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Maryam Ali Salem AlSereidi

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جامعة الإمارات العربية المتحدة
United Arab Emirates University

United Arab Emirates University

College of Education

EXPLORING CRITICAL READING EXPERIENCE IN ENGLISH OF
EMIRATI 11th GRADE STUDENTS

Maryam Ali Salem AlSereidi

This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy

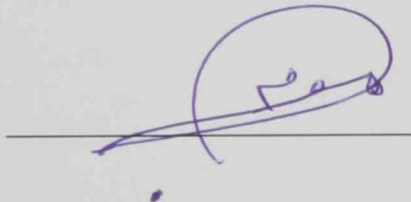
Under the Supervision of Dr. Negmeldin Alsheikh

April 2019

Declaration of Original Work

I, Maryam Ali Salem AlSereidi, the undersigned, a graduate student at the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU), and the author of this dissertation entitled "*Exploring Critical Reading Experience in English of Emirati 11th Grade Students*", hereby, solemnly declare that this dissertation is an original research work that has been done and prepared by me under the supervision of Dr. Negmeldin Alsheikh, in the College of Education at UAEU. This work has not previously been presented or published, or formed the basis for the award of any academic degree, diploma or a similar title at this or any other university. Any materials borrowed from other sources (whether published or unpublished) and relied upon or included in my dissertation have been properly cited and acknowledged in accordance with appropriate academic conventions. I further declare that there is no potential conflict of interest with respect to the research, data collection, authorship, presentation and/or publication of this dissertation.

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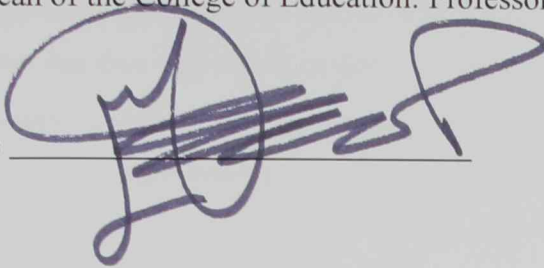
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Abstract

This study aimed at exploring the critical reading experiences of Emirati 11th grade students in public high schools. A sequential explanatory mixed method design was used to answer the five research questions posed in this study. In this study, data was collected in two consecutive phases and used different instruments including a questionnaire, classroom observation, and a semi-structured interview. In the first phase of the study a total number of 11th grade students (n=645) participated by filling a questionnaire about their critical reading experiences. The second phase of the study featured an in-depth investigation of the teachers' and students' views about critical reading practices by means of interview (n=10) and classroom observations. The results of this study revealed that there is a consistency among students' self-reporting, students' views and classroom observations. The two phases of the study provided evidence that the students use basic critical reading skills and they do not use higher order critical reading skills. The results also showed that English teachers used different reading strategies and activities, the majority of these practices engaged lower order thinking skills that only required knowledge recognition and identification of factual details. Both teachers and students' views corroborated that the English curriculum used is not flexible and lack a fundamental English literature component and the curriculum assessment is based on teaching to the test. Finally, several challenges hinder the use of critical reading were expressed by teachers and students alike. These included lack of time, lack of resources, low language competency, low motivation level, lack of curriculum choices and the teachers were constrained by the curriculum. The study recommends a general reconceptualization of English curriculum contents, curriculum assessment, and teaching strategies with regard to critical reading.

Keywords: Critical theory, critical thinking, higher-order-thinking, critical reading, Bloom's Taxonomy.

Title and Abstract (in Arabic)

استكشاف مدى استخدام طلاب الصف الحادي عشر ومعلميهم لمهارات القراءة الناقدّة في تعلم اللغة إنجليزية

المخلص

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف مدى ممارسة معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية وطلاب الصف الحادي عشر لمهارات القراءة الناقدّة في حصص اللغة الإنجليزية. ولتحقيق أهداف الدراسة استخدم الباحث منهج البحث المختلط من خلال توظيف أدوات البحث الكمي والنوعي. ولتحقيق ذلك تم اختيار عينة عشوائية تكونت من (645) طالب لتعبئة استمارة القراءة الناقدّة والتي تضمنت مهارات القراءة الناقدّة التي يمارسها طلاب الصف الحادي عشر في حصص اللغة الإنجليزية. وللتوصل لفهم أعمق لممارسات القراءة الناقدّة في حصص اللغة الإنجليزية للصف الحادي عشر تم اختيار (١٠) معلمين و (١٠) طلاب لإجراء مقابلات شخصية لرصد آرائهم حول ممارسات القراءة الناقدّة، كما قام الباحث ببعض الزيارات الصفية لرصد ممارسات القراءة الناقدّة في حصص اللغة الإنجليزية للصف الحادي عشر. وقد أظهرت النتائج أن طلبة الصف الحادي عشر في المدارس الحكومية لدولة الإمارات نادرا ما يمارسون مهارات القراءة الناقدّة حيث أن معظم ممارسات القراءة موجهة لتطوير المهارات اللغوية للطلبة أكثر من مهارات التفكير الناقد، كما أظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن مناهج اللغة الإنجليزية في المدارس الحكومية تعاني من كثافة في المحتوى الذي يفتقر للنصوص الأدبية والنقدية، كما أن أساليب التقويم المتبعة في المدارس الحكومية لا تعزز مهارات القراءة الناقدّة. وقد أظهرت نتائج هذه الدراسة أن هناك بعض التحديات التي تواجه تطبيق مهارات القراءة الناقدّة في حصص اللغة الإنجليزية، هذه التحديات هي: ضيق الوقت، قلة المصادر التعليمية التي تدعم القراءة الناقدّة، ضعف الكفاءة اللغوية لدى طلبة الصف الحادي عشر، ضعف الحافز لدى الطلبة للممارسات القراءة الناقدّة، تقيد المعلمين بمحتوى المنهاج الدراسي.

ختاماً، ظهرت هذه الدراسة ببعض التوصيات لإعادة صياغة مناهج اللغة الإنجليزية لتعزيز مهارات القراءة الناقدّة، إضافة إلى تطوير أساليب التقويم والتعليم لتضمين أدوات قياس مهارات التفكير الناقد في الإختبارات المدرسية واستخدام استراتيجيات التعليم الحديثة والتي من شأنها تطوير مهارات القراءة الناقدّة لدى الطلبة.

مفاهيم البحث الرئيسية: نظرية النقد، التفكير الناقد، القراءة الناقدّة، مهارات التفكير العليا، تصنيف بلوم.

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Dedication

To the woman who left her homeland, pursuing her dream

My mother

Fatima Khaja

Table of Contents

Title	i
Declaration of Original Work	ii
Copyright	iii
Advisory Committee	iv
Approval of the Doctorate Dissertation	v
Abstract	vii
Title and Abstract (in Arabic)	viii
Acknowledgements	ix
Dedication	x
Table of Contents	xi
List of Tables.....	xv
List of Figures	xvi
List of Abbreviations.....	xvii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
1.1 Overview	1
1.2 Study Background.....	1
1.3 Critical Literacy in UAE.....	3
1.4 Context of the Study	4
1.4.1 Focus on High School Students	6
1.5 Researcher’s Personal Investment	6
1.6 Statement of the Problem.....	7
1.7 The Purpose of the Study.....	8
1.8 Research Questions	8
1.9 Limitations of the Study	9
1.10 Definitions of Key Terms	10
1.11 Significance of the Study	12
1.12 Organization of the Study	13
1.13 Summary	14
Chapter 2: Literature Review	15
2.1 Introduction.....	15

2.2 Critical Literacy	16
2.2.1 Critical Pedagogy	18
2.2.2 Critical Reading and Critical Thinking	19
2.2.3 Critical Thinking as a Base for Critical Reading	20
2.2.4 The Importance of Critical Reading	23
2.3 Theoretical Framework	25
2.3.1 Bloom's Taxonomy	30
2.4 Teaching Critical Reading in English Classes	32
2.4.1 Learning about Critical Reading in English Classes	35
2.4.2 Assessing Critical Reading in ESL/EFL	36
2.5 Research about Critical Reading	38
2.6 Critical Literacy in UAE Context	42
2.7 Summary	43
Chapter 3: Methodology	45
3.1 Introduction	45
3.2 Research Questions	45
3.3 Research Design	46
3.3.1 Research Paradigm	46
3.3.2 Explanatory Mixed Methods Research Design	47
3.3.3 Action Plan of the Study	49
3.4. Participants	51
3.4.1 First Phase Participants	51
3.4.2 Second Phase Participants	55
3.5 Research Site	60
3.6 Instruments	61
3.6.1 Background Survey	61
3.6.2 Questionnaire	61
3.6.3 Observation Checklist	62
3.6.4 Semi-Structured Interviews	63
3.7 Reliability and Validity	64
3.7.1 Critical Reading Questionnaire	64
3.7.2 Observation Checklist	66
3.7.3 Semi-Structured Interview	67
3.8 Data Collection and Procedures	69
3.8.1 Critical Reading Questionnaire (CRQ)	69
3.8.2 Semi-Structured Interview	70
3.8.3 Classroom Observations	71
3.9 Data Analysis	71
3.9.1 Analysis of the Background Survey	72
3.9.2 Analysis of Critical Reading Questionnaire (CRQ)	72
3.9.3 Analysis of the Observation Checklist	73

3.9.4 Analysis of Interviews.....	74
3.9.5 Ethical Considerations.....	76
3.9.6 Informed Consent.....	76
3.9.7 Confidentiality and Anonymity.....	77
3.9.8 Accuracy.....	77
3.10 Quality	77
Chapter 4: Results	79
4.1 Introduction.....	79
4.2 First Phase Data Analysis (Student Questionnaire).....	80
4.3 Second Phase Data Analysis.....	83
4.3.1 Interview Analysis: Part A.....	83
4.3.2 Interview Analysis: Part B	122
4.4 Classroom Observation.....	144
4.5 Summary	152
4.5.1 First Phase Findings (Quantitative Results).....	152
4.5.2 Second Phase Findings (Qualitative Results).....	154
4.5.3 Classroom Observation Findings	160
4.5.4 Mixed Methods Findings	160
Chapter 5: Discussion	163
5.1 Introduction.....	163
5.2 Discussion	163
5.2.1 Question 1: What do 11 th Grade Students Report about their Critical Reading Experiences in English?	163
5.2.2 Question 2: How do 11 th Grade Teachers View their Teaching of Critical Reading?	165
5.2.3 Question 3: How do 11 th Grade Students View their Critical Reading Experiences?	181
5.2.4 Question 4: What do Actual Practices in 11 th Grade Classrooms Reveal about the use of Critical Reading?	188
5.2.5 Question 5: Are there any Consistencies or Variations among Students' Self-report, Students and Teachers' Views and the Actual Classroom Practices?.....	192
5.3 Conclusion, Recommendations, and Future Implications	195
5.3.1 Recommendations	196
5.3.2 Implications for Future Research	199
References	201
Appendices.....	210
Appendix A: Approval from IRB	210
Appendix B: Approval from Ministry of Education and Schools' Administrations.....	211
Appendix C: Consent Form	212

Appendix D: Students' Background Survey	213
Appendix E: Critical Reading Questionnaire (CRQ)	214
Appendix F: Observation Checklist.....	216
Appendix G: Teachers' Interview Questions Pool	218
Appendix H: Students' Interview Questions Pool	219
Appendix I: Thematic Map	220
Appendix J: Consent form (Arabic).....	221
Appendix K: Critical Reading Questionnaire	222

List of Tables

Table 1: Action Plan of the Study	50
Table 2: Participants' Gender	52
Table 3: Participants' Age.....	52
Table 4: Participants' Nationality	53
Table 5: Participants' Mother Language.....	53
Table 6: Participants' Second Language.....	54
Table 7: Participants' Average Overall Grade	54
Table 8: Cronbach's Alpha Reliability	66
Table 9: Student Reports on General Categories in the CR Questionnaire	80
Table 10: Results of T-test Analysis Examining Differences between the Six Scales.....	82
Table 11: The Emerging Themes from Teachers and Students' Interviews	143

List of Figures

Figure 1: Student Reports on General Categories in the CR Questionnaire	81
Figure 2: English Reading Classes Observations	145

List of Abbreviations

ADEK	Department of Education and Knowledge
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
UAE	United Arab Emirates

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Overview

This chapter details the current study, which explores the critical reading experiences of Emirati 11th grade students in order to gain a deeper understanding of critical reading practices in their English classes. The study sought an in-depth understanding of how critical reading is taught and experienced in the context of the UAE. Moreover, this study focused specifically on the teaching and learning of critical reading skills. This chapter presents the background to the study, its basis in critical reading theory, the importance of the research, and the implementation and challenges in terms of English language education. Furthermore, the research problems, purpose of the study and specific research questions are defined. Additionally, the significance and limitations of the study are addressed, before the chapter ends with a comprehensive plan.

1.2 Study Background

English language is the foremost second language in the world today and is the dominant language in many fields. It is the language of science, technology, commerce and international communication (Purwati, 2012). Therefore, improving proficiency and competency in the English language has become a priority for success in higher education and the workplace. Consequently, strenuous efforts have been made in many countries and by governments around the world to improve English language proficiency.

Reading is the backbone of proficiency in any language. It is a basic yet effective skill for 21st Century learners, as academic success both locally or globally

is based on your reading skills. Fadlallah (2016) believes that, “all our knowledge is increased through reading” (p. 2). Several theories, models and guiding frameworks have emerged to explain reading processes in English and how they operate from social, cognitive, cultural and psycholinguist positions. One of the most interesting views can be found under the umbrella of Critical Theory, which sees reading as an interactive process between reader and text during which the reader digs deeper and moves beyond surface level features to work out underlying assumptions or hidden messages. It is a process, in which higher-order thinking skills are involved in evaluating, analyzing, reasoning and judging textual meaning (Alvermann, Unrauand & Ruddell, 2013).

Critical literacy is vital if students are going to function effectively function in the current digital age, where they are exposed to an incessant flow of ideas and deluge of information, which requires assessment, evaluation, questioning, and judging the validity of information and contradictory opinions. To do so, students need higher-order thinking skills and must seek to continuously build critical thinking skills through reading and learning different subjects from pre-school up to university level and beyond (Hughes, 2014). In the same vein, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners need to be critical readers, critical writers and critical thinkers, who can apply acquired knowledge, rather than just memorize and recall what they have learned. For example, Kabilan (2000) argued that proficiency in a language is not just using language or knowing the meaning of words, but being able to think critically and creatively in and through that language.

However, despite the advocacy of scholars, teachers and decision makers to better equip students with the key elements of critical literacy – so they can analyze,

evaluate, synthesize and think deeply about any written text – EFL/ ESL students around the world appear to lack sufficient critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Unfortunately, students in UAE are no exception (Abo Salem, 2016; Ridge, Kipples & Farah, 2017; Warner, Jonathan & Burton, 2017). Consequently, a large number of students get low marks for tasks, activities and in tests that require critical reading and higher thinking skills (Choy and Cheah, 2009; Macknish, 2011; Snyder & Snyder, 2008; Stapleton, 2008).

1.3 Critical Literacy in UAE

The UAE is an ambitious nation working to promote student success in English language and realize the Ministry of Education's vision of being among the best in the world in this respect by 2021 (Ministry of Education, 2018). Several seismic changes in education have been implemented (including curriculum reform) since 1980 (Ministry of Education, 2018). One of the key indicators for Vision 2021 is to achieve high results in international assessments such as PISA, TOEFL and IELTS. However, despite the sweeping changes and curriculum reform, reports reveal that UAE high school pupils' performance in international tests remains comparatively weak (Farah & Ridge, 2009; Freimuth, 2014). According to Farah & Ridge (2009) the reasons for this weak performance go back to teaching and assessment techniques, which still emphasize memorization and rote-learning and do not foster critical thinking. Such critical thinking is the key to performing well in international tests (Hughes, 2014). For example, O'Sullivan (2004) argues that most high school graduates in the UAE lack the ability to read adequately, and this is due to traditional teaching techniques, which focus on test requirements rather than on learning skills. Thus, students get low marks in tests such as IELTS and TOEFL.

Similarly, Al Noursi (2014) contends that UAE students' reading skills in English is actually in decline. The reason for that according to Fadlallah (2016) is that most EFL/ ESL teachers still teach what to think rather than how to think.

1.4 Context of the Study

This study was conducted in public high schools that work under the mandate of Ministry of Education and implement the English curriculum designed by Cambridge University. The medium of instructions in all public high schools is Arabic and English as a second language is emphasized. The public education in UAE is free for all citizens under age of 18. Recently UAE Ministry of Education has integrated English medium instruction in math and science in some public schools called AlNokhba (advanced science program) which is initiated newly in the education plan and was implemented in 13 schools and targeted 1.600 outstanding students (Ministry of Education, 2018).

Developing a high-quality education system is a world-wide demand to improve the quality of life and prepare a generation with English language competencies to participate effectively in workplace and community. Hence, UAE is seeking a high standard education that enables students to compete at an international level in all fields including language assessments. Therefore, Ministry of Education has introduced a new English curriculum that is designed by experts from Cambridge University and reviewed by a local curriculum committee to comply with the international education standards. The new English curriculum is based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). It aims to develop English language literacy skills and prepare UAE learners with English competencies to compete successfully in international exams. Those educational

reforms targeted the education levels KG-12th grade and were supported syllabus and teaching materials that were designed by Cambridge University (UAE Cabinet, 2018)

The new curriculum incorporated four skills exam system with integrated skills project work embedded in to the program in addition to immediate exams through-out the academic year called Pop Quizzes that are assigned by the assessment department in MOE (Ministry of Education, 2018). Moreover, all tests are standardized and organized by the Ministry of Education in all public schools.

