the most basic level of cognitive processing ([Adams, 2015](#)).

After reaching the comprehension level, students need to be able to interpret and explain what they have read. This addresses the results of a study by [Le et al. \(2024\)](#), which showed that although students had a basic comprehension, they found it difficult to complete progressively challenging analytical tasks. At this stage, the taxonomy's focus on classification and summarizing highlights how crucial it is for students to move from simple identification to more complicated text comprehension.

The application level consists of applying previously taught concepts in new contexts. Students' difficulty implementing critical reading techniques in new situations indicate a lack of teaching strategies that connect theoretical knowledge to practical application ([Dwiastuty & Nurjanah, 2016](#)).

At the analysis level, the taxonomy offers a theoretical framework for comprehending the analytical difficulties that students have because of its emphasis on text analysis and differentiating between facts and opinions. As noted by [Le et al. \(2024\)](#), effective comprehension and response depend on teaching methods that improve students' capacity to evaluate texts and draw forth implicit information.

The highest levels of cognitive complexity—synthesis and evaluation—are required for advanced critical thinking skills. According to a study by [Le et al. \(2024\)](#), when students are asked to critically examine texts and integrate knowledge in new ways, they hardly achieve these levels. The taxonomy's focus on these advanced cognitive skills highlights the need for teaching methods that encourage critical thinking and creative application of established information.

Bloom's Taxonomy is a crucial tool for contemporary research since it offers a systematic framework for evaluating critical thinking skills. The taxonomy's hierarchical stages provide a systematic framework for developing instructional techniques in critical reading education.

The researcher adopted the levels of comprehension, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation as competencies for critical reading to assess students' performance in short stories.

Critical reading strategies

[Varaprasad \(1997\)](#) asserts that all languages require contextual interpretation. Meaning is not limited to the written word; it is created via contact with the reader. Moreover, the meaning that is produced is dynamic. Thus, in addition to language and world knowledge, individuals also bring interpretive and critical resources to reading. To confront and challenge a textual selection of discourses, learners need to be able to adopt a critical attitude in addition to possessing enough linguistic and world knowledge. Reader communities share personal and societal interpretative materials. [Varaprasad \(1997\)](#) states that the majority of proficient readers use a combination of the following strategies:

1. **Previewing.** Learning as much as possible about a material before really beginning to read it is known as previewing.
2. **Making annotations.** Students must learn how to annotate if they want to read critically. Proficient critical readers carry a pencil in their hands while reading, taking notes on the text ([Varaprasad, 1997](#)). Students actively rather than passively interact with the text they are reading by “talking back” to it in the margins.
3. **Making a summary.** According to [Varaprasad \(1997\)](#), summarizing a piece of content is a useful way to determine how well students understand it. The learner should be able to write down the main points of the text as well as the thesis while summarizing. Writing a summary isn't limited to summarizing; students can also comment, evaluate, creatively synthesize, or share their ideas on what they've read. Reassembling your ideas in a coherent and well-structured way illustrates how reading critically may lead to a deeper understanding of any subject.
4. **Analyzing.** Analysis is the process of looking at a text to see how its elements relate to one other. Understanding the functions that the various literary elements play and how they relate to one another and to the composition as a whole can help students better understand the meaning of a piece.
5. **Re-reading.** Rereading is emphasized by [Varaprasad \(1997\)](#) as an essential step in the critical reading process. Skilled readers will read a piece of writing several times before they are satisfied. For best understanding, students should read a text three times.
6. **Responding.** Lastly, [Varaprasad \(1997\)](#) asserts that a student's comprehension of what they have read is largely dependent on their response to it. Students have the option to write comments or have group discussions about what they've read.

The strategies mentioned above can be applied both independently (when reading for oneself) and in the classroom with the teacher's assistance. Applying critical reading strategies in EFL lessons will take different forms with different student groups due to

the fact that students have varying levels of language ability and first language learning experiences.