Eleventh grade students in UAE start to learn English in KG, and thus it is expected that they have a good base of language competency. However, despite the those new educational reforms to improve students' performance and prepare them to join higher education institutions, the research (O'Sullivan, 2004; Al Noursi, 2014; Ridge et al., 2017) reveal that UAE high schools students are not at the level of joining higher education institutions as they lack the basic language skills in addition to critical literacy skills to perform well in higher education level. Al Noursi (2014) contends that UAE students' lack the basic language skills like reading, which make it hard for them to pursue their higher education successfully.

Ministry of Education in UAE seeks to hire qualified teachers who are equipped with high level teaching skills as it assigned high criteria for hiring teachers whereby all teachers should have a minimum qualification of a bachelor's degree. Moreover, the Ministry of Education has initiated a teachers' training center located in Ajman to provide high standard training programs presented by qualified trainers and offer professional development programs for about 11,000 teachers across UAE (UAE Cabinet, 2018).

1.4.1 Focus on High School Students

This study investigated 11th grader students in public high schools as students in this grade met the conditions of the study. That is, they were an appropriate group with which to explore critical reading in English classes. First, it was to be expected that students in high school have an adequate understanding of the basics of critical literacy and so could answer the questionnaire honestly and fully. Furthermore, high school is a critical period where prescribed learning outcomes, the quality of the curriculum, and teaching instruction can be considered as a good indicator of potential success in higher education (college or university). Moreover, high school students are expected to have sufficient knowledge and skills having already been through the primary and intermediate levels of schooling. Consequently, investigating their experiences and understanding of critical reading is appropriate in terms of time, level of education and maturity. According to Rundblad (2015), research participants are the informants of any study and the students' educational level, literacy and language abilities met the criteria for a suitable sample in this context.

1.5 Researcher's Personal Investment

This study is based on the researcher's personal interest in critical literacy, when one of the English literature professors asked her to do a critique for one of William Shakespear's or William Beckford's works when she was a bachelor student. This project was a twist in the researcher's attitude toward critical literacy which since then become part of any reading process done by the researcher, whether it is a written text, visual text, a conversation in a movie, or even an artistic work. Moreover, beside what the international assessments reported about the UAE

students' performance which fall below the average as they lack the critical literacy and higher-order thinking skills to perform well in such tests (Ridge et., 2017), and putting in mind the national agenda 2021 which seeks top positions in international exams, the researcher found this topic appealing as she believes that it is vital to develop critical literacy.

1.6 Statement of the Problem

Despite the commendable educational reforms in the UAE, results remain weak in international reading tests requiring high-level critical reading skills. For instance, a recent report by PISA revealed that UAE student performance in reading tests falls below the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) average. It dropped from 46th to 48th in global rankings (Pennington, 2016). In the same vein, Warner et al., (2017) stated that, “one of the pertinent issues that requires tackling is the UAE performance in international standardized test such as PISA, TIMMS, and the Progress of International Reading and Literacy Study (PIRLS)” (p. 18). PIRLS' 2016 report showed that the rank achieved by UAE pupils in reading was 439th out of 600, which places the UAE between the intermediate to lower level bands on the international reading scale (Warner et al., 2017). Similarly, in the IELTS test, UAE students recorded the lowest average score in reading and writing (IELTS, 2017), indicating that UAE students lack the required skills, such as critical thinking and problem solving to perform well in such tests. Hughes (2014) confirmed that widely used exams like IELTS and TOEFL require a high level of thinking, including critical reading skills. If students lack those skills, they will not perform well and get good results.

Research around the world and in UAE in suggests that developing higher-order thinking skills is generally neglected. Most common teaching methodologies still emphasize decoding, rote learning, and the memorization of information rather than analysis and the evaluation of information (Ridge et al., 2017). Fadlallah (2016) asserted that despite the effort that language teachers put into improving student performance, most students still have weak reading comprehension skills, because they lack the ability to analyze deeper themes and identify ideas imbedded in text. She added that the reason behind this weak result is that the majority of language teachers did not look beyond the teaching of basic linguistic skills. With the emergence of 21st Century skills, reading is no more just a decoding process, but rather the ability to read, think, criticize, analyze and comment on what has been read (Fadlallah, 2016). Therefore, a revolutionary development in language learning mandating the creation of an environment conducive to critical reading should form the basis of any robust educational program (Fadlallah, 2016).

1.7 The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the critical reading experiences of Emirati 11th grade students who are learning English as a foreign language. More specifically, the study explored how critical reading was taught, experienced and learned. Finally, the study investigated the obstacles that English language teachers face in trying to foster critical reading skills, rather than just assess their knowledge acquisition and recognition.

1.8 Research Questions

1. What do 11th grade students report about their critical reading experiences in English?

2. How do 11th grade teachers view their experiences of teaching critical reading?
3. How do 11th grade students view their critical reading experiences?
4. What do the actual practices in 11th grade classrooms reveal about critical reading?
5. Are there any consistencies, or variations among students' self-reporting, students' and teachers' views and the actual classroom practices?

1.9 Limitations of the Study

1. This study was based on a limited population and was conducted solely in a small number of public high schools under the mandate of the Ministry of Education. As such, the study did not include schools from Abu Dhabi that are under the supervision of the Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK). In addition, private schools were excluded from the study. Therefore, limiting this study to a very specific population makes it difficult to generalize the results to other populations (Creswell, 2013)
2. As the small study sample affects the generalizability of the results to a larger big population (a larger sample might have revealed more details on the teaching and learning of critical reading), a mixed method design was used to partially overcome these limitations by using multiple data collection instruments. This offset the drawback of using only one research method with a relatively small sample.
3. As the interview sample consisted of voluntary participants, who could drop out at any time, the researcher expected the number of participants to be quite small. Therefore, the results of the qualitative phase may affect the findings and the level

of generalizability. However, using quantitative methodology (a questionnaire) in the first phase incorporated a wider sample and ensured higher levels of generalizability.

4. As I am a teacher, I was cast as an insider participant in this study, which might affect the objectivity of the results due to the researcher's own interpretation. Therefore, to ensure validity, multiple data sources were utilized. These included questionnaire, interviews and classroom observation. Triangulation is the use of more than one data collection tool in order to enhance the validity of a study (Creswell, 2013). Moreover, it provides multiple data that adds credibility to the interpretation of the results and allows us to feel confident about our observations, interpretations and overall conclusions (Creswell, 2013). Moreover, the issue of subjectivity was addressed through detailed reflection on the subjective nature of the research process, in order to avoid personal biases and address the concerns raised by being an insider (Creswell, 2013).

1.10 Definitions of Key Terms

Critical thinking: The use of the term critical thinking goes back to the educational philosopher John Dewey who defines it as: is an active, precise, and purposeful mental activity that brings conscious awareness to the process of analyzing, reasoning, evaluating, observing, reading any form of knowledge (Stanford Encyclopedia, 2018).

Critical reading: According to (Patesan, Balagiu , Zechia & Alibec, 2014), define critical reading as an active engagement with text and communicate with it to understand the information flow and create a systematic scheme knowledge. Macknish (2012) defines critical reading as “a social practice that engages the readers critical stance and shaped by different understanding people have of it in different context” (p. 445).

- Critical Theory:** According to Tyson (2011), critical theory is a theory that challenges how the knowledge is conveyed and presented from powerful social group to less powerful individuals or social groups. It also entails a powerful combination of vocational skills that increase students' ability to reason logically and think creatively. According to Freire (1983), critical theory presents dialogue as a substantial activity that students should be engaged in to reflect on different issues and social actions to come up with multiple perspectives of a text which is regarded as main element of critical reading.
- Critical literacy:** According to Freire (1983), critical literacy is a method in which "reading is not exhausted merely by decoding the written words or written language, but rather anticipated by and extending in to knowledge of the world" (p. 5). Alvermann et al (2013) define critical literacy as a method for developing critical conscious and translates the ways by which reading and writing enable individuals to understand everyday world, question power relationship, appreciate multiple realities and viewpoints, and analyze different culture and media texts
- Critical Pedagogy:** This new movement shifted the focus from how language is mediated or shaped through grammar to simply look to the content of message through language to be empowered and better understand social and political circumstances of the world (Wallace, 2003).
- Bloom Taxonomy:** Bloom Taxonomy is a framework for classifying learning objectives by its mean of what we expect our students to learn and acquire as the result of instructions (Krathwohl, 2002). It is a practical and easy model for teachers to promote their students' higher order thinking skills. Bloom's Taxonomy was seen as more than a measurement tool, but rather serves as a common language among educators about learning goals for developing and enhancing thinking skills and stands as a precious platform for successful classroom activities, instructions, and assessments as well (Sousa, 2006).

Higher order Thinking: According to Lewis & Smith (1993), higher order thinking is a “mental activity which “occurs when person takes new information and stored information in memory and interrelates or rearrange and extends this information to achieve a purpose or find possible answer in perplexing situations” (p. 136). It is a broad term that include critical thinking, problem-solving, creative thinking and decision making. Hence, it represents the top end of Bloom Taxonomy which incorporates skills like analyze, evaluate, and create that reflect students’ ability to relate what they have learned to other elements beyond those they were taught (Brookhart, 2010).

1.11 Significance of the Study

A review of the literature indicates that while considerable research has been conducted in the USA and Australia regarding critical literacy issues, there is a general paucity of research the EFL/ ESL field with regard to critical literacy (Nam, 2013). Unfortunately, UAE is no exception. Consequently, this study is designed to inform language learning and critical reading in the UAE’s ESL/ EFL context.

Therefore, it is to be hoped that this study will prove to add a significant contribution to the body of knowledge related to critical literacy in the UAE. The significance of this study stems from the fact that it collected a comprehensive set of data from a large number of students about how they perceived their experience of critical reading in the ESL/ EFL classroom. Furthermore, sufficient data was forthcoming from teachers on the challenges they experienced while teaching critical reading.

It is worth mentioning that in 2016 the Ministry of Education in UAE has introduced a new English curriculum that is designed by Cambridge University to tackle the problem of UAE students’ low achievements in international standardized

test such as PISA, IELTS, and TOEFL, and prepare UAE students to compete successfully in international standardized tests. Thus, the findings of this study can inform many stakeholders across the educational field including curriculum designers and decision makers regarding the implementation of critical literacy in the new English curriculum as Ridge, Kippels & Farah (2017) assert that higher order thinking skills including critical literacy are strong demand to prepare UAE students for international test.

As such, this study sheds some light on useful techniques for incorporating critical literacy into the English curriculum to meet needs and expectations of UAE high school students. Finally, this study can inform teachers, administrators, and other educational personnel by providing a clear definition of the gaps, obstacles, and challenges that teachers and students experience when trying to teach and learn through critical reading practices.

1.12 Organization of the Study

The study was organized into five sequential chapters. This chapter provides a brief overview of the proposed area for research, the problem statement, the purpose of the study and the research questions. Moreover, it has presented the potential significance of the study in addition to dealing with its limitations. Chapter Two presents an extensive review of the relevant literature. The literature review describes the origins of critical reading from the time of Socrates onwards. It also discusses the importance of critical thinking and reading in general and in the field of EFL in particular. Furthermore, several philosophical views are explained under the theoretical framework of critical theory and its various perspectives. This chapter also provided an overview of the teaching and learning of critical reading in EFL

classes. The literature review ends with a synthesis of the relevant research on critical reading and how it has been taught and learned around the world, and in the UAE. Chapter Three presents an overview of the design of the study, including the research methods and action plan. It provides information on the background to the study, its setting and the sample population. Moreover, the data collection methods are described, as are the validity and reliability evaluation procedures. Additionally, ethical consideration and data analysis techniques are described in detail. Chapter Four reports the main findings derived from the sequential, explanatory mixed method design. This involved two phases that used differing research instruments. These included a questionnaire, a classroom observation checklist, and semi-structured interviews. Finally, Chapter Five explicated upon the data and described how the quantitative analysis was used to inform and validate the qualitative results.

1.13 Summary

This chapter has provided a summary of the research and highlighted major themes relating to the background of this study on critical reading. We have covered its importance, origins, and how it is implemented and experienced in ESL. Moreover, critical reading has also been discussed within the context of the UAE, and how it has been assessed by different international reading tests. The research problem: how students lack critical reading skills both around the world and in UAE was also described thoroughly. Furthermore, we addressed the purpose of the study and defined the research questions, before discussing the significance and the limitations of the study. Finally, the organization of the study completed the chapter.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter contains a review of literature on a broad range of themes related to critical reading, its definition and importance in language classroom. It foregrounds a series of extensive perspectives, arguments and research findings about the practices related to critical reading.

This chapter is divided into four main sections. The first section highlights critical literacy, its origins, definitions, and its importance in the field of language learning. The second section discusses the theoretical framework which provides a platform for the entire study and forms as an umbrella of the pedagogical, social, cultural, and linguistic perspectives of critical literacy. The third section provides a guide for teaching and learning critical thinking and reading in English classroom. Finally, the fourth section provides a number of relevant studies' findings, perspectives, and reports about teaching and learning critical reading supported by strong evidences from real practices.

2.1 Introduction

Critical literacy has become a primary goal for many educators in recent years as they believe it is a core element for a successful learning system. It is the essence of effective learning in the world of today in which people experiencing a huge data flow from different sources. Thereafter, it is important to analyze, judge different assumptions, weigh contradicting ideas, and question different arguments that are presented to us in order not to be a passive consumer of what is produced around us. Research in education reveals that students around the world lack the capacity to think and read critically as they lack the confidence in the application of critical

thinking and struggle to develop its skills as well as demonstrate those skills in their assessments (Stupple, Maratos, Elander, Hunt, Cheung & Aubeelu, 2017).

The main reason behind this is that teachers and students perceive critical thinking as complex and difficult skills to teach and learn (Stupple et al., 2017). Thus, different arguments, perspectives, and views have been raised to tackle this issue and stand on the main pillars of this drawback in teaching and learning critical literacy skills. This section sheds light on the history and definition of critical thinking as a base for critical literacy, in addition to its importance as an integral part in the learning process, and how it is associated with academic achievement of students. Furthermore, this section presents multiple views and perspectives about critical reading and how it is experienced by ESL/EFL students around the world in general and UAE in particular.

2.2 Critical Literacy

The foundation of critical literacy goes back to the late 80s as the need to develop critical thinkers became apparent. Hence, major educational institutions in the USA such as National Institute of Education, National commission on Excellence in Education, and some educational journals called for the development of critical thinkers as national priority to meet the competitive challenges of future. Consequently, several projects and school programs have emerged intending to develop critical thinking. Those attempts led the foundation of what called critical literacy and critical pedagogy. (Brookfield, 1987). Sternberg (1985) as cited in Brookfield (1987) argues that reading anything would be difficult without becoming aware of the importance of teaching critical thinking. Brookfield (1987) asserts that by thinking critically “we became aware of the diversity of values, behaviors, social

structures and artistic forms of the world” (p. 5). The main components of critical thinking according to Brookfield (1987) is identifying and challenging underlying ideas, beliefs and assumptions; trying to imagine and explore alternatives to existing ways of thinking and living; reflecting on ideas through analysis and evaluation instead of taking anything read as innate truth.

Traditionally, critical literacy is viewed and defined from different political and social angles. It emphasizes the main principles of social justice, and increasing people’s awareness about power, domination and oppression practiced by some members of society who are regarded as elites of the society. However, in 21st century this view of critical literacy took new trends in academic field, wherefore it become an imperative and integral demand that should be incorporated in the content of educational curriculums (Shirkhani & Fahim, 2011). The contemporary view of critical literacy emphasizes alternative paths for self-development through reflecting on the text content and connecting it to prior knowledge and experience of the readers. In other words, reading the world from our own eyes and experiences (MacDonald & Thornley, 2009). Critical literacy by its contemporary definition, enables readers to analyze, identify and reflect on the underlying assumptions, thoughts, values, and ideologies of a text (Robrege, 2013). It goes beyond merely decoding and understanding texts to explore in depth messages and viewpoints as well as question the underlying assumptions, and the power relationship encountered in the text (Robrege, 2013). This view is also supported by the leading figure and founder of critical literacy Paul Freire who affirms that “reading is not exhausted merely by decoding the written words or written language, but rather anticipated by and extending in to knowledge of the world” (Freire, 1983, p. 5).

2.2.1 Critical Pedagogy

The major figure who contributed remarkably to critical pedagogy is Paulo Freire who challenged what he called “Banking Models” of learning by which knowledge and bits of information were deposited to learners’ minds (Wallace, 2003). Freire presents knowledge as collective and continuously created and produced through searching, reflecting, and making sense of the world. He emphasizes that knowledge is not an individual ownership but a collective product (Wallace, 2003).

Critical pedagogy in language started to take its shape in late 1970s through Hallidayan linguistics who were greatly inspired by Freire critical approach. This new movement shifted the focus from how language is mediated or shaped through grammar to simply look to the content of message through language to be empowered and better understand social and political circumstances of the world (Wallace, 2003).

Through critical pedagogy priority is given to experiential language which is close to the learner’s everyday experiences, their culture and background knowledge. The main tools for critical pedagogy are students’ voice, their thought and opinions that get the stronger emphasis which are contextualized to students’ own experiences and interpretations of different social acts (Wallace, 2003). Moreover, the main principals of critical pedagogy are to help students reconceptualizing and see different views and phenomena in new ways. That is why it presents knowledge as global not local. Another principle is to empower students and prepare them for wider struggle and be aware of different ideologies and thus take the proper actions and response from critical stance rather than being passive consumers of different world

circumstances. Additionally, critical pedagogy is based on commonality not difference, wherefore despite its emphasis on marginalized and oppressed group's rights. It seeks to bridge the gap between oppressed and non-oppressed groups in society and different contradictory views to find common ground where they can share and celebrate their differences. It is based on fixing boundaries rather than dismantling them (Wallace, 2003).

2.2.2 Critical Reading and Critical Thinking

Critical reading is part of critical thinking whereby it is a skill that applies critical thinking elements such as reasoning, questioning facts, and inferring in its process of understanding (Junining, 2013, p. 10). It is worthy to mention that If students need to perform well in higher education institutions or work marketplace, they have to move beyond mastering the basic skills of English language (reading, writing, listening, speaking), whereby they need to develop their ability to think and read critically (Wilson, 2016). There are several definitions of critical thinking which have been proposed by different scholars indicating that there is no consensus regarding the exact definition of critical thinking. Mayfield (2010) defines Critical thinking as a purposeful mental activity that brings conscious awareness to the process of analyzing, reasoning, evaluating, observing, reading and communicating.

James & Hatzler & Chen (2016) defines critical thinking as a “Form of thinking that goes beyond simply accepting what is being said at face value; rather the critical thinker develops an attitude of inquiry to determine the reason and evidence for a conclusion. Critical thinking requires knowledge and the ability to logically determine valid inferences that can be applied to real-world situations” (p. 767). Another definition provided by Snyder (2005) who defines critical thinking as

“actively analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating the thinking process” (p. 1). Liaw (2007) defines critical thinking as a group of skills which “involves the use of information, experience and world knowledge in ways which allow L2 learners to seek alternatives, pose questions and solve problems” (p. 51). Choy & Chean (2009) assert that critical thinking is a “complex process that requires levels of cognitive skills in the processing of information” (p. 198). Leicester & Taylor (2010) view critical thinking in some aspects of “asking good questions, understanding point of views, being rational, and developing skills of research and analysis” (p. 1).

2.2.3 Critical Thinking as a Base for Critical Reading

The origins of critical thinking go back to the ancient time when the “Greek philosopher Socrates proposed a system of inquiry which set out to question everyday beliefs and arrive at truth on the basis of real evidence” (Hughes, 2014, p. 2). Similarly, Plato who believes that the real education is the one that “enables students to question, examine and reflects on ideas and values” (Seker & Komur, 2008, p. 390).

The critical thinking emerged in the academic field and educational sector in the mid twentieth century. In 1951 a remarkable committee of educators chaired by Benjamin Bloom, Anderson & Krathwol who worked extensively to develop a system that encouraged higher order thinking and went beyond the prominent rote learning in education. The system is named under Bloom Taxonomy which consists of “series of skills that teachers should develop in their learners in order to make their students learn more effectively” (Hughes, 2014, p. 2). Snyder & Snyder (2008) highlight the main elements of critical thinking as follows: 1) Using instructional strategies that actively engage students in the learning process rather than relying on

lecturing and rote memorization; 2) Focusing instructions on the process of learning rather than the content; 3) Using assessment techniques that provide students with an intellectual challenge rather than memory recall (p. 90).

Critical thinking is a must for new generations that will allow them to merge and deal with the huge data flow which they are exposed to on a daily basis. Critical thinking empowers students by increasing their awareness and self-control, providing protection from manipulation, attaining good lessons from mistakes, helping in making better decisions individually and in groups. It leads to mental independence, and finally, “it is a path to more productive work with others, wherefore it helps people to openly share their ideas and works of their minds” (Mayfield, 2010, p. 8). Additionally, it helps people to direct the inner processes for understanding different issues and making sense and harmony out of confusing world. Furthermore, it allows people to analyze and solve life problems and welcome them as challenges (Mayfield, 2010). Furthermore, it is worthy to mention that critical thinking is not an isolated subject that should be taught separately from other subjects, but rather it is a precious skill that should be incorporated in every subject and most importantly the language subject. Hughes (2014) provides some reasons to teaching critical thinking in language classroom. First, communication language tasks require personalization, investigation and problem solving which are regarded as main elements of critical thinking. Second, in modern language teaching methodology, students are expected to approach different texts critically by “comprehending the meaning, analyzing the facts and opinions, matching arguments to the supporting evidence, and expressing their own views in response to the text” (p. 6). Third, students in the digital age have access to a huge amount of information through search engines, hence they need to have the ability to evaluate the information by “asking critical questions, assessing

credibility, comparing and tracking the root of information” (p. 6). Fourth, language taken exams require students to have a good level of skills to state their opinions with accurate arguments and supporting evidence, which are learned through critical thinking. Finally, thinking is a key required skill to study at university and enter a future profession in which they can use their critical thinking skills to assess the ideas and present as well as confront arguments to convince others.

Brookfield (1987) indicated that critical thinking is emotive as well as rational, whereby criticizing and questioning our previous values and beliefs bring the sense of liberation and increase the excitement to change many aspects of lives. Hence, to facilitate and provoke critical thinking, the diversity of methods and materials is necessary as teachers should vary their teaching methods and use a range of written and visual materials. The education of critical thinking enhances students’ critical awareness which represent the main pillar of liberal education that fosters creativity, students’ self-direction and openness to a diversity of interpretations of any single text, ideas, knowledge or theory (Brookfield, 1987). This emphasizes the idea of expecting multiple interpretations of one idea or issue that reflect different personal perspectives and understandings gleaned from students’ own experiences. Consequently, teachers and students would be more as constructors of the knowledge or so-called truth. This deconstruction of ideas, curricula, and textbook content are cornerstones of critical literacy (Brookfield, 1987).

The most important skill in language is reading wherefore it is directly associated with the other basic skills such as listening, writing and speaking (Fairbairn & Fairbairn, 2001). Hence, developing reading skills has become a priority for academic success. Nevertheless, multiple arguments and perspectives have been

raised about reading and how it is developed. The most remarkable view of reading goes under the umbrella of critical theory which presents reading as an analytical process that goes beyond decoding the text to deeply analyze, evaluate, and explore the underlying assumptions and divergent points of view (Tyson, 2011). This contemporary view gives birth to what is called critical reading.

2.2.4 The Importance of Critical Reading

Being a critical reader is not a choice anymore but an imperative demand to perform effectively in today's world, whereby students with critical reading skills are better prepared for their future studies (Macknish, 2011). Similarly, Kabilan (2000) who argues that proficiency in language is not just using language or knowing the meaning, but beside that being able to think critically and creatively through the language. Critical reading is an individual skill that reflects different interpretations of the text and ideas of written passage (Wallace & Wray, 2016). It is a skill that reflects the ability to analyze and evaluate a text and relate what has been read to other information (Wallace & Wray, 2016). It is about questioning the facts, weighing evidence and assessing indications made by authors (Wallace & Wray, 2016). Critical reading is evaluating, inferring, and interpreting the text meaning to get in-depth understanding of the text and move beyond the surface level of meaning (Lewis & Macgregor & Jones, 2018). According to Freire (1983), "reading always involves critical perception, interpretation and rewriting what is read" (p. 11). According to Freire (1983), critical reading enables students to read and understand the world, it also enables students to deeply connect to their own world experiences and thus, explore their beliefs, fears, values and tastes. Critical reading goes beyond memorizing. Other scholars like (Patesan et al., 2014) define critical reading as an

active engagement with text and communicate with it to understand the information flow and create a systematic scheme of knowledge. Macknish (2011) defines critical reading as “a social practice that engages the readers’ critical stance and shaped by different understanding people have of it in different context” (p. 445). There is a strong association between critical reading and critical thinking as critical reading is a skill that applies critical thinking elements such as reasoning, questioning facts, and inferring in its process of understanding (Junining, 2013, p. 10), and critical reading is guaranteed through higher order thinking skills (Ciorcki, David, Gupta, & Dala (2008). Freebody & Luke (1990) assert that in the critical reading process readers are mainly divided into four roles: 1) Role as a code breaker: refers to the ability to access the sound and written symbols in English. In other words, being able to decode the elements of a sentence; 2) Role as a text participant: refers to the ability to be engaged in the meaning system of a text by relating the textual elements to the background knowledge and thus draw new inferences; 3) Role as a text user: refers to the reader’s ability to develop resources for participating in social activities in which the written text is for; 4) Role as a text analyst: refers to the ability to analyze and uncover the ideologies, depositions and orientations proposed in the text.

With rapidly evolving technology, critical reading becomes a must for students who deal with a huge number of electronic resources as a primary information source. Consequently, critical reading allows them to question what they are reading as well as evaluate the information accuracy, clarity, depth, and fairness (Chris, 2005). Kay (1956) contend that critical reading enables students to discriminate between true, complete fabricated or slightly colored information. (Abd-Kadir, Subki, Jamal, & Ismail, 2014) synthesize the importance of critical reading: as 1) It helps students to analyze, synthesize, evaluate and draw references; 2) It

enables students to survive and perform well in the world, real life and their future territory; 3) It helps students to think outside the box and be active learners who challenge author's views and come up with valid arguments instead of being just passive learners. Moreover, Abd-Kabir et al., (2014) contend that students who develop a critical stance toward a text gain better understanding and comprehension of the overall meaning of a text. In addition to that, critical reading expands students' awareness and understanding of different genres and discourses encountered in any written text.

These claims emphasize the importance of critical reading as a vital demand that students need to survive and perform well in the world and more importantly have an active role in creating and producing the knowledge instead of being consumers of the knowledge that is creating continuously and consistently all over the world.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

In order to understand the critical literacy dimensions and instructional practices, the researcher utilized critical theory that is directly associated with critical reading. Critical theory has a powerful combination of vocational skills that increase students' ability to reason logically and think creatively (Tyson, 2011). Moreover, critical theory has a lot of benefits for students as it increases their understanding of literary texts by helping them look beyond the explicit meaning of the text. It also provides multiple interpretations of the same literary work. Additionally, it helps students to understand more of the world in which they live and grasp deep meaning of the human experience (Tyson, 2011). Furthermore, critical theory helps students

develop their self-awareness and interpretive skills that in turn help them to better understand the world (Tyson, 2011).

The origins of critical theory go back to the Frankfurt school whose theoreticians such as Marcuse, Adorno, Horkheimer, Habermas, Lukacs and most notably Karl Marx who transcended the roots of critical theory based on dialogue that serve as an empowering tool for reflecting on ideas, evaluating and refining social actions to bring tangible change (Angelo, Seaton & Smith, 2012). Horkheimer (1972) is a famous theorist who raised paramount ideas to criticize positivism and contended that science and reducing reasoning to formal logic didn't contribute to the betterment of society, as it put science as something apart from the working of society, which in turns emphasizes the passive sense perception of reality. According to Horkheimer (1972), facts and science are products of the activity of society, both are not natural but are shaped by human activity (as cited in Siegel & Fernandez, 2002). Freire (1973) as cited in Siegel & Fernandez (2002) argues that humans are culture makers, they have the capacity to use language to mediate their world. This capacity enables them to reflect on their world and become aware of social and political action and discourse. However, this awareness can't be developed by education practices of banking by which teachers deposit knowledge in the minds of students. In contrast, social conscious could be developed through problem posing education and by dialogue among equals. In other words, enable students to give their voice, read their world and rewrite it (cited in Siegel & Fernandez, 2002).

In education a famous philosopher Paulo Freire presents dialogue as a substantial activity that students should be engaged in to reflect on different issues and social actions to come up with multiple perspectives of a text which is regarded

as a main element of critical reading (Nam, 2013). Critical theory has two main dimensions; one criticizes rationality and asserts the separation of facts from value, and privileges forms of reasoning that expands human conscious and action. The second dimension asserts the connection among institutions, daily life activities, and all forces that shape the larger society (Siegel & Fernandez, 2002).

In 21st century remarkable scholars like Allan Luke and Hilary Janks advocated for critical literacy as a new basic and integral skill that enables learners to approach numerous texts through questioning texts' claims and examine the writers aims to influence the readers. Luke (2012) who is an educator, theorist and a researcher, argues that reality looms large in everyday life as he believes that reality is socially constructed by human beings through discourse. He also argues that any writer presents reality or fact under doubt through multiple expressive forms that could disrupt the reader's understanding who is left unmoored to social or material reality. At the same time, Luke (2012) asserts that there are "few human beings would doubt that there is a biosphere out there with some degree of actual facticity" (p. 210). Therefore, developing critical literacy provides key opportunities for debating and learning about questions like: "How does language, text, discourse, and information make a difference? For whom? In what material, social and consequential ways? In which interests? According to what patterns, rules and in what institutional and cultural sites?" (p. 214).

Luke (2012) affirms that critical literacy that was originated in the third world countries under decolonization through languages other than English is drawn. In contrast, critical literacy in English speaking countries is now old news as it has been documented for four decades of diverse approaches of critical literacy that has been

arisen in the context of schooling, universities, vocational education and second language education.

According to Luke (2012) reading is a social practice that entails psychological skills, linguistic competence and cognitive strategies which enable readers to figure out social ideas and understand different affiliated discourses and cultural scripts embedded in the text. hence, the acquisition of critical literacy by means of reading and writing entails “naming and renaming, narrating and analyzing of life worlds as part of problem posing and problem-solving pedagogy. This engagement with the text teaches learners how the structure of sentences and clauses attempts to define the world’s reality. It enlarges the learners’ understanding of how major and sophisticated texts and discourses can be manipulated to represent different thoughts, ideas and realities of the world. This understanding according to Luke (2012) is “premised on the imperative for freedom of dialogue and the need to critique all texts. Discourses and ideologies” (p. 225). It requires a commitment to the existence of ‘truth’ and ‘reality’ outside the text, in addition to the existence of independent stance of the reader through the construction of meaning as he believes that reading and writing are part of broader investigation of facts, realities and ideologies.

In the same line, Hilary Janks (2012) argues that critical literacy is a must in a world that is structured in relation to power and inequality based on gender, race and ethnicity. Janks (2012) asserts that critical engagement with a text and reader’s interest in the text are not enough, whereby there is an imperative need for certain ways of thinking, believing and valuing different ideas to come up with successful reconstruction of meaning. Janks (2012) believes that there is a binary relationship

between the text and the reader whereby there is a possibility of actual effects of texts on the reader. Therefore, reader should have a critical stance toward ideas that are embedded in the text and not be a passive consumer of thoughts and ideas that flow from the text.

Luke and Janks ideas provided a clear and comprehensive picture of the main pillars of critical literacy that stands on active engagement with the text and enlarge the readers' understanding of different social actions and discourses in order to make sense of their own world. But to achieve that critical stance, readers should have certain ways of thinking to extract the embedded ideas and ideologies in any text, and here come the schools' responsibility to develop certain ways of thinking that evoke students' higher order thinking skills such as analytical and critical reading skills.

Under the big umbrella of critical theory several models have been developed by some scholars to serve as a metaphor to explain and represent the theory and explain different aspects of reading. In fact, those models are divided into two waves: bottom up wave such as model of Gough (1972) which assumes that the reading process began with low level sensory representation (letter input) and proceeded through phonemic and lexical level representation to deeper structural representation, while top down wave focused on what readers remember after reading a text, and the discovery that text memory was systematic. Another top down reading was model adopted by Pearson & Stephens (1992) which focused on a broader view of what readers bring to a text. All theories under this wave focus on the connection between the background knowledge that a reader brings to a text and the reader's comprehension of a text (cited in Alvermann et al., 2013). Another significant view

of reading is represented by Olson (1994) through his book (*The World on Paper*) who presents a different view of literacy that goes beyond the explicit representation of the text (say letters and words) to incorporate the referential element of the text or what is not represented and left unsaid. This significant work led to different representations of the natural world, and gave birth to works such as portrait painting, map making, and botanical drawing, in other words a world on a paper. Olson (1994) affirms that literacy develops an internal subjectivity, a consciousness and discourse of thoughts and feelings (cited in Alvermann et al., 2013).

2.3.1 Bloom's Taxonomy

One of the most valuable and significant models recommended by a number of remarkable scholars (Airasian, Cruikshank, Pintrich, Raths & Wittrock, 2000; Anderson, Krathwohl & Bloom, 2001; Krathwohl, 2002; Sousa, 2006) is Bloom's Taxonomy which is regarded as a useful model and "framework for classifying statements of what we expect or intend students to learn as a result of instruction" (Anderson et al., 2001, p. 212). Bloom's Taxonomy was seen as more than a measurement tool, but rather serves as a common language among educators about learning goals for developing and enhancing thinking skills and stands as a precious platform for successful classroom activities, instructions, and assessments as well (Sousa, 2006).

As aforementioned, Bloom Taxonomy is a framework for classifying learning objectives by its means of what we expect our students to learn and acquire as the result of instructions (Krathwohl, 2002). This framework has been developed about 50 years ago by Benjamin Bloom in 1956 (Sousa, 2006). The initial goal of developing this framework is to facilitate the constructing of test items and create a

bank of items, each measuring a specific educational objective (Krathwohl, 2002). This framework consists of six major categories that are ordered from simple to complex and from concrete to abstract. Those categories are: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Krathwohl, 2002).

1) Knowledge: refers to remembering or retrieving previously learned material, it incorporates terms like: define, label, recall, and recognize; 2) Comprehension: describes the ability to grasp or construct meaning from material and it incorporates tasks like: summarize, discuss, explain, and outline; 3) Application: refers to the ability to use learned material, or to implement material in new and concrete situations and it includes applications of some rules, concepts, methods and theories to solve problems. The terms associated with it are: practice, calculate, apply, execute etc.; 4) Analyze: reflects the ability to break down or distinguish the parts of material into its components so that its organizational structure may be better understood. It includes identifying parts and examining relationship between parts. It is associated with terms like analyze, contrast, distinguish, and deduce; 5) Synthesis: reflects the ability to put parts together to form a coherent or unique new whole. It consists of terms like imagine, compose, design, infer etc.; Evaluate: The ability to judge, check, and even critique the value of material for a given purpose. It incorporates terms like appraise, assess, judge, and critique (Wilson, 2016, p. 3-4).