Short story

Short stories tend to be the ideal literary works to employ in EFL courses since they are “narratives” that can be read in one sitting for one to two hours and are limited to “a certain unique or single effect,’ to which every detail is subordinate” (Abrams, 1970). There is frequently only one narrative and a small group of characters since it is quick and meant to generate a “single effect,” and the location is not adequately explored. The plot of the story is so straightforward for students to follow.

Khuankaew (2010) claims that integrating literary works in the classroom promotes critical reading and thinking. This is because exposition in literary writing is rarely directly stated, forcing readers to form their own inferences in order to comprehend the text. As demonstrated by Abrams (1970), reading literature is a “bottom-up” process that activates readers’ prior knowledge while also integrating new information with what they already know. This process encourages critical thinking and thoughtfulness. Students participate in problems-solving activities with literary works by addressing challenges while they read them. They must also apply their analytical skills to link the many elements of a literary work, including the themes, setting, characters, plot, metaphors, symbols, motifs, and points of view.

Readers of literary works are more introspective and attentive, therefore they read them more slowly than other genres. According to Langer (2000), reading literary works encourages critical thinking since readers often make assumptions about potential future events and try to understand anything that is unclear in the text.

As stated by Langer (2000), there are strong pedagogical justifications in regard to promoting critical thinking through literature. He asserted that the following qualities are present in successful learners: (1) comprehension of literary genres, types, and purposes, including meta-linguistic knowledge; (2) competencies and methods for processing literary knowledge, including the ability to analyze, evaluate, and debate narrative texts; and (3) the ability to apply and transfer what has been learned to different contexts.

Method for teaching critical reading using short story

The teaching strategy, in addition to the reading materials, is a significant factor in the students’ low critical reading competencies. Wallace (2005) suggested dividing the activities into three phases: pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading in order to teach reading, particularly critical reading, in EFL classrooms.

During the pre-reading stage, students are encouraged to develop and articulate their own questions, predictions, and theories about the material they will read. The goal is not to have students answer questions that guide how they read the content, but to let them think about the story. They may be asked to state whether they agree or disagree with the story’s plot before they even start reading. Students could now be encouraged to make assumptions about text predictions, including what will happen and how the story will end.

The goal of the during-reading stage is to provide the students an opportunity to interact with the content. The teacher explains the content, records the students’ reactions and points of view, and assists the students in taking notes on the story’s events, notions, emotions, values, and cultures. As a result, during-reading activities should to assist students in recognizing the characters, events, time period, and cultural viewpoints of the story. One way that educators may help is by placing the literary work in its historical, biographical, and cultural context.

Teachers encourage critical thinking in the post-reading stage by allowing each student to examine the applicability of the pre-reading stage's questions, hypotheses, and predictions, as well as reflect on the interpretation developed throughout the during-reading stage. As result, the post-reading tasks highlight a diversity of questions that allow for multiple interpretations.

Several modern scholars and educators have shown that literary texts may successfully develop students' critical reading competencies since short stories are the most suitable literary form to employ in EFL courses due to their shortness. Reading short stories encourages students to think critically, logically, and reflectively, which helps them develop their critical reading skills (Nazara, 2019). Analytical, rational, and reflective thinking are necessary for the inference of indirect expressions that are commonly used in short stories, conflict resolution, the relationship between the various elements of a literary work—themes, setting, characters, plot, metaphors, symbols, motifs, and various points of view—and the evaluation of the author's biases.

Methodology and procedures

Population and sample

The population of this study is second-year female students in English Language Departments at the College of Education for Women in University of Baghdad and College of Education for Women in Al Iraqia University during the academic year 2024/20205. The total number of the population is (374) students. The sample of the study is (200) female students selected randomly, (98) students from college of education for women/ University of Baghdad and (102) students from college of education for women/Al-Iraqia University.

Instruments

Critical reading tests

The critical reading tests are constructed based on the second-year university short story textbook entitled "A Book of Short Stories" compiled by Abdul Razzak and Al-Muttalibi (1991). The first three short stories have been chosen: The Open Window by H. H. Munro (Saki), The Happy Prince by Oscar Wilde, and The Black Cat by Edgar Allan POE, to assess students' performance and competencies. The critical reading tests are a subjective test of four questions; each question aims to measure specific competency; for instance, question One aims to measure the student's ability to understand and interpret significant concepts from the text, question Two aims to measure the student's ability to provide relevant and precise analyses of the text, question Three aims to measure the student's ability to connect and integrate concepts from multiple texts, and question Four aims to measure the student's ability to demonstrate critical thinking and evaluative skills.