Bloom's Taxonomy is a practical and easy model for teachers to promote their students' higher order thinking skills (Sousa, 2006). Thereafter, several studies approved that teachers who use Bloom's Taxonomy in their planning for instructions and assessment demonstrate better achievement and learning outcomes among their students. Thus, it is highly recommended that teachers use open-ended questions and continuously stimulate their students to evaluate, analyze, and synthesize as intensive

ways to develop the higher thinking skills (Sousa, 2006). However, the research reveals that most teachers work hard on just one kind of cognitive processing through their instructions and assessments and that is remembering which represents the lower level of thinking in Bloom's Taxonomy (Mayer, 2002), wherefore teachers have difficulty in teaching and assessing objectives of promoting higher thinking skills such as analyze, evaluate, and synthesize which represent the ability to use the learned or acquired knowledge.

2.4 Teaching Critical Reading in English Classes

Teaching critical reading is not an easy task, but rather a complex process that needs a sufficient understanding of its overall principles and adequate techniques to ensure effective implication of activities that foster critical reading. Ciorcki et al., (2015) assert that critical reading is a complex process in which readers take further steps from what text says about a topic to analyze and interpret a sequence of connected ideas to figure out the deep meaning of a text. Hence, critical reading is an analytic activity (Ciorcki et al., 2015). Similarly, Lizarraga, Baquedano, & Oliver (2010) affirm that teaching critical literacy skills is an extensive process that "couldn't be achieved spontaneously, but rather with conscious programmed and continuous evaluation" (p. 132). Additionally, there are several strategies and techniques that teachers could adopt to teach critical thinking and reading effectively. For example, Ciorcki et al., (2015) noted that teaching critical thinking in reading should be through explicit instructions which provide teachers with precious opportunity to foster critical thinking skills such as (analyze, infer, interpret, and explain) and some strategies like questioning, visualization, mind mapping, and observation. Another leading technique is assessment either formative or summative.

Ciorcki, et al., (2015) indicate that ESL/EFL teachers could provide students with multiple sorts of critical thinking activities as part of reading assessment. For instance, recognize the underlying assumptions in a text, figure out implicit argument within a text, present one's own reflection to others, use open ended questions, encourage in group discussions, mind mapping and searching. Moreover, teachers need to align teaching objectives with clear and accurate levels of higher order thinking, wherefore, provoking critical reading in the classroom depends mainly on the objectives of teaching, activities, and most importantly the questions used by teachers (Poudel, 2014).

Some scholars like Acosta & Ferri (2010) suggest some strategies to develop critical thinking skills for reading comprehension. First, activating students' prior knowledge to help students make connections between their own experience and new information being taught. In this strategy teachers can utilize brainstorming, discussions, and visual or graphic organizers that are proved to be practical tools for developing critical reading. Second, prediction is a strategy that could improve students' critical reading and comprehension, wherefore it prepares students before reading a text by activating their prior knowledge and engages them from the outset. It is a powerful strategy that increases students' interaction and understanding of a text by which they come up with different interpretations, analysis, and understandings of a text. Third, questioning is also another significant strategy that could be divided into before, while, after reading questions that can develop different levels of thinking, evoke deeper understanding, and foster students' critical thinking. It is worthy to mention here that "right there" or "literal questions" that have answers stated directly in the text can't develop students critical thinking but rather indirect and inference questions or what are called construction questions according to

(Nagappan, 2001), have a big role in developing critical reading by which students search for information in between lines of the text, describe, compare, analyze, organize, and explain ideas. Sometimes it is required that students look back in their own thoughts, experiences and knowledge, reflect on them, and look within themselves to find the answers (Acosta & Ferri, 2010).

Nagappan (2001) suggests some practical strategies to enhance critical thinking in language classroom. 1) Classification system or taxonomy that is used to differentiate the levels of thought that various questions could elicit. The most significant taxonomy is of course Bloom's Taxonomy with six levels of cognitive processing; 2) Metacognition which refers to the connection between one's awareness and control of a specific knowledge needed to complete a specific task. In other words, it is one's awareness of cognitive processes of learning and how people operate cognitively by being conscious about their characteristics such as background knowledge, interests, and skills they use to process different tasks. Those cognitive processes include skills like evaluating, planning, monitoring, and checking (Abd-Kadir et al., 2014); 3) Classifying which is a strategy that enhances students' higher thinking skills by which they analyze the content of a text and categorize information in different ways that reflect their own understanding. Similar to classifying is ordering or sequencing ideas and entities; 4) Summarizing in language teaching is also an important strategy to foster critical thinking which includes focusing on the core of the content, deleting trivial and redundant material, and selecting what interest students rather than what is a good organizer for the information that is to be summarized; 5) Extending or drawing inferences is crucial to help students go beyond the explicit information of a text to identify the deep meaning and discover the analogies and metaphors incorporated in a text; 6) Discussion is one more

powerful and essential strategy to evoke students' critical thinking in which students should take the leading role and time to express their ideas and interact as well as exchange questions with their teachers and peers.

2.4.1 Learning about Critical Reading in English Classes

Critical thinking is highly associated with four basic language skills: writing, listening, reading, and speaking (Acosta & Ferri, 2010; Rashid & Hashim, 2008; Kabilan, 2000). A number of scholars affirm that the integration of critical thinking with language skills is a must to improve reading and writing skills, and overall language proficiency (Acosta & Ferri, 2010; Kabilan, 2000; Rashid & Hashim, 2008) and communication competencies (Hughes, 2014; Maduqi, 2011). Moreover, learning analytic skills and critical thinking skills in language classrooms improve the analytical ability of non-native readers Roy (2014). Furthermore, there are some scholars who assume that mastering critical skills is a strong predictor for success in acquisition of language skills (Rashid & Hashim, 2008), because those skills evoke students' schemata and enable them to connect what they have read to their prior knowledge and thus improve their understanding of L2.

Choy & Cheah (2009) assure that ESL/EFL students lack the critical thinking skills as they were never exposed or taught those skills in early education. The main barriers for teaching critical thinking in language classrooms as declared by teachers is that big numbers of L2 learners don't have L2 mastery which interrupts learning the critical thinking skills (Choy & Cheah, 2009). Another barrier is the social nature and lack of confidence among L2 learners who are shy to express their ideas openly and thus overly exam oriented. Additionally, several scholars emphasize that L2 learners lack the capacity for criticality due to different educational backgrounds and

cultures, in addition to limited confidence among L2 learners in using English language.

However, Macknish (2011) asserts that those views are over generalized, wherefore L2 learners have the ability to read, evaluate and think critically if they have extensively been exposed to such techniques through reading. Macknish's (2011) arguments lead us to reconceptualize the premises of critical literacy in ESL/EFL field as asserts that low language competency is not the main obstacle that hinders L2 learners from applying critical reading, but in contrast, lack of sufficient opportunities to engage in critical reading is the main reason for L2 learners' limited capacity of thinking and reading critically. Macknish (2011) affirms that the main reasons of neglecting critical literacy learning are limited time, large classes and culture of not questioning an authority. He argues that cultural background could be a crucial challenge to delivering critical reading in ESL/EFL classes.

As a researcher, I think that Macknish's (2011) claims about the obstacles that hinder critical literacy in ESL/EFL field make sense, whereby criticality and critique in Arab world are perceived negatively. People in Arab world have some kind of sensitivity toward the word criticism.

2.4.2 Assessing Critical Reading in ESL/EFL

Assessment is an integral part of teaching, and assessing critical thinking is as important as teaching it. Hence, questions and questioning methods teachers use in the language classroom play a vital role in fostering critical thinking of students. Seker & Komur (2008) affirm that questions play an important role in evoking critical thinking skills and they are strong tools teachers and students can use to activate

metacognitive and higher order thinking skills during the learning process. Similarly, Rezaei, Derakhshan & Bagherkazemi (2011) who assert that developing critical thinking in the classroom depends on teacher's use of effective questions. Seker & Komur (2008) declare that assessment is a vital part in classroom teaching as it provides teachers with comprehensive feedback about students' different pedagogic, academic and cognitive abilities.

Questions play a significant role in teaching and learning of critical reading and they are precious tools teachers can use to activate metacognitive processes and encourage students to be active participants in activities of inquiry, reasoning and problem solving. Furthermore, Bloom's Taxonomy "serves as a backbone of many teaching philosophies, especially those which bend more toward skills rather than content" (Soleimani & Kheiri, 2016, p. 868). Consequently, it can be used as a tool to "make balance among assessment and text book to guarantee that all orders of thinking are practiced in students' learning" (Soleimani & Kheiri, 2016, p. 868). Teachers usually ask questions in language classrooms: First, to assess their students' understanding and comprehension. Second, to help students practice the structure of the target language. Third, to figure out what students think and know. Fourth, to encourage students to talk about their experience. Fifth, questions are posed to evoke further discussion and interpretations in the classroom (Seker & Komur, 2008). Nevertheless, in order to evoke critical thinking in the learning process teachers should use techniques that require students to reflect on ideas, analyze and synthesize resources, evaluate information and solve problems rather than recall or memorize information.

2.5 Research about Critical Reading

The education field has witnessed a tremendous number of significant studies to measure out the teaching of critical thinking skills and its impact on different aspects of academic achievement and cognitive skills development. James & Hartzler (2016) assert that critical thinking is a strong predictor of academic success. In the same line, Roy (2014) asserts that teaching analytic skills and critical thinking skills in the language classroom improve the analytical ability of non-native readers. However, the research reveals that critical thinking skills is a neglected field that faces crucial challenges and barriers to be integrated effectively in schools. Snyder (2005) in his review declares that 89% of teachers claim critical thinking is a primary objective. Nevertheless 78% of them state that students lack critical thinking skills. Snyder (2005) found that 19% of teachers can clearly define critical thinking, 9% can describe how to teach critical thinking in their discipline, and just 8% use critical thinking standards in their assessment techniques.

The academic field is rich with a number of significant studies conducted by different scholars from different disciplines to assess the effect of critical thinking on students' academic achievements, their analytic skills, verbal intelligence and creativity. For instance, a pretest-posttest experimental study conducted by Lizarraga et al., (2010) on the effect of instruction method "thinking actively" on the thinking skills of 58 sixth grade students in Spanish primary education schools, found that the academic achievement, creativity and thinking skills are stimulated and enhanced when teachers use thinking actively methods. In addition, students' ability to think intelligently with diverse reasoning was increased. Lizarraga et al., (2010) assert that teaching thinking skills is more effective than conventional teaching as it enhances

intelligence, verbal, abstract, and numerical reasoning, creativity and academic achievement. Another study by Jensen, McDaniel, & Woodward & Kummer (2014) who conducted a quasi-experimental nonequivalent groups study in Brigham University, USA, to measure out the effect of high-level exam questions on fostering 180 undergraduate students' conceptual understanding of the material, found that students in high level exam conditions obtained higher level results as well as acquired deep understanding of the material and better memory for the course information.

In ESL/EFL field, the research reveals that students lacking critical thinking skills is a worldwide challenge that is not excluded to a specific nation (Ciorcki et al., 2015). A mixed methods exploratory study conducted by Yee (2007) in 2 Hong Kong secondary schools to investigate the implementation of critical thinking in English language classrooms learning, revealed that just two out of five case studies were encountered as applying critical thinking in a supportive learning atmosphere. The study indicated that critical literacy is neglected somewhere in the field of ESL. Moreover, in a mixed method study a questionnaire by Stapleton (2008) distributed on 70 Japanese under-graduate learners of English to investigate their levels in using higher order thinking skills. The study demonstrated that the majority of ESL Japanese learners lack critical thinking skills. Stapleton (2008) found that students in higher education have some success in identifying facts from reading texts, and less success in extracting big ideas or thinking about the content critically.

Choy & Cheah (2009) argue that the most important pillar in teaching critical literacy is teachers' perceptions toward the importance of such skills. Hence, they administered a quantitative study in number of higher institutions in Malaysia to

investigate 30 teachers' perceptions about critical thinking in language classroom. They found that the majority of teachers perceive that they are teaching critical thinking to their students, but the reality showed that they are solely focusing on the comprehension of subject content as they lack the understanding of critical thinking requirements. Choy & Cheah (2009) study revealed that students lack the critical thinking skills as they were never exposed to or taught those skills in early education. A mixed method study conducted by Ciorcki et al., (2015) on 160 students at Indian and Malaysian secondary schools found that critical thinking is mostly neglected.

Similarly, in the Middle East whereby a quantitative study conducted by Taleb & Chadwick (2016) in British University in Dubai, found that educators perceive teaching and learning critical thinking skills problematic and the reason behind that is what they called the conventional education system in the Middle East which for decades look like spoon feeding which emphasizes the rote learning system. Hence, adopting the aspects of critical thinking would be problematic and crucial for many teachers who lack the basis and main elements of such skills. Rezaei et al., (2011) assert that critical thinking is a valuable cornerstone in the language classroom, and an important element of schooling in 21st century. Although some teachers believe that teaching critical thinking is a must to raise their students' higher order thinking, yet most of the teachers lack the confidence and capacity to teach it. Rezaei et al., (2011) argue that teachers in the language classroom rarely use inferential questions to stimulate students thinking process. Furthermore, pre- and post- test experimental study administered by Abdel-halim (2011) in Helwan University in English language section to assess the effect of teaching critical reading strategies on developing 120 students' critical reading skills. The study revealed that such strategies like such as debate, draw conclusion, and differentiate between facts

and interpretations have large positive effects on improving students' analytical and critical reading skills. Moreover, a quantitative conducted by (Al-Jubouri, Hussein & Al-Sharee, 2018) in which an experimental pretest-posttest was administered to investigate the impact of critical reading strategy on the achievement of 36 4th grade Iraqi students who studied literature and text, found that students who studied literature and text according to the critical reading strategy were superior to the students who studied the texts with conventional ways.

Additionally, an experimental pretest- posttest study conducted by Jasim (2007) on the effect of using critical reading strategies on the comprehension of 70 second year students of English language and literature at University of Al Mosul in Iraq, found that critical reading strategies have a favorable effect upon Iraqi EFL learners' comprehension of text. A pretest-posttest experimental study conducted by Mozafari & Barjesten (2016) on 109 Iranian EFL students at Azad University to examine the impact of critical oriented reading strategies on their literacy competence, found that critical reading strategies empower students to know, explain, analyze, and answer the questions that arise in text which leads to a progress in literacy competence. In Algeria, a quantitative study conducted by Kaja & Alshayeb (2016) to identify and know the level of 100 high school students' competence in mastering the critical reading skills, identified the poor level of the learners in critical reading skills where the average of student's performance got a percentage of 46.72% from the standard which was defined in this study by 80%.

Those remarkable studies provided an evidence that implementing critical literacy in language education field is proved to be beneficial in regard to students' acquisition of second language, academic achievements, and overall comprehension

of subjects. At the same time, the research also revealed that the implementation of critical literacy in ESL/EFL field and students lacking critical thinking skills is a crucial worldwide challenge that is not excluded to a specific nation.

2.6 Critical Literacy in UAE Context

Critical literacy is becoming an imperative demand and backbone of 21st century skills and learning outcomes all around the world in general and in UAE in particular. One of the remarkable goals included in 2021 vision and mission of the UAE government is to build up a new generation of critical thinkers who are able to realize the notable vision of creativity and innovation in different fields (Ministry of Education, 2017). Consequently, the recent curriculum reforms witnessed a radical change in the textbook content to include activities and tasks that foster critical thinking of students (Farah & Ridge, 2009). However, the research in UAE context and some educational reports like schools' inspection reports reveal that teachers in the UAE tend to focus on the low level of thinking skills and the assessment structure and items still emphasize memorization and rote learning (Ridge et al., 2017).

A mixed method study conducted by Al-Sheikh (2014) to explore the use of metacognitive reading strategies by UAE high school students, found that although students reported that they use high levels of metacognitive strategies while reading, in the actual practice they used fewer strategies especially in English language. This indicates that students lack high level thinking skills like criticality especially in English language. In the same line, a quantitative study conducted by Abo-Salem (2016) in Abu-Dhabi public schools in order to measure the extent to which teachers made tests assess higher order thinking of 50 grade 8th and 9th learners and find out how the test items agreed with Bloom's Taxonomy levels. The results indicated that

all test items measure just the lower three levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. Abo-Salem (2016) affirms that there is a mismatch between teachers' instructional practices and kind of test items students encounter in their courses. Additionally, the dominant form of assessment practices in the UAE is multiple choice test which is widely known as evaluating lower thinking skills. Moreover, assessment practices still focus on students' performance rather than their ability to use the learned knowledge. Abo-Salem (2016) concludes "tests that are commonly used in our schools are not suitable to measure higher order thinking skills" (p. 6). These results support the argument made by Ridge et al., (2017) and Dakkak (2010) that instructional and assessment practices in the UAE merely emphasize rote learning and don't develop critical thinking especially in ESL/EFL classrooms.

It is worth mentioning that although research field witnessed a numerous number of studies that investigate the implementation of critical literacy in ESL/EFL field, there is a paucity of research studies that were conducted in GCC countries in general and UAE in particular to tackle this issue, which raises a strong demand of concern that should be oriented toward critical literacy and seeks the best implementations of critical reading strategies in ESL/EFL field.

2.7 Summary

This chapter has highlighted the basis and origins of critical reading that is rooted in the ancient time of Socrates. The importance of critical thinking and reading was also discussed especially in ESL/EFL field. Furthermore, several philosophical stances were presented under a vast theoretical framework of critical theory which stands as a platform for the entire study. This chapter also provided an overview of critical reading practices and experiences that were discussed in addition to the

strategies of teaching, learning, and assessing critical reading in English. Moreover, the literature review provided an abundant synthesis of research about critical reading and how it is taught, learned, and assessed around the world in general and in UAE in particular. Furthermore, this chapter addressed critical reading practices in UAE context which fall below the global average demonstrated by different international reading tests like IELTS, TOEFL, PIRLS and PISA. The entire literature review asserts that developing critical reading skills stands on solid and practical teaching strategies as well assessing techniques that are missed in the UAE context. Finally, this chapter ended up with some research in the UAE which affirms the lack of criticality among UAE students. The next chapter discusses the methodology, methods, data collection instruments, and means of data analysis used for the research study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed description of the mixed methods sequential explanatory design employed to provide insight on 11th grade students' experiences about critical reading in English language classrooms. It starts with stating the research questions that the study is aimed to address. It also provides detailed description of the data collection methods and procedures, which featured quantitative method by means of background survey and critical reading questionnaire and featured the qualitative method by means of classroom observation, and semi- structured interview. Additionally, this chapter describes the participants' demographics, sampling procedures, and the research site in which the study took place. Moreover, this chapter discusses the action plan and data analysis procedures including descriptive analysis for background survey, and critical reading questionnaire, and thematic analysis for the semi-structured interviews. Finally, validity, reliability, and ethical considerations were extensively discussed.

3.2 Research Questions

1. What do 11th grade students report about their critical reading experiences in English?
2. How do 11th grade teachers view their experiences of teaching critical reading?
3. How do 11th grade students view their critical reading experiences?
4. What do the actual practices in 11th grade classrooms reveal about critical reading?
5. Are there any consistencies, or variations among students' self-reporting, students' and teachers' views and the actual classroom practices?

3.3 Research Design

3.3.1 Research Paradigm

Paradigm is a “shared belief within a community of researchers who share a consensus about which questions are most meaningful and which methods are most appropriate for answering the questions” (Morgan, 2013, p. 53). It is a “guide that frames one’s approach to research problem and offer suggestions on how it address it” (Baker, 2016, p. 321). According to Teddlie & Tashakkori, (2009) Paradigm is “a worldview, together with the various philosophical assumptions associated with the point of view” (p. 84).

The philosophical paradigm associated with Mixed Method is pragmatism, that focuses on “what works” to uncover truth and reality regarding the research questions. Consequently, the research questions guide the MM investigation that are answered by both narrative and numerical information (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Hence, the philosophy of pragmatism in social research emphasizes practicality as a cornerstone for the investigation of the study under process (Morgan, 2013). It focuses on the research outcomes and products that emerge from a communicative process of making meaning of things (Baker, 2015).

Mixed Method Research advocates tend to emphasize the idea of “what works” rather than “how to do” a research, which reflects the importance of practicality which involves more than making decision about the research methods, because pragmatism as philosophy goes beyond methodology or problem-solving, whereas any researcher is committed to choose what works to pursue the goals of the research as well as justify why he/ she chose specific methodology.

It is worthy to mention that pragmatism is not a philosophy of methodology, but rather it is a theory of truth (Denzin, 2012). Whereby, for pragmatism, the truth or the nature of reality determines the kind of knowledge that is possible, and the knowledge abstraction is replaced by experience where the interaction between beliefs and action is continuous (Morgan, 2013). Here, the key point for pragmatism is that knowledge is an interactive process of inquiry between the knower and the known that creates a continual movement between beliefs and actions (Morgan, 2013). This emphasizes the idea that knowledge is not an abstract social system or a relationship between the knower and the known, but a social action that encompasses multiple experiences, beliefs, and understandings of an issue or phenomena. One of the most distinctive features of pragmatism is that it emphasizes the importance of differentiating approaches to research that guide the choices about how to conduct inquiry. As such it emphasizes the importance of research questions, communication, and interactive process of meaning making as three important pillars of a research.

3.3.2 Explanatory Mixed Methods Research Design

Mixed Method Research is defined as “a type of inquiry that is philosophically grounded where an intentional mixture of both quantitative and qualitative approaches is used in a single research study” (Baker, 2013, p. 5). Teddlie & Tashakkori (2009) assert that MM can address a range of confirmatory and exploratory questions with both QUAL and QUAN approaches. Additionally, it provides better and stronger inferences, in-depth information and greater breadth. Finally, it provides the opportunity for a greater collection of divergent views.

This study adopted a mixed methods explanatory sequential design to explore critical reading experiences by Emirati 11th grade students who learn English as a

second language, as well as to understand how critical reading is taught and learned. Mixed methods explanatory sequential design involves collecting and analyzing the quantitative data which has the priority of addressing the study questions, followed by interpretation and analysis of qualitative data. Then, the findings of both the quantitative and qualitative data are merged during the interpretation phase of the study (Creswell & Clark, 2011). This process has been clearly illustrated in the notion system by Morse (1991) as follows:

QUAN → QUAL= explain results which indicates an explanatory design in which the researcher implements the two strands in a sequence (cited in Creswell & Clark, 2011).

The overall purpose of this design is to gain further explanation and in-depth information of the initial results of the quantitative approach through qualitative approach which will be designed and conducted based on the quantitative results including defining main instruments for data collection, and sampling groups or participants (Creswell & Clark, 2011). According to Wheeldon & Ahlberg (2012), mixed methods is recently the most preferred research design as it provides practical benefits by allowing multiple paths of research (qualitative and quantitative), hence allowing for better explanation and exploration of any issue. Furthermore, it is a flexible research design that focuses on the practicality in answering the research questions instead of adopting one design either quantitative or qualitative. Therefore, MMs aim to bridge the gap and limitation that may occur in the case of adopting one research design either QUAN or QUAL. Similarly, Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner (2007) assert that mixed methods research is a powerful paradigm that

provides “the most informative, complete, balanced, and useful research results” (p. 129).

The procedures of conducting an Explanatory sequential design starts from collecting and analyzing the quantitative data (questionnaire). Then using the quantitative results to shape the questions, participants sampling and overall design of the qualitative strand (observation and semi structured interview). After that, collecting and analyzing the qualitative data. Finally, integrating and interpreting the data of both strands and reporting the results in the discussion section of the whole study (Creswell & Clark, 2011).

3.3.3 Action Plan of the Study

The action plan for this study was chosen to be in the second term of the academic year (2017-2018) (Table 1). For the first phase of this study, participants were asked to answer the questionnaire prior to the classroom observations to extract their experiences about critical reading. After that, based on the quantitative data, participants and research instruments were selected purposefully and developed according to specific criteria. In the second phase of the study, teachers and students were observed according to specific and predetermined criteria to measure out their experiences and practices of critical reading in order to probe classroom behaviors, teaching styles, instructions, and assessment tasks used during reading sessions. Then, both 11th grade teachers and students were interviewed for 30-45 minutes to get in-depth understanding of their attitudes toward critical reading and what incentives or challenges they encounter in English reading classes. Finally, both quantitative and qualitative data were integrated and interpreted in the discussion chapter.

Table 1: Action Plan of the Study

Study Phase	Procedures
First Phase (Quantitative)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare the back-ground survey questions. • Develop and review the questionnaire by a jury of experts. • Obtain Institutional review board approval. • Gain the permissions needed to study the sites and participants. • Receive Ministry of education and schools' administrations approval for teachers' interviews and students 'questionnaire. • Define the sites and the participants of the study. • Probabilistic sampling of participants. • Conduct a pilot study for the questionnaire to evaluate its validity. • Distribute and collect the questionnaire • Statically analyze the questionnaire data. • Develop observation checklists. • Develop interview questions. • Purposefully select participants for the second phase of the study.
Second phase (Qualitative)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom observations for participants engaged in reading classes. • In-depth Interview of participants on critical reading, its importance, challenges, and support they encounter as they teach it • Transcribe the interviews (qualitative data). • Analyze interview and observation checklist data (coding and thematic analysis).
Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpret and explain quantitative and qualitative results.

3.4. Participants

3.4.1 First Phase Participants

To answer the research questions and gain in-depth understanding of critical reading practices experienced by 11th graders in UAE public high schools, a sample of 645 participants completed a questionnaire from an initial pool of 800 students in public schools (cycle 3) across the nation. The participants were chosen via random selection. Random selection ensures that whatever you find out about the sample can be generalized to the population from which it was taken, as well as give or take a known amount of potential error (Creswell & Clark, 2011). The Ministry of Education sent out the questionnaire to 30 public high schools under its supervision. Around 14 schools out of 30 responded to the ministry's request and distributed the questionnaire to their students and returned the completed questionnaire to me. Nevertheless, some schools didn't distribute the questionnaire. Consequently, in order to get big thread of responses, the questionnaire was distributed and collected by the researcher in 16 schools in different Emirates. All participants were briefed about the purpose of the research and given the opportunity to ask any question they had. The questionnaire was distributed to six Emirates: Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Um Al Quwain, Ras Al-Khaima, and Fujairah.

The participants were all 11th grade students enrolled in public high schools. The questionnaire was distributed nearly equally to male and female students, as 311 (48%) were male, and 334 (52%) were female. This information is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Participants' Gender (n=645)

Gender	Number	Percent
Male	311	48%
Female	334	52%
Total	645	100%

The participants' ages ranged from 15-17 years old, with a mean age of (16.32) n=(645). This data is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Participants' Age (n=645)

Age	Number	Percent
15	7	1%
16	424	66%
17	214	33%
Total	645	100%

As for the participants' nationalities, 554 (86%) were Emirati, 9 (1%) were Egyptian, 6 (1%) were Omani, 5 (1%) were Syrian, and the rest (11%) were Island of the Moon, Palestinian, Lebanese, Algerian, Somalian, and Jordanian. This data is illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4: Participants' Nationality (n=645)

Nationality	Number	Percent
UAE	554	86%
Egypt	9	1%
Oman	6	1%
Syria	5	1%
Other	71	11%
Total	645	100%

For the primary language, of the participants (n=645), 641 (99%) of them indicated Arabic as their mother language, while the other 4 (1%) indicated that their mother language was Balochi, and Farsi. Table 5 shows this data.

Table 5: Participants' Mother Language (n=645)

Language	Number	Percent
Arabic	641	99%
Balochi and Farsi	4	1%
Total	645	100%

When it came to the second language, of 645 participants 634 (98%) indicated English as their second language, while 4 students (1%) indicated that Arabic was their second language, 3 (1%) Hindi, and the other 5 (1%) indicated that their second

language was Korean, Turkish, and Balochi as their second language. Table 6 presents this information.

Table 6: Participants' Second Language

Language	Number	Percent
English	634	98.3%
Arabic	4	1%
Hindi	3	1%
Total	645	100%

For the average overall grades of the participants (n=645), 244 (38%) reported that their overall grade was 90-100, 212 (33%) was 80-90, 116 (18%) was 70-80, 60 (9%) was 60-70, 13 (2%) was 50-60. This data is presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Participants' Average Overall Grade

Average Overall	Number	Percent
90-100	244	38%
80-90	212	33%
70-80	116	18%
60-70	60	9%
50-60	13	2%
Total	645	100%

3.4.2 Second Phase Participants

To gain in-depth understanding of critical reading practices in 11th grade, participants were recruited for the second phase of the study. Thus, permission was granted from the Ministry of Education to interview (n=10) teachers and (n=10) students of the schools in which the questionnaire was distributed. Participants for this phase were selected purposefully to serve the purpose of the study, whereby students were nominated by their English language teachers who provided average to high achieving students believing that such students were the best choice to answer questions and talk openly about their experiences.

From the ten students, eight were from UAE, 1 student was from Egypt, and 1 student from Jordan. The ten students were in 11th grade. Six of them were in advanced track, and 4 in general track. Of the ten students, 4 had completed the questionnaire while the six hadn't, as they were not included in the sample of students who received the questionnaire. Below is a descriptive profile of the ten participants who took part in the interviews. These participants were given pseudonyms to protect their identities.

3.4.2.1 Descriptive Profiles of the Interview Participants

Sara: Sara is an Emirati 11th grade student in a public high school. She is 16 years old. Her native language is Arabic. She speaks English as a second language. She is studying the general academic track. Her overall final grade in English is 96. She is an ambitious student who seeks to acquire good skills in English language.

Manal: Manal is an Emirati 11th grade student in a public high school. She is 17 years old. She is an Arabic native speaker. Her second language is English. She is studying

the general academic track. Her overall final grade in English is 94.

- Muna: Muna is an Emirati 11th grade student in a public high school. She is 17 years old. She is an Arabic native speaker. Her second language is English. She is 16 years old. She is Arabic native speaker. Her second language is English. She is studying the advanced academic track. Her overall final grade in English is 97. She is looking to study political sciences in Sorbonne University.
- Salem: Salem is an Emirati 11th grade student in a public high school. He is 16 years old. He is an Arabic native speaker. He is fluent in English language as it is his second language. He is studying the advanced academic track. He studied in private school till 10th grade. His overall final grade in English is 97. He is a highly distinctive student who wants to study nuclear energy. He loves literature and reading stories.
- Hamdan: Hamdan is an Emirati 11th grade student in a public high school. He is 16 years old. He is a native speaker of Arabic. His second language is English. He is studying the general academic track. His overall final grade in English is 92.
- Kamal: Kamal is 11th grade student in a public high school. He is from Egypt. He is 17 years old. He is an Arabic native speaker. His second language is English. He is fluent speaker of English as he learned English from YouTube videos. He is studying the advanced academic track. His overall final grade in English is 97. He loves reading and watching football matches.
- Omar: Omar is 11th grade student in a public high school. He is from Jordan. He is 16 years old. He is an Arabic native speaker. His second language is English. He is studying the advanced academic track. His overall final grade in English is 94. He is a hard-working student who looks to study medical science.
- Hazza: Hazza is an Emirati 11th grade student in a public school. He is 16 years old. He is an Arabic native speaker. His

second language is English. He is studying the general academic track. His overall final grade in English is 95.

Hind: Hind is an Emirati 11th grade student in a public high school. She is 17 years old. Her first language is Arabic, and she learns English as a second language. She is studying the advanced academic track. Her overall final grade in English is 91.

Asia: Asia is an Emirati 11th grade student in a public high school. She is 16 years old. She is an Arabic native speaker. Her second language is English. She is studying the advanced academic track. Her overall final grade in English is 90.

Additionally, 10 teachers were selected for the second phase of the study to get deep insight of critical reading practices in 11th grade in public high schools as well as explore Emirati 11th graders' teachers' experience in teaching critical reading. Teachers were selected purposefully to serve the purpose of the study from five schools in which the questionnaire and classroom observation were administered. All five schools' administrations provided highly qualified English Language teachers who teach 11th grade students with it's both advanced and general tracks. Of the 10 teachers, eight teachers were native speakers of English, and two were non-native speakers of English. Additionally, eight teachers were female, and two were males. All participants came from different countries like USA, UK, Morocco, and South Africa. Participants' age ranged from 30-45 years old, and their teaching experiences ranged from 5-20 years. For the academic qualifications of the ten teachers eight hold bachelor's degree, while the remaining two hold master's degree. Below is a descriptive profile of the ten teachers who took part in the interviews. All names were pseudonyms.

- Anthony: Anthony is from USA. He is an English language teacher in a public high school. He teaches 11th grade students in both general and advanced academic tracks. He is 44 years old. He has 11 years of experience in teaching inside and outside the UAE. He has a master's degree in teaching English as a second language. He is a native English speaker. He is very enthusiastic teacher who works hard to support his students learning of English language.
- Helen: Helen is a native English speaker. She is from the UK. She teaches English language in a public high school. She teaches 11th grade students in both general and advanced academic tracks She is 37 years old. She has a bachelor's degree in education. She has 4 years' experience in teaching inside and outside the UAE.
- Anna: Anna is from USA. She is a native English speaker. She is 36 years old. She teaches English language in a public high school. She teaches 11th grade students in both general and advanced academic tracks. She has a bachelor's degree in TESOL. She has 7 years' experience in teaching English as a second language. She is a highly professional teacher who works hard to enhance her students' skills in English by using different teaching strategies.
- Inna: Inna is from Morocco. She teaches English language in a public high school. She teaches 11th grade students in advanced academic track. She is 35 years old. She has a master's degree in Linguistics. She has 12 years' experience in teaching English as a second language. She initiated an online platform to exchange assignments, exchange ideas, and provide extensive feedback for her students outside the school.
- Kate: Kate is from the UK. She is a native English speaker. She is a lead teacher in a public high school. She teaches 11th grade students in both general and advanced tracks. She is 44 years old. She has a bachelor's degree in curriculum and instruction. She has 10 years' experience in teaching inside and outside the UAE. She is a highly qualified teacher who prepares and trains English teachers on using updated teaching methodologies in their classes.