Scoring the tests

The scoring process is guided by a critical reading rubric (Elmaghrby, 2021). This rubric classifies the Iraqi EFL female student performance according to four major competencies: comprehension, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Each correct answer gains four points, while an incorrect answer gains zero points. The final score is determined using the cumulative marks gained in all four questions, giving an accurate representation of the student's overall performance in critical reading.

Test validity

The ability of a test to measure the characteristic or trait that it was intended to measure is known as validity. A test is considered valid for estimating a characteristic in an individual whenever it is not influenced by circumstances that make it unique or that result in a consistent or regular error. These errors lead individuals receiving grades that are either higher or lower than they ought to (Bateson & Martin, 2021). Therefore, two indicators of validity were extracted for the instruments, which are face validity and construct validity.

Face validity

Face validity, as it relates to tests, is what the test seems to demonstrate in its surface form rather than what it truly measures. Ebel and Frisbie (1972) supports this interpretation by pointing out that a test is considered facially valid if its items seem to measure the trait or feature it was intended to measure. As a result, a jury member of experts evaluated the test's items based on its objectives.

Construct validity

According to Peter (1981), construct validity refers to how well an instrument measures a certain construct. Construct validity is the measure of how well a test captures a certain hypothesis or characteristic by confirming how well test results match the ideas or presumptions that were used to construct the test. It is necessary to outline the underlying assumptions of the characteristic or trait theory and then confirm or test them through experimentation in order to ensure construct validity. When the measurement's experimental results align with the theoretical presumptions, the test is said to have construct validity. On the other hand, if the measurement's experimental results contradict one or more of the theoretical presumptions, the test is invalid or the theoretical presumptions are incorrect.

Statistical analysis of instruments

Difficulty and discrimination power of the critical reading tests items

To calculate the difficulty coefficients and discrimination coefficients for test items whose answers are continuous, the following steps were followed:

1. The total scores for each test obtained by the sample members were arranged in descending order from the highest score to the lowest score.
2. 27% of the answers that obtained high scores, and 27% of the answers that obtained the lowest scores, were chosen to represent the two extreme groups, so that the number of members of each group was (41) individuals.
3. Calculation the number of responses for each item weight for each test item in both the upper and lower groups.
4. Multiply the number of answers by the corresponding weight for each item, then calculate the sum of the product for all the weights in the upper and lower groups.
5. The sum of the product of the answers multiplied by the corresponding weight for both the upper and lower groups was added, then divided by the product of the highest weight multiplied by the number of members of the two groups (see Table 3.1).
6. Discrimination is calculated by following the same steps used in calculating difficulty coefficients, and the difference lies in calculating the difference between the number of correct answers in the upper and lower groups and dividing it by the number of members of one of the two groups (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1. Difficulty and discrimination power of the critical reading tests items.

test	Competencies	Group	Weight				Difficulty	Difficulty level	Discrimination power	Discrimination level
			1	2	3	4				
First short story	Comprehension	Upper	3	10	11	30	0.65	Moderately	0.32	Good
		Lower	23	16	9	6				
	Analysis	Upper	5	18	16	15	0.54	Moderately	0.31	Good
		Lower	30	20	3	1				
	Synthesis	Upper	5	6	19	24	0.61	Moderately	0.36	Good
		Lower	22	28	2	2				
Second short story	Evaluation	Upper	10	10	17	17	0.54	Moderately	0.31	Good
		Lower	27	25	2	0				
	Comprehension	Upper	5	20	16	13	0.67	Moderately	0.46	Very Good
		Lower	26	16	11	1				
	Analysis	Upper	2	15	17	20	0.60	Moderately	0.31	Good
		Lower	25	18	8	3				
Third short story	Synthesis	Upper	8	3	17	26	0.56	Moderately	0.45	Very Good
		Lower	38	15	1	0				
	Evaluation	Upper	8	8	11	27	0.58	Moderately	0.38	Good
		Lower	32	16	4	2				
	Comprehension	Upper	3	12	17	22	0.61	Moderately	0.31	Good
		Lower	23	20	8	3				
	Analysis	Upper	5	9	16	24	0.63	Moderately	0.30	Good
		Lower	23	15	10	5				
	Synthesis	Upper	3	11	15	25	0.60	Moderately	0.38	Good
		Lower	27	20	6	1				
	Evaluation	Upper	0	10	19	25	0.57	Moderately	0.50	Very Good
		Lower	38	16	0	0				