- Maya: Maya is from the UK. She is a native English speaker. She teaches English language for 11th grade students in a public high school. She teaches the accelerated English track for lower achievers. She is 34 years old. She has 9 years' experience in teaching English language inside and outside the UAE. She has a bachelor's degree in TESOL. She is very enthusiastic teacher who uses various strategies to scaffold her students in learning English language.
- Mike: Mike is from the UK. He is originally from Pakistan. He is a native English speaker. He is 30 years old. He has bachelor's degree in education. He teaches English language in a public high school. He teaches 11th grade students in both general and advanced academic tracks. He has 5 years' experience. His effort is not evident in using different teaching strategies to scaffold his students' learning of English language.
- Rina: Rina is from South Africa. She is non-native English speaker. She studied in UK. She is 35 years old. She has a bachelor's degree in TESOL. She has 17 years' experience in teaching English language inside and outside the UAE. She teaches English language in a public high school. She teaches 11th grade students in both general and academic tracks.
- Selin: Selin is from UK. She is a native English speaker. She is 44 years old. She has a bachelor's degree in TESOL. She also has CELTA certificate for teaching. She has 13 years' experience in teaching English inside and outside the UAE. She teaches 11th grade students in a public high school. She teaches advanced track classes.
- Zaya: Zaya is from South Africa. She is a native English speaker. She is 33 years old. She has bachelor's degree in TESOL. She has CELTA certificate for teaching. She has 7 years' experience in teaching English language. She teaches 11th grade students in a public high school. She teaches the general track classes. She also teaches the accelerated English curriculum for low achievers.

3.5 Research Site

The quantitative phase of the study was administered in a number of male and female public high schools across different Emirates in the UAE, wherefore the questionnaire was conducted across 6 Emirates except Abu Dhabi as it works under the supervision of Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK) and has different procedures and curriculum instructions. All schools chosen for this study were public high schools because those schools are implementing the Ministry of education curriculum of English language that is designed by Cambridge University and has been adapted and modified by committee of specialists from the Ministry of Education in UAE (Ministry of education, 2017). Moreover, teaching in those schools is standardized by the Ministry of Education.

Additionally, the schools are working under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, and implementing the same educational plan, working schedule and grades which range from 10-12. Additionally, those schools were chosen randomly by the Ministry of Education, who provided the names and locations of the chosen schools with a permission to conduct the study and collect the data from the chosen schools, whereas for the qualitative phase of the study, five schools were chosen purposefully for interviews and classroom observation. All five public high schools were situated in Fujairah. The approximate number of students in those schools ranged between 300-700 students from 10th grade to the 12th grade. All schools work under the supervision of Ministry of Education and implement its curriculum and policies as well.

3.6 Instruments

The data collection instruments for this study relied on many sources of evidence as it adopted mixed methods design. The rationale for using mixed methods is that neither quantitative nor qualitative are sufficient by themselves to answer the research questions and capture the details of the issue. Moreover, mixed methods are expected to provide a clear picture about the participants' interpretations, beliefs and insights and get breadth as well as in-depth understanding of critical reading practices in 11th grade English classroom.

3.6.1 Background Survey

The background survey was developed for both students and teachers to procure demographic data about participants including their age, nationality, mother language, second language for students, in addition to academic degree and teaching experience for teachers. The collection of demographic data provided a solid backbone of the study whereby it helped in classifying participants according to specific criteria and aided in understanding of their responses and experiences of critical reading in English Language subject (See Appendix D).

3.6.2 Questionnaire

Though the study employed a Mixed Method Explanatory approach, the quantitative phase of the study included critical reading questionnaire. Questionnaires are quantitative research instruments that aim to gather data as well as describe human interests, concerns, behaviors and preferences about any particular issue (Ponto, 2015). The form of data obtained from questionnaires is not extensive as in interviews, but the time required to collect the data is significantly reduced.

Therefore, questionnaires are beneficial to gather a wide range of information in a short time. The questionnaire for this study were self-developed and it is intended to explore students' experiences about critical reading in their English Language classes. The questionnaire is 5 Likert Scale which ranges from high score of 5 (always) to a low range of 1 (never), a response of 2 (rarely), three (sometimes) and 4 (usually) indicating that a response is falling in between the lowest and highest response level. According to Abdel Galil (2014), "Likert scale" is one of the "most widespread and consistent way to do questionnaires and it is used to answer choices that alternating from one positive side to another negative one (for example, Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree)" (p. 36), to measure the attitudes, and people's perception.

The questionnaire incorporated six parts ordered according to the Bloom's Taxonomy levels which follows a hierarchal order from the low levels which are knowledge, comprehension, application, and the high levels which are analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Each part includes 5 statements that reflect reading practices experienced by students in English Language reading classes (See appendix E).

3.6.3 Observation Checklist

In order to obtain in-depth understanding of the issue under study and get a clear picture of critical reading practices in 11th grades in UAE public high schools, an observation checklist was developed. Classroom observation of students is proved to be one of the most important research instruments, whereby it enables the researcher to capture the most critical moments of students' interactions with each other and with their teacher during the learning process. Classroom observation is a

powerful research instrument to judge the quality of teaching and learning as it allows for collecting extensive data and evidence about what goes on in the classroom (O'Leary, 2013).

The observation checklist included series of items that represent reading practices according to Bloom's Taxonomy. Hence, those items were sorted under each category of Bloom's Taxonomy, starting from Knowledge, then Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis and Evaluation. Each item represented specific criteria for measuring the teachers and students' practices during reading session (See appendix F).

3.6.4 Semi-Structured Interviews

Since the bulk of this study is qualitative in nature, semi structured interviews were utilized to obtain deep insight and rich data from participants. The semi-structured interview was adopted as a third data collection method. Semi structured interview is a remarkable research tool, which is according to Cohen & Carbtree (2006), is a flexible method of research that allows the informants to express their views freely and provides reliable and comparable data. Such kind of interviews allow researchers to explore interviewees' deep thinking and perceptions of a particular topic. Moreover, it helps researchers to get more informative historical information of the participants that can't be obtained by other research methods. Furthermore, it makes possible for the researcher to gain in depth understanding of the participants' perceptions and beliefs about certain issues (Abu al-Hana, 2012).

Interviews in this study were aimed to explore the critical reading practices experienced by 11th grade student in public high schools, in addition to the incentives and obstacles that hinder the effective teaching of critical reading in English classes.

The interview questions were developed based on some remarkable studies on critical reading such as: (Anderson, Krathwohl, & Bloom, 2001; Ciorcki, David, Gupta, & Dala, 2008; Lewis, Macgregor & Jones, 2017; Macknish, 2012; Patesan, Balagiu, Zechia, & Alibec, 2014; Sousa, 2006; Wallace & Wray, 2016).

The interviews questions were sub-categorized under six levels of Bloom's Taxonomy: Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation. Each category incorporated a number of items that represent different reading practices ordered according to the hierarchy of Bloom's Taxonym (See appendix G and appendix H).

3.7 Reliability and Validity

3.7.1 Critical Reading Questionnaire

In order to ensure the validity of the questionnaire, first of all it included clear, easy and readable questions, with clear layout and sequence of questions that made it easy for the participants to read, understand and respond. The items and questions of the questionnaire were stated to match the purpose of the research questions because the validity of research instruments depends highly on the extent to which the instrument provide answers to the research questions (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Additionally, the questionnaire was reviewed and modified by a jury of experts to ensure comprehensibility, ease to read and sensitivity of the statements.

Moreover, a pilot study was administered for 48 of participants (20 males; and 28 females) who met the demographic criteria of the study's participants. This was followed by scrutinizing process of each part of the questionnaire to ensure that the items are fully understandable, clear and easy, as well as find out any gaps that

might be missed through the construction of the questionnaire. In addition to that, the questionnaire was translated and reviewed by three professors to ensure its comprehensibility to the participants. The accuracy of the translation was obtained through back translation from Arabic to English and was reviewed as well as verified by Arabic and linguistic professor in UAE University and translation professor as well as the researcher's advisor.

Since the questionnaire followed Likert scale design, it was imperative to calculate and measure Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the internal reliability for the scales and sub-scales included in the questionnaire (Gliem & Gliem, 2003). Thereafter, the issue of reliability was addressed in the study through Cronbach's Alpha reliability degree of significance which was measured using SPSS. This process was essential to figure out the degree of reliability of participants' responses and judge the consistency of their answers and rubrics. Gliem & Gliem (2003) assert that the internal reliability is measured through the coefficient "between 0 and +1" (p. 87), whereby the Cronbach's Alpha rules are assigned as follows: > 0.9 excellent, > 0.8 good, > 0.7 acceptable, > 0.6 questionable, > 0.5 poor (Gliem & Gliem, 2003). Hence, according to Cronbach's Alpha rules, "the closer Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is to 1.0, the greater the internal consistency of the items in the scale" (Gliem & Gliem, 2003, p. 87). This means that a high value of Cronbach's Alpha indicates higher internal reliability of items in the scale. Therefore, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient that was calculated to measure the internal reliability of the questionnaire showed the internal reliability as 0.9 which indicated a high degree of reliability, where the means of the categories ranged between 0.68 and 0.82 as shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Cronbach's Alpha Reliability

Category	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Knowledge	0.71	5
Comprehension	0.86	5
Application	0.75	5
Analysis	0.76	5
Synthesis	0.69	5
Evaluation	0.82	5
All items	0.90	30

3.7.2 Observation Checklist

In this study, the observation checklist was prepared and reviewed by a jury of experts to ensure its comprehensibility and accuracy in highlighting the teaching practices employed by 11th grade English teachers. This was followed by scrutinizing the process of each part of the observation checklist to ensure that the items specifically measure the actual practices of critical reading in English classes and find out any gaps that might be missed through the construction of the checklist.

In addition to that, two observers were trained by the researcher to take part in the classroom observation process and ensure the inter-rater reliability, whereby obtaining the inter-rater reliability is vital to “quantify the degree of agreement between two or more coders who make independent ratings about the features of a set of subjects” (Hallgren, 2012, p. 1).

3.7.3 Semi-Structured Interview

The reliability and validity checks were ensured and involved throughout the study. Several techniques were used to ensure the validity and reliability of the data. First of all, the data was transcribed by two researchers to test the reliability of the results. Moreover, the researchers used probing and leading questions techniques to examine the validity and reliability of participants' statements.

Since the qualitative research stems from a different paradigm that strives for in-depth understanding of different issues and social phenomena (Creswell, 2013), it adopts distinct terms of validation that differ from those of quantitative terms. For instance, qualitative researchers establish the term "Trustworthiness" that is equivalent to the term validity in quantitative approach, as they believe that language of positivist research is not congruent with the qualitative work (Creswell, 2013). Hence, terms like credibility, authenticity, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were adopted as equivalent for external and internal validity, reliability, and objectivity of quantitative approach.

Although the qualitative approach has been criticized for being interpretive approach in which the researcher's subjectivity and bias may interrupt the trustworthiness of the results, in this study multiple validation procedures were considered and employed to ensure the trustworthiness of the results. First, in order to ensure the results trustworthiness, the qualitative data collection instruments were triangulated with multiple data sources including interviews, observation, and field notes. Triangulation involves the use of more than one collecting tools while studying the same research questions in order to enhance the validity and trustworthiness of a study (Creswell, 2013). Moreover, it leads to having multiple sorts of data that

support the researcher's interpretation, which in turns breeds credibility of the results and makes feel confident about our observations, interpretations and overall conclusions (Creswell, 2013). Second, member checking techniques was adopted which is a critical technique that allowed for further corroboration, feedback and verification from the study participants. In addition to that, it helped the researcher judges the accuracy and credibility of the data analysis, interpretation, and conclusions (Creswell, 2013).

Consequently, a group of participants reviewed the interview transcripts, observation notes and data materials to enhance the credibility of the interpretations as well as findings of the study. Third, a thick and detailed description of the raw data, study participants, and setting under the study was incorporated in order to enhance the transferability of the results to other populations and settings. Fourth, external consultant was involved to examine the process and product of the study, as well as assess the accuracy of the findings, interpretations and conclusions made by the researcher and to what extent they are supported by the data. Finally, researcher's bias, subjective stance, past experience, prejudice and orientation were clarified in order not to affect or shape the interpretation of the data. Thus, the researcher in this study was interviewed by a research assistant using the same interview questions of the study.

Reliability in both qualitative and quantitative research refers to the consistency of the results and if the findings are reproducible to other settings and times (Creswell, 2013). In this study, the reliability of the results was ensured by the quality of the procedures that were taken by the researcher starting from designing to the reporting of the results. Kvale (2007) asserts that the reliability of interviews

depends mainly on the craftsmanship of the researcher and his\her ability to prepare a comprehensive project that encompasses the seven stages of an interview study, which starts with Thematizing the purpose of an investigation, Designing the plan of the study, Conducting the interviews, Transcribing and analyzing the results, Verifying the reliability and validity of the results. And finally, Reporting the results. Moreover, to ensure the reliability of the results, the researcher is going to use probing and leading question techniques that helped to gain further explanations, verifications and detailed descriptions of different statements made by the respondents. Additionally, the interview was transcribed by a research assistant to enhance the reliability of the finding. Finally, reporting the main findings of the interview in consistence with the main purpose of the study (Kvale, 2007)

3.8 Data Collection and Procedures

Data collection procedures occurred during the Spring of 2018. All data was collected with explicit permission from the participants and in full compliance with Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines (See appendix A). Permissions were also gained from United Arab Emirates University's institutional review board, the Social Science Research Ethics Committee, the Ministry of Education, schools' administrations and the participants who were informed about the purpose, content and layout of the study. Additionally, they were also informed that the data will be anonymous and confidential (See appendix B and C)

3.8.1 Critical Reading Questionnaire (CRQ)

The Critical Reading Questionnaire and the back-ground survey were distributed to high school 11th grade students throughout six Emirates. The questionnaires were administered to groups of students in a quiet, large and empty

room to avoid any distraction. Bornman (2009) asserts that administering questionnaires in groups is the best way to collect large numbers of completed questionnaires in relatively short time. Additionally, administering questionnaires in groups enables the researcher to control the circumstances in which the questionnaire is administered as well as clarify any questions and make the participants feel free to report their experiences freely, whereas administering questionnaires individually makes the participants feel that their anonymity is threatened and thus feel less free to report their exact feelings or experiences. The questionnaires were scheduled for 15-20 minutes to provide the participants with sufficient time to think and retrieve their thoughts about critical reading experiences.

3.8.2 Semi-Structured Interview

The interviews were held after classroom observations and were conducted with 10 students and 10 teachers. It is worthy to mention that although the questions were ordered according to the six levels of Bloom's Taxonomy, the interviewing process didn't follow that linear plan but rather, the questions flowed in a non-linear manner according to participants' revelation. Thus, some questions were omitted, modified or added in accordance with unanticipated information provided by the interviewees.

The researcher followed the framework suggested by Kvale (2007) for conducting interviews. The first step was the Thematizing step in which the study's main purpose was identified for all participants to put them in the right frame of the issue under study. Additionally, all participants were briefed about the purpose and the procedures of the study. The interview conducted followed the original protocol which started with asking the participants some personal questions regarding their

attitude toward the school, and what they prefer as students and teachers to build a rapport and relationship and ensure their trust as well as make them feel comfortable. This was followed by a brief introduction of this study's purpose, procedures and overall framework. Interviews were initially planned as follows: 15-30 minutes for each student, and 30-45 minutes for teachers.

3.8.3 Classroom Observations

The classroom observations were scheduled twice a week for each teacher in all five schools chosen for the qualitative phase of the study. The observations were supported by relevant discussions with teachers to understand and clarify all points related to the proposed research. Moreover, teachers were included in the interpretation process of what had been noticed to ensure the reliability of the data.

In this study, 28 classroom observations were conducted for English teachers in four public schools. Ten teachers were observed 3-4 times in 6 weeks to attain thick description and in-depth data of the learning practices during English reading classes. Moreover, the observations were supported by relevant discussions with teachers to understand all points related to the proposed research and get further clarification on what had been noticed to validate the interpretations of the researcher as well as ensure the reliability of the data.

3.9 Data Analysis

Though the study design is mixed method explanatory design, the data analysis for study occurred in a chronological order. First of all, it started with descriptive statistical analysis in terms of the quantitative phase which included summarizing "numeric data in easily interpretable tables, graphs, or single

representations of group of scores” (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 258). Descriptive analysis for this study began with converting the raw data in to a form of useful data for analysis, which means assigning numeric value to each response, cleaning data entry errors from the data base, creating specific variables, and finally computing those variables through statistical computing program SPSS to produce frequency tables and graphs, and measures of central tendency.

3.9.1 Analysis of the Background Survey

The background was analyzed through descriptive statistics using Google forms (a web site to collect and analyze surveys) and SPSS (a software for building and analyzing quantitative data), into which surveys responses were manually entered. The descriptive analysis included measures of central tendency in terms of means, and standard deviation which were provided in the participants’ description section.

3.9.2 Analysis of Critical Reading Questionnaire (CRQ)

The data received from (CRQ) were analyzed through descriptive analysis using the Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS). Since the questionnaire was divided into six categories according to Bloom’s Taxonomy, the mean and standard deviation of each category were calculated to assess the results. The minimum score of each questionnaire item was (1=never), and the maximum score was (5= always). The overall data was illustrated in Table 9, and Figure 1, which included the mean and standard deviation of the questionnaire six categories (Bloom’s Taxonomy levels).

3.9.3 Analysis of the Observation Checklist

Classroom observation checklists were entered and analyzed through SPSS to calculate the most repeated reading practices experienced by both 11th grade students and English teachers in public high schools and to highlight which practices under which category are mostly used in English reading classes. Moreover, further notes were taken to highlight some other reading practices that were not included in the checklist to be categorized according to Bloom's Taxonomy levels. The researcher highlighted those notes with a different color to identify them for later use. Coding information and thematic analysis were also utilized for analyzing this qualitative data.

Finally, the findings of both quantitative and qualitative methods were compared and interrogated with previous researches' findings and arguments that have been stated by other researchers' in the field. Then came the interpretations of the main findings of the study, and finally reporting new results, and arguments that are settled by the findings of the study. So, the whole process focused on two operations: one is describing accurately and exactly the collected data without any editing, whereby the data was presented in its rawest state to be the closest to the reality of the research, starting with students' questionnaire results, teachers' interviews results, and ending with classroom observation results. The second one was the explanation stage whereby my role as a researcher was more active through building the interpretations and discovering the meanings behind the data. And that was more conceivable with teachers' interviews and classroom observation methods which offered a valuable chance for me to construct the meanings, set my arguments and enrich the research with my own knowledge, whereas presenting data as it

occurred is not enough because data is different to the social reality. It can't speak for itself (Hunt, 2013). Hence, it needs to be scrutinized, interpreted, and explained by the researcher.

3.9.4 Analysis of Interviews

The qualitative data was retrieved from interviews with ten 11th grade students in public high schools, and ten English teachers who teach 11th grade students in public high schools. The data was used to answer the third research question regarding critical reading teaching and learning practices, in addition to obstacles and incentives that face the effective implementation of critical reading.

For the Interview analysis the researcher followed the process proposed by Kvale (2007) to analyze the qualitative data. The interview analysis was started by transcribing text from interviews into word processing files for analysis, which were checked for accuracy and then entered in data analysis program NVivo. All interviews were transcribed using computer, headphones, Otter Voice note, and Voice Memo Notes recorder on which the interviews had been recorded. Students' interviews were conducted in vernacular Emirati Arabic, and then transcribed and translated to English word for word including repetitions, pauses, laughs, and stutters. However, clear verbatim was used when referencing the transcription in the discussion chapter to ensure high level of readability. Whereas, for teachers interviews the transcription was done twice by the researcher and through Otter Voice Note (Web site for Audio Files Transcriptions).

Then came the fifth stage suggested by Kvale (2007) which is analyzing in which the interview data was categorized and subjected to extensive qualitative

interpretations and integrating that with the main purpose of the study. The analysis entailed meaning coding which “involves attaching one or more keywords to a text segment in order to permit later identification of a statement” (Kvale, 2007, p. 105), in addition to content analysis which involved breaking down ideas, and processes such as examining, comparing and categorizing (Kvale, 2007). Content analysis was achieved through the categorization of the meaning coding to form meaningful themes (Kvale, 2007).

The core process in qualitative data analysis is coding. It is a “process of grouping evidence and labeling ideas. In other words, data is grouped into codes, and codes are grouped into broader themes that can also be grouped under larger perspectives” (Creswell & Clark, 2011, p. 208). In this study, the qualitative data was divided into small units, then labels were assigned for each unit and then the codes grouped into themes or categories.

Then came the meaning condensation step in which the meaning retrieved from the interviewees’ statements were formulated and ‘long statements were compressed into briefer statements in which the main sense of what is said is rephrased in few words’ (Kvale, 2007, p. 107). This process went through five steps proposed by Kvale (2007) as follows: the first step involves reading each interview to get a general sense. Then, determining the natural meaning of the text as expressed by the subjects. Third, restating the dominant natural meaning unit and Thematizing the statements expressed by the interviewees as understood by the researcher. The fourth step is integrating the meaning units with the main purpose of the study. Finally, in the fifth step the essential themes retrieved from the interview were tied together in form of a

descriptive statement. Moreover, excerpts from interviews that specifically represent the themes were used as evidence for each theme in the final report.

3.9.5 Ethical Considerations

The consideration of ethics in research and in general business for that matter is of growing importance, whereby it is very important to ensure that participants in any academic research or study will not be harmed psychologically, financially, or socially. In fact, there are several aspects of ethical considerations. Hammersley & Traianou (2012) states 5 ethical principles as: 1) Minimizing harm; 2) Respecting autonomy; 3) Protecting privacy; 4) Offering reciprocity; 5) Treating people equitably. Here in this proposed study I have covered the most important ones that are outlined below:

3.9.6 Informed Consent

Informed consent forms were prepared for administration, teachers, and students' parents to inform them about the purpose of the study and clarify participants' role and how their responses will be used or published. Furthermore, they were informed about any potentially consequences of the study with respect to any possible harms to the subject as well as the expected benefits of participating in the study. Finally, their permission was obtained to conduct the proposed study. Additionally, participation was voluntary, and students were informed that they could withdraw at any time without prejudice or force. Furthermore, prior to conducting the study, approvals from the University in terms of IRB (See Appendix A) and Ministry of Education were gathered. In addition to that, permissions to collect the data from participants and sites were also obtained individually and through gatekeepers.

3.9.7 Confidentiality and Anonymity

The researcher must accept responsibility for maintaining confidentiality (O'Brien, 2001). Consequently, in this study, confidentiality was guaranteed for all participants that their names and identities will not be revealed in any way in the resulting report of the study as pseudonyms were assigned for all participants. Moreover, all details and intentions of the study were clearly explained.

3.9.8 Accuracy

Accuracy in this proposed study was maintained via recording the results and all participants' responses as occurred without any fabricating. Moreover, participants were engaged in the interpretation process to ensure further verification, feedback and details on the interpretation and conclusions made by the researcher.

It is worthy to mention that ethical consideration was an ongoing process throughout the research. For instance, in qualitative the phase, the researcher considered insider/outsider issues and established supportive and respectful relationship because in such research in-depth information is dependent on the trust and respect that the participants should have toward the researcher. To obtain this relationship, the researcher tried to build respect and trust rapports with the study participants without stereotyping or using labels that participants don't embrace. Moreover, the researcher was closely involved in the study site and with the participants, by going native to obtain, collect, and understand multiple perspectives.

3.10 Quality

This proposed research could show a high level of quality, wherefore it adopted a mixed methods approach, which combined both qualitative and

quantitative approaches and provided an active position for the researcher to build meanings, discover gaps, interpret and set his\ her argument, wherefore the researcher is the cornerstone of the research through ongoing interpretation and meaning construction. Potter (2009) asserts that the researcher is the active constructor of meaning. The quantitative method is another significant approach that could support the research assumption and argument with real and statistical evidences. Thus, using quantitative and qualitative methods presents triangulation by using several data collection tools rather than relying on just one tool. It also enhanced the validity of the research by providing strong evidence that may come out with sufficient results and establish new assumptions that might be generalized for other research and thus achieve generalizability.

Chapter 4: Results

4.1 Introduction

This chapter reports the main findings of this study, which explored the critical reading experiences of 11th grade Emirati students in public high schools. A sequential, explanatory, mixed method design was utilized to answer the five research questions. Data collection involved two phases and different instruments such as a questionnaire, a classroom observation checklist, and semi-structured interviews. The data was collected in two consecutive, separate and yet still related phases. The initial quantitative method dealt with the first question by means of a questionnaire (n=645). This was followed by qualitative, semi-structured interviews with both teachers and students. Additionally, there were also classroom observations (n=28) in order to see the actual classroom practices of the 11th grade students in terms of critical reading. The fifth question is a mixed method question in order to triangulate the different types of data collected to serve the purpose of this study. The questions were as follows:

1. What do 11th grade students report about their critical reading experiences in English?
2. How do 11th grade teachers view their experiences of teaching critical reading?
3. How do 11th grade students view their critical reading experiences?
4. What do the actual practices in 11th grade classrooms reveal about critical reading?
5. Are there any consistencies, or variations among students' self-reporting, students' and teachers' views and the actual classroom practices?

4.2 First Phase Data Analysis (Student Questionnaire)

The questionnaire used in the study was based on Bloom's Taxonomy (See Appendix E). Bloom's Taxonomy has six hierarchically arranged cognitive ability levels. They start from a lower level and ascend to the highest level, which is that of evaluation (i.e. knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation).

Table 9: Student Reports on General Categories in the CR Questionnaire (n=645)

Category	M	SD
Knowledge	3.63	1.10
Comprehension	3.78	1.08
Application	3.10	1.23
Analysis	2.98	1.14
Synthesis	2.53	1.27
Evaluation	2.74	1.24
Total Mean	3.12	1.18

Table 9 and Figure 1, show the means and standard deviations for the six scales representing Bloom's taxonomy, according to the 11th Grade students self-reporting on their critical reading practices.

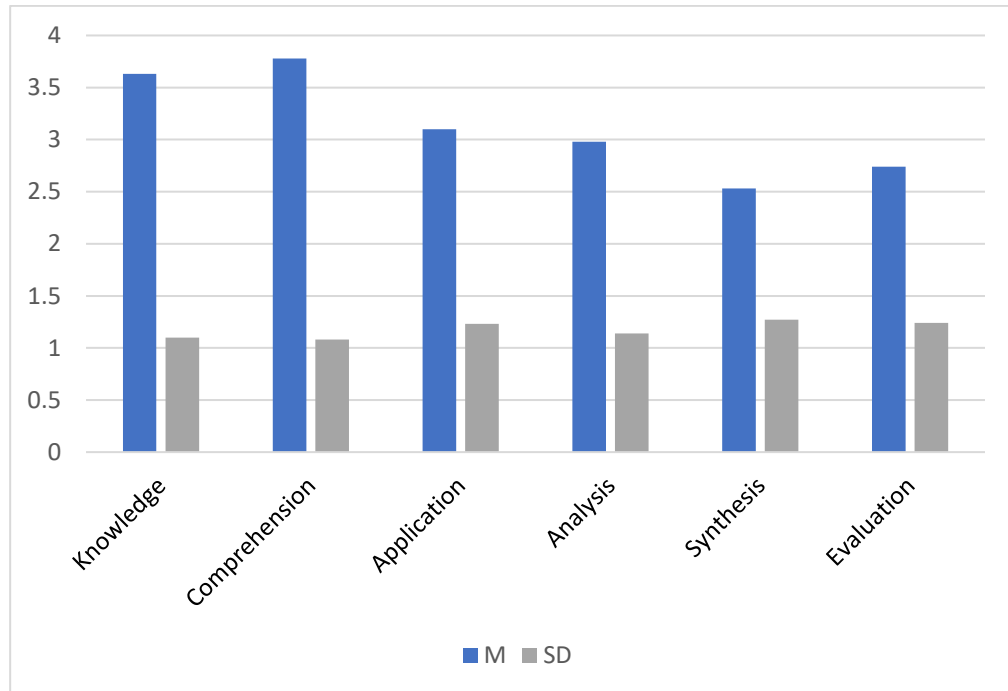


Figure 1: Student Reports on General Categories in the CR Questionnaire (n=645)

Moreover, paired samples t-tests were performed on the scales to look for statistically significant differences between the ratings. Significant differences were obtained between all of the scales. The t-test results are shown in Table 10. Examining the means, it can be seen that there is a significant difference between the lower level categories and the upper level categories of Bloom's Taxonomy. For instance, as shown in Table 10, there is a significant difference between the Knowledge category ($M=3.63$; $SD=1.10$) and Analysis category ($M=2.98$; $SD=1.14$); ($t=17.56$, $df=636$, $p<0.001$), Synthesis category ($M= 2.53$; $SD=1.27$); ($t=29.48$, $df=639$, $p<0.001$), and Evaluation category ($M=2.74$; $SD=1.24$); ($t=21.53$, $df=643$, $p<0.001$).

At the same line, significant differences were obtained between the Comprehension category ($M=3.78$, $SD=1.10$) and Analysis ($M=2.96$; $SD=1.14$);

($t=21.75$, $df=635$, $p<0.001$), Synthesis ($M=2.53$; $SD=1.24$); ($t=32.75$, $df=638$, $p<0.001$), and Evaluation ($M=2.74$; $SD=1.27$); ($t=24.65$, $df=642$, $p<0.001$).

Finally, significant differences were also obtained between the Application category ($M=3.10$; $SD=1.23$) and Analysis ($M=2.96$; $SD=1.14$); ($t=4.43$, $df=633$, $p<0.001$), Synthesis ($M=2.53$; $SD=1.24$); ($t=19.23$, $df=636$, $p<0.001$), and Evaluation ($M=2.74$; $SD=1.27$); ($t=11.62$, $df=640$, $p<0.001$).

Table 10: Results of T-test Analysis Examining Differences between the Six Scales

Scale comparison	t-test
Knowledge cf. Comprehension	$t=6.23$, $df=643$, $p<0.001$
Knowledge cf. Application	$t=16.13$, $df=641$, $p<0.001$
Knowledge cf. Analysis	$t=17.56$, $df=636$, $p<0.001$
Knowledge cf. Synthesis	$t=29.48$, $df=639$, $p<0.001$
Knowledge cf. Evaluation	$t=21.53$, $df=643$, $p<0.001$
Comprehension cf. Application	$t=20.66$, $df=640$, $p<0.001$
Comprehension cf. Analysis	$t=21.75$, $df=635$, $p<0.001$
Comprehension cf. Synthesis	$t=32.75$, $df=638$, $p<0.001$
Comprehension cf. Evaluation	$t=24.65$, $df=642$, $p<0.001$
Application cf. Analysis	$t=4.43$, $df=633$, $p<0.001$
Application cf. Synthesis	$t=19.23$, $df=636$, $p<0.001$
Application cf. Evaluation	$t=11.62$, $df=640$, $p<0.001$
Analysis cf. Synthesis	$t=15.23$, $df=632$, $p<0.001$
Analysis cf. Evaluation	$t=8.08$, $df=636$, $p<0.001$
Synthesis cf. Evaluation	$t=7.00$, $df=639$, $p<0.001$

In summary, the results of the quantitative phase have been shown in Tables 9, 10 and Figure 1. The category with the highest mean score was Comprehension (M=3.78, SD=1.10), followed by Knowledge (M=3.63; SD=1.08), Application (M=3.10; SD=1.23), Analysis (M=2.96; SD=1.14), Synthesis (M=2.53; SD=1.24) and Evaluation (M=2.74; SD=1.27). A samples t-tests were performed on the scales to look for statistically significant differences between the ratings. Significant differences were obtained between all of the scales.

4.3 Second Phase Data Analysis

4.3.1 Interview Analysis: Part A

Qualitative data was collected by interviewing ten 11th grade teachers and 10 students from public high schools. In this section a thematic analysis was utilized to answer the second research question guiding this research study, namely:

2. How do 11th grade teachers view their experiences of teaching critical reading?

Eight major themes emerged from the interviews and helped to provide a framework for reporting the perspectives of the 11th grade English teachers towards critical reading experiences. The emergent themes were, a) critical reading fuels creativity; b) an absence of critical reading in the curriculum; c) standardized test being used as a banking system; d) a mismatch between instructional and assessment objectives; e) a lack of critical pedagogy in training programs; f) the challenges of delivering a critical reading curriculum; g) a focus on teaching basic skills, and h) a limited use of higher order thinking skills.

4.3.1.1 Critical Reading Fuels Creativity

The interview data indicated that all the teachers stressed the importance of critical reading as a means to analyze and scrutinize other people's thoughts and to better understand hidden meanings or messages in a text. The teachers believed that critical reading fueled creativity and is an important skill that should be developed from an early stage as it helps students to understand the world and accept a variety of ideas and thoughts. They also posited that critical reading is very important at any level and in any subject area. The following extracts illustrate how teachers thought about the important role of critical reading:

Adam: Reading skills are essential. I think it is very important to be able to think critically, to not only analyze a text but to actually you know, think about it and expand on it. [Pause] I think critical reading [is] definitely needed, especially for EMSAT, TOEFL ... that focus on critical analysis.

Zaya: I think critical thinking is important, or critical reading is important. The reason is that we need such skills, or let's say to enhance skills. I think, of course, we have to, I think when you're reading, we need to open up all the different wings that are available to allow our brains to look at things in different ways.

Selin: I think critical reading is very important in any level, and it's a skill that has to be developed. I think it's a skill that needs to be developed in every subject. [Pause] It's something that you can apply to everything in education; you can apply it to anything in your life. Reading could be a picture. It's a feeling and it's a thought process, and it takes you to a whole other world. I mean you can't just read a book and not feel something for that book? The reason you're reading your book, it's not just for fun. It is to put your mind in a different place.

For Selin critical reading is essential, as it is a key indicator of creativity and innovation and allows students to think creatively and come up with innovative ideas as well as look at the world from different perspectives.

Selin: [Pause] hmmm ... I think critical reading is imperative for creative thinking, and I think critical reading is imperative to be creative, to understand and be creative and innovative. I think it's important in every class and every subject

Despite such positive attitudes toward the importance of critical reading, three out of ten teachers indicated that critical reading was not as important as other basic language skills that need to be developed in English. According to the three teachers, critical reading can be developed in subjects like Math, Physics and Art, but not in English class as the focus of English classes should be on improving linguistic skills. They believed that students should first learn the language. For instance, Kate and Rina doubted that critical reading was important in English classes. They felt that developing critical reading was not as important as developing grammar skills.

Kate: Improving this skill could be in Math, or Physics class, but not in English. [Pause] in CDI, in business, they can critically analyze things. But for us, no, it's more about getting the language.

Rina: Um ... It is important to some extent, but [pause] ... I think what is more important is developing grammar skills, which they lack because of translation from other tongues to English. So, for critical reading, it is important, but it has to come up after grammar, after a strong base. Yeah.

In the following example, Mike supports Rina's view that developing basic skills is more important than critical reading, which he refers to as something that

exists on paper, while reality is something else. He affirmed that certain language competencies should be achieved before moving on to critical reading.

Mike: I think it is important, but you have to look at what we have, I have to be realistic about it. And, what we have is, is on paper, all they do is conversational. Actually, you see critical reading for them! They can't even give me a single sentence. It is important – but for example – if an 11th grade student can retrieve one sentence in English, then I will be surprised. For me critical reading is something on paper, but the reality is something else.

The teachers referred to factors that lead to their views concerning the importance of critical reading in English classes. Those factors were low skill levels, the lack of basic linguistic skills and a lack of textbook content with an ESL focus.