The difficulty range for the critical reading tests items ranges between (0.54–0.67) with an average difficulty of (0.60). The difficulty criterion indicates that if the values of the difficulty coefficients range from 0.19 or less, it indicates that the question is very difficult, and if the values of the difficulty coefficients range from 0.20 to 0.29, then the question is difficult, and if the values of the difficulty coefficients range from 0.30 to 0.69, then the question is moderately difficult, and if the values of the difficulty coefficients range from 0.70 to 0.79, the question is easy, and if the difficulty coefficients range from 0.80 or more, the question is very easy. This indicates that the difficulty factors are within the acceptable range for the difficulty factor, which ranges between (0.20–0.80).

While the discrimination coefficients for the test items range between (0.30–0.50) with an average discrimination of (0.37). The discrimination criterion indicates that if the values of the discrimination coefficients range from 0.19 or less, then it indicates that the question has poor discrimination and must be deleted. If the values of the discrimination coefficients range from 0.20 to 0.29, then the question has marginal discrimination. It can either be improved or deleted. If the values of the discrimination coefficients range from 0.30 to 0.39, then the question has good discrimination and is preferred, but it can still be improved. If the values of the discrimination coefficients range between 0.40 and more, then the question has very good discrimination. This indicates that the discrimination of the items is within the level.

Test reliability

Since reliability is the consistency in the total scores of the test items, which is meant to measure what should be measured (Harrison, 1983), reliability is defined as the degree of

stability and consistency of the instrument and its components. The objective of calculating reliability is to estimate the errors of the instruments and suggest ways to reduce these errors (Murphy & Davidshofer, 1988). The reliability of the instruments can be verified in several ways, including methods that measure the internal consistency, such as Alpha Cronbach’s Formula, and what Heaton (1988) adds the intrascorer reliability as one way of estimating the internal consistency.

Alpha cronbach’s formula

The reliability coefficients for critical reading tests were (0.819), which indicates good reliability (see Table 3.2).

Table 3.2. Reliability coefficients using Alpha-Cronbach equation.

Instrument	Reliability Coefficient
Critical Reading Tests	0.819

Interscorer reliability

The consistency of scores given by the same scorer on the same test papers when the test is administered numerous times on various occasions is known as intrascorer reliability. In this study, the researcher administrated three tests based on three short stories. In each question of these tests, measure specific competencies such as comprehension, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. The researcher initially graded students’ responses and, after a few weeks, re-evaluates the same tests without referring to the previous scores. The researcher assigned similar scores on different occasions.

Results

In order to analyze the data gathered, the mean scores and standard deviations were calculated for the four competencies of the critical reading (comprehension, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation) and were compared to the hypothesized means for each competency using a one-sample t-test (see Table 3.3).

Table 3.3. Results of a one-sample t-test to compare the mean scores of the study sample members and the hypothesized mean of the competencies.

competencies	N	Mean	Standard deviation	hypothetical mean	t.test	
					computed	tabulated
Comprehension	200	6.870	1.786	6	6.890	1.960
Analysis	200	6.400	1.632	6	3.466	1.960
Synthesis	200	5.895	1.599	6	−0.929	1.960
Evaluation	200	5.590	1.531	6	−3.788	1.960

Tabulated t.test -value has a significance level of (0.05) and a degree of freedom (199) equals (1.960).