Mike: Actually, you see critical reading for them!! they can't even give me a single sentence. It is important, but for example, if an 11th grade student can retrieval one sentence in English, then I will __surprised__.

Rina: I think what is more important is developing grammar skills which they do lack because of the translation from other tongues to English.

Helen: It is really important. I think they should start learning it from the age of 11th, but it is not part of the curriculum.

As such, while some English teachers saw the importance of critical reading as a skill that enables students to look at things from different angles and expand their horizons, others expressed doubts about developing critical reading in English for second language learners, when the most important factor is developing linguistic skills in terms of grammar and vocabulary.

4.3.1.2 Absence of Critical Reading in the Curriculum

When asked about critical reading practices different attitudes emerged. Some teachers were satisfied with their textbook in terms of the variety of topics and the relevance to students' lives and experiences. These teachers thought the current textbook was varied and covered multiple topics regarding the students' lives and culture. This allowed teachers to elaborate on topics and have fruitful discussions with the learners. This exhibited in the following excerpts:

Rina: The only thing that is helpful there is the texts are related to their daily lives and to their country. But, some of the stuff they find it very hard for them to understand. So, those activities, we cannot say that they can really develop their reading skills, but not as much as the critical reading because I think there's a difference between just reading and be critical.

Maya: Hmm...I personally like the book because I think it's very, very and I think it's I think there's a lot about issues, some issues that affect them. I think it's very varied. And, so I think I'm able to talk about some issues.

Inna: I really love the book it is so rich, but-but it's sometimes challenging. Again, it's so rich in you can actually help them explore so many, many things for them every single class for reading text.

Nevertheless, when the teachers were asked about the role of the textbook in developing critical reading skills, several of them contradicted the views above and thought that the 11th grade English curriculum did not effectively support the development of critical reading. They felt that the English curriculum did not stimulate critical reading, nor help students to think critically about different ideas from the text. They used phrases such as “very dry” and “boring” to describe the curriculum texts. They also believed that the textbook contained too many units,

exams and projects, which created huge pressure on teachers and students to cover the content in a limited time. This prevents any creativity in preparing extra teaching materials. This is depicted in the following excerpts by Inna and Kate:

Inna: Again ... I really loved the book. It is rich, but I believe some texts are very dry and boring [pause] we have a lot of pressure, also of units, pop quizzes, exams and projects.

Kate: We're constantly battling against the curriculum and trying to get it finished. And, I think that is the major issue. There is no room for teachers to do their own thing within that curriculum. The texts [pause]... I think they are not deep enough; the books tend to skim over the top. There's a lot of pages. There's a lot more that we could do without conscious of where I'm that way. We've got to get through the pages. We've got to do this. I think the books they do give them scope for creativity. But in the main, no, not really.

Selin described the textbook as 'fluid' because it did not include any debate activities, arguments or inferences. She felt that the textbook did not develop or stimulate higher thinking skills.

Selin: Uh ... [pause] here's no argument or debating. They don't have anything like that in the textbook. They don't have any real testing in the in the curriculum. You can look at and but the curriculum itself seems to be very fluid right now. I don't mean to be rude, but this is what we're teaching has no benefit to these children whatsoever [pause] ... The context of the questions doesn't match the concept of the readings. It's very difficult curriculum to teach. And, it's a difficult curriculum to get them involved in, and it's hard to give somebody a good lesson in something that they don't like, this is insane. Why am I teaching it! It's not applicable to anything that they're doing! There's no inference.

4.3.1.2.1 Absence of Literature in the Curriculum

All the teachers suggested that the curriculum focused more on linguistic skills, such as grammar and vocabulary rather than literacy skills like analytical and critical reading, analyzing implicit themes, prediction and evaluating contradictory ideas and arguments. Adam thought that it was important for the curriculum to incorporate literature in terms of narratives and poetry to help students to appreciate the beauty of the language and extract ideas from text. This is exhibited in the following excerpt:

Adam: Well, [pause] it is very important here for the curriculum to have literature [pause] umm like narratives and poems. There is not too much of them. The textbook doesn't have questions that ask students to predict outcomes and ideas [pause] I guess it takes the lexical approach, more often than not; it's based on vocabulary building.

Inna and Zaya expressed dissatisfaction with the textbook, which they described as having a single format and repetitive activities as well as being saturated with content that had to be covered in a limited period. They used phrases such as “not interesting”, “dry”, “boring”, and even “ridiculous” to describe the textbook.

Anna: I'm not a fan of our textbooks [pause] ... every single format is always the same. There's nothing new. I haven't had any text where we write a narrative. There's no room for creativity. It is just repetition and repetition. I have so much material shoved into a term that I have to stay one course to get finished. The texts are not interesting. They are dry ... Uh ... [pause] they don't have narratives, or stories although the Arabic language has such a rich history of stories. It is boring. As a teacher, I find it boring. I'm sure that students also do [pause] ... They don't have narrative texts in the textbook, all they have are just historical or scientific texts. Go through the text. There's nothing in the year that is that would classify as a narrative

text. And, while I would like to do that I have so much to do with them that I don't have time I could pull those resources out, but they're never going to see it in the future. The whole idea that I'm trying to teach them this curriculum is ridiculous.

Zaya: They don't have any narratives in the text book, which is unfortunate, actually, to be honest with you, I think, personally for this kind of level __And this would actually go to an imagination ... [pause] because if it became more interesting, then it would as soon as we would be more interested in thinking about it deeper.

Additionally, the teachers thought that any critical reading was almost nonexistent in the textbook. All the texts were either descriptive, or informative, and the main focus was on developing basic language basic skills rather than developing critical thinking. The teachers' opinion regarding critical reading in the textbook is exemplified below:

Helen: Critical reading is not part of the curriculum. There is a lot of material in the course book, but there are no narratives or argumentative texts to analyze. They may have critical reading but not in English language, [pause].... but to certain extent, maybe we are discussing ideas.

Maya: I can honestly say when you talk about critical reading, there is nothing. We don't do stories here actually. The book has a lot of issues. It is varied, but they don't have such activities that evoke such skills.

Zaya: The curriculum that I am working on is supposed to be a fast track to raise students' levels in English. They don't have any narrative texts to analyze or think deep.

4.3.1.3 Standardized Tests as a 'Banking' System

One of the questions was "how standardized tests assess 11th grade students' critical reading skills?" The majority of the teachers believed that the standardized

tests did not assess critical reading skills, as most questions required either word recognition or finding specific information in the text. This is exhibited in Anna's and Adam's scripts below:

Anna: Standardized tests don't enhance such thinking skills thinking like critical reading. They are reading just to have some specific information, and for recognition.

Adam: Hmm ... [pause] the standardized test questions are mostly finding information from the text. Yeah. Yeah, I think for the grades I teach grade 10th and 11th grade, -this is the focus- like more identifying and using the vocabulary.

Kate suggested that the reading section in most standardized tests required searching for facts, while critical thinking was utilized more in writing activities when students had to justify their thoughts and beliefs about certain issues.

Kate: If you look at the exams, they're looking for the facts, really, the multiple-choice readings are focusing on finding some information [pause] ...critical thinking is not- I think maybe the critical thinking comes more in the writing where they have to justify what they're saying. So maybe then. Yeah, but not reading.

Adam supports Kate's ideas regarding critical thinking being more prevalent in writing than in reading, but still thought that students did not write about major issues requiring deep and analytical thinking, but only about their personal preferences.

Adam: I think there's writing sections that focus on critical analysis, but even there they don't – they don't – discuss or write about the issues – bigger issues – rather than they're just there's certain issues of the preferences. They might have questions about their family and just focused

on vocabulary that they had learned, family members in our family, what they like to do; daily routines, things like that.

Maya and Mike described standardized tests as “very easy” and “straightforward”, as they do not require any analytical or critical thinking skills. That is why these standardized tests are not precise indicators of the students’ real level of language and thinking skills. Most questions are literal questions without any inferences or evaluation required. This is depicted in the following excerpts:

Maya: Have you seen the pop quizzes? What is the point of pop quizzes please? I can honestly say what is the point that the kind of questions literally you know, when you talk about critical thinking there is nothing. [Pause] ... They are all recognition questions. Uh ... exams are easy, you know? Very easy is a case of like – write about a current member. The last exam to be honest, it's easily had like three bullet points. So really, even if they didn't do the course, they can still pass the exam. It's kind of like skill base. They could just they include these three bullet points and they can write exam and so this critique you're talking about [pause] ... [laugh] I don't think it's there in the exam.

Mike: Uh ... I looked at the questions and they are very simple and straightforward. They look like to me the target one level so for example, if we have like some tests, which will gradually get more difficult that will be more useful because then you're able to see who can actually go to a different level.

4.3.1.4 Mismatch Between Instructional and Assessment Objectives

The teachers believed that there were inconsistencies between the test questions and what students learned from their textbooks and classroom activities. In other words, there was a discrepancy between the instructional and assessment goals. This piles pressure on students and teachers alike as they try to follow the textbook

and content rigorously in order to do well in the mid-term and final tests. The teachers suggested that the test questions should be related to what the student have studied in their textbook in terms of reading and writing skills. However, they were often surprised by questions, which were seemingly irrelevant. This mismatch between instructional and assessment goals is reflected below:

Selin: There's a really big disconnect between what's happening in the classroom and what comes in the test [pause] ... This is unfair, these girls are used to this methodology of teaching, they don't understand it, this is all new to them. And, then to have these – just huge – expectations put on top of them. I think it's causing a lot of stress and anger with the students, which kind of carries over to the teachers and then to have create curriculum that's not addressing the issues that we really need to handle.

Zaya: Okay... the idea behind it is good, but there are perhaps I think binding to look sometimes a bit more, what's they provide in curriculum and what they put in the test. I think sometimes they don't match and not consistent. Yeah, they're not consistent with each other [pause] I think sometimes it's not fair for the students, perhaps they're – you know, the curriculum that they follow in and test sometimes a little bit ambitious, it's just the level. What is in the book and what is found in the test is not from the same level.

4.3.1.5 Lack of Critical Pedagogy in Training Programs

When teachers were asked about the extent to which training programs from the Ministry of Education enhanced the teaching and learning of critical reading skills, they all felt that such training programs rarely offered sessions on critical reading or thinking skills. In fact, even basic skills like phonics and grammar were rarely discussed during training. When asked about critical reading in training programs, Mike replied:

Mike: I don't think any of training that I've actually been through here were relevant to what you are saying. It's just kind of forced to go, to go through and ... I give example this week that we broke up we came back after we trained for a week your train for a week, and there was five training days in those 5 days. Just one was useful and – that one is based on phonics and was useful because you could relate to it even and understand. We can extract we've learned something, and the rest of the days training was the same. In very rare occasions, we done things related to what you are saying, and I've never done anything related to reading from training.

Selin supported Mike's view that critical thinking was virtually ignored in training programs. All they had was irrelevant materials and mostly outdated teaching strategies. She thought that training programs were a waste of time because they did not address the needs of the teachers or students. This is exhibited in the following excerpt:

Selin: Critical thinking skill [laugh] that not even in the realm of what we're having deal with right now. [Pause] ... [Laugh] I think probably you talked to most of the teachers and you found that we all feel that these training programs are wasting their time they're not giving us something we can work with. You know they're not giving us to use in the curriculum. They're not giving it to use in out teaching manuals. It's too hard to access any type of information that we may need, that could help us because it's in five different places and you keep changing it, and then they send us to a training programs, which don't address the issues right now – that we're dealing with in the classroom.

When asked about training Zaya also deemed most courses irrelevant and insufficient with regard to the curriculum.

Zaya: Um ... I think, I think sometimes the things that we do discuss are either too late or not really relevant. [Pause] They are providing training, Yeah, but I don't think it's – it's quite efficient in terms of teaching critical thinking.

4.3.1.5.1 Mitigating the Gap between Theory and Practice

The teachers also felt that training programs were mostly theoretical and knowledge-based with many repetitive ideas. They reaffirmed their belief that there exists a gap between theory and practice in Ministry of Education training programs. The programs were good for a review of teaching pedagogy, but they did not present any practical ideas or techniques that they could use in the classroom. This is depicted in Helen's excerpt:

Helen: Well um ... [pause] it's just literally like a knowledge base. All the teachers come together, and they share their ideas. That's how it's done. There's not like, specific! People just pick who they have, like a whole list of complications, whether they have the actual knowledge on the ground or they've been taught in a school like this and developed any techniques. No, it's just like in their heads. I think they're good in terms of reviewing pedagogy, like the theory of it, it's good in that way as a reminder of techniques.

Inna also expressed dissatisfaction with training programs that she described as 'ridiculous' where teachers left school only to repeatedly be met with the same material over and over again.

Inna: Training [laugh] I cannot say I'm hundred percent satisfied with the training because sometimes they just training on already know. But, you're talking to the teachers who have teaching experience. And, I am I have so many degrees and diplomas on teaching from different parts of the world. So, I'm not going to sit there and look at someone who's been reading slide when you read from

a slide, send me the slide. I read it myself. One lady was telling us there is nothing new. This is something that they trained us on previous years ago, the same material, the same slide and they were like this is really, really ridiculous.

Kate suggested that what was missing in training programs was practical techniques that could be used to enhance skills such as critical reading. She argued that teachers needed practical ideas to help them to employ different teaching strategies, rather than reviewing theoretical knowledge which most of teachers already knew.

Kate: In the main they are okay, but I think we need stuff that is more classroom focused, more practical, rather than theoretical. Yeah, its fine going listening to the five paths or whatever it was. We need practical stuff, you know. Practicality, you go and observe a lesson. I was very – very grounded in differentiation.

Maya reiterated Kate's beliefs regarding practical skills. She thought that teachers needed something they could take away and use in their classes. Maya was of a similar opinion:

Maya: I would like to see more training that focus on things we can take away and implement in class. Often the training is more about theories. Yeah – we're teachers and I can't understand why we spend time talking about stuff that we've all done in our training or you know, let's give us something to take back to the classrooms. If we have a training give us something, we can take back to use you know. Going and sit there to hear something that I already know is a wasting of a time.

4.3.1.6 Challenges to the Delivery of Critical Pedagogy

The teachers were asked to what extent they used critical reading strategies in their 11th grade English reading classes. In response, several obstacles emerged as impediments to developing critical reading skills in English. The data revealed five major challenges to the implementation of critical reading strategies in English classes. Those were a lack of time, the language barrier, a lack of resources, student motivation, and the constant focus on textbooks and exams. All the teachers recognized these impediments to teaching and learning critical reading strategies.

4.3.1.6.1 Lack of Time

The requirement to cover many units of work, many activities, regular quizzes, and projects in a short time was one of the critical challenges facing the implementation of critical reading strategies. Such strategies require sufficient time and effort to be integrated effectively into reading classes. Eight of the ten teachers stated that time is a big issue for them. They believed that few units of work and activities might allow them to implement critical reading skills in the classroom. Otherwise, teachers struggled to cover the prescribed content. This is exhibited in Inna's following excerpt:

Inna: There is not much time, I hope if we have fewer units and more time to have these kinds of activities [pause] ... it needs a lot of effort and a lot of time and it's time consuming and see the curriculum and the units and the pressure on the teacher. We have to finish this circle of units in this time. They don't give you enough time to actually push them to the critical thinking. The main challenge is time – time constraints and the length of the textbook. We have a lot of pressure, a lot of units, pop quizzes, exams, projects.

Kate reiterated Inna's view that the major problem faced in teaching 11th grade is a lack of time. She highlighted the number of units of work, activities, and projects that she had to cover. Moreover, she pinpointed the fact that most English teachers in public schools have a full teaching schedule of 24 lessons a week, which in turns hinders teacher creativity by not allowing enough time to adopt different teaching strategies in order to enhance higher thinking and critical reading skills. Hence, creativity and critical reading skills are stifled. This is depicted in the following transcript of Kate:

Kate: Um [pause] ... I think the problem; the major problem is that we don't have time. We have a textbook and we have to follow the textbook. Well, we have to follow the concepts and because our time is so tight, that we're constantly battling against the curriculum and trying to get it finished. There is a room for teachers to do their own thing within that curriculum. There is room, but teachers have got 24 lessons. I think that creativity gets stifled as well. You know, there's lots and lots of things that we do, but we just don't physically have the time.

Maya also expressed her dislike of so many activities and pop quizzes that students have each semester. She reaffirmed that critical and analytical thinking, where students debate, evaluate ideas, and justify arguments, are very difficult to incorporate due to time constraints. The following excerpt illustrated Maya's View:

Maya: To be honest [pause] ... I think that the actual time in class is not enough and then if you've seen the schedule! I'll be very honest with you, it depends on the time because sometimes this kind of activities takes up with the students that it kind of if they're getting lost [pause] ... the schedule is always working against the teachers and there's just not enough time to do things in – what I would consider it – a very qualitative way. It's about you know, we've got so many pages to do this and things you just can't rush like

writing and it would be nice to spend more time on reading as well.

Maya suggested a change to the schedule and a reduction in the number of units of work. She believed that students should have more time to work on critical reading skills, as, at present it is virtually non-existent due to a lack of time.

Maya: We don't seem to have the time. The schedule doesn't allow the time you know. So what I would like to see is the schedule change, that has more time to focus on things like reading and critique because you're talking about such skills, give us more time to focus on it you know, maybe take away unit so we can actually spend more time on quality reading instead of trying to have four units which is impossible let us focus on three units. Again, [pause] ... The reality here is the pace and the speed are just not helpful. It's really not helpful. The time is really not helpful. I feel now is that it's better to focus on maybe two or three things only in the class.

Maya felt that the problem was not with the teaching strategies, but not having enough time to teach and develop skills like critical reading