Table 3.3 indicates the following results:

1. The sample members have a moderate level of comprehension.
2. The sample members have a moderate level of analysis.
3. The sample members are below the mean level of synthesis.
4. The sample members are below the mean level of evaluation.

Discussion of results

Regarding identifying the level of critical reading competencies, the findings indicate that Iraqi EFL students exhibit deficiencies in synthesis and evaluation and strengths in comprehension and analysis. Despite their ability to understand and analyze texts, students may find it difficult to integrate knowledge and generate critical judgments. This variation emphasizes the need for a more thorough curriculum that promotes the growth of all important reading competencies.

Conclusion

Based on the study findings, it can be concluded that Iraqi EFL female students perform well in comprehension and analysis competencies, demonstrating their ability to absorb and break down textual information. Their synthesis and evaluation competencies are below the expected level, indicating that they have struggled to integrate information, draw conclusions, and make independent judgments about text.

Recommendations

In the light of the conclusions drawn, a number of recommendations are forwarded:

1. Teachers should use more interactive and participatory approaches in the teaching of short stories that can lead to a more thorough grasp of the texts.
2. While short stories are valuable, incorporating other genres such as poetry and essays can provide students with a broader perspective on critical reading and encourage diverse analytical skills.
3. Students should be encouraged to engage in independent reading outside the classroom. Reading clubs or book discussions can promote motivation and reinforce critical reading skills.

Suggestions

In the light of the findings of the study, further studies need to be undertaken as follows:

1. Investigate the relationship between EFL university students' critical reading competencies and their writing proficiency.
2. Investigate the effectiveness of different literary genres in improving critical reading skills in EFL learners across various educational settings.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Author contributions

- **Ayat Muthana Flaifil:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Data collection, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft.

- **Hanan Dhia Alsalihi:** Interpretation of results, Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Final approval of the manuscript.

Both authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Data availability

The authors confirm that the data supporting the findings of this study are available within the article [and/or] its supplementary materials.

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كفاءات القراءة الناقدة في القصص القصيرة عند طالبات قسم اللغة الانكليزية في كليات التربية للبنات

ايات مثنى فليفل، حنان ضياء الصالحي

جامعة بغداد /كلية التربية للبنات /قسم اللغة الانكليزية.

المستخلص

القراءة الناقدة مهمة للطلاب لفهم النصوص وتحليلها وتركيبها وتقييمها بشكل فعال، ولكن طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية غالبًا ما يواجهون تحديات بسبب نقص المعرفة اللغوية والفهم المعرفي، وخاصة مع النصوص القرائية مثل القصص القصيرة. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى : التعرف على مستوى كفاءات القراءة الناقدة (الفهم والتحليل والتركيب والتقويم) لدى الطالبات في القصص القصيرة. معرفة الاختلافات في كفاءات القراءة النقدية عبر أربع فئات. تم اختيار عينة من (200) طالبة عشوائيًا من المرحلة الثانية في أقسام اللغة الإنجليزية في كليات التربية للبنات: جامعة بغداد والجامعة العراقية، للعام الدراسي 2024-2025. وقد استخدمت الباحثة أداتين لتحقيق هدف هذه الدراسة : ثلاثة اختبارات مصممة لتقييم مستوى كفاءات القراءة الناقدة في ثلاث قصص قصيرة، ومقياس القراءة الناقدة لتسجيل درجات أداء الطالبات. كشفت النتائج أن الطالبات قسم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية فيما يتعلق بكفاءات القراءة الناقدة، فإنهن يؤدين أداءً جيدًا في كفاءات الفهم والتحليل، مما يدل على قدرتهن على استيعاب المعلومات النصية وتحليلها. أما كفاءتهن في التركيب والتقويم فهي أقل من المستوى المتوقع، مما يشير إلى أنهن واجهن صعوبة في دمج المعلومات وإصدار أحكام مستقلة حول النص.

الكلمات المفتاحية: القراءة الناقدة، كفاءات القراءة الناقدة، قصص قصيرة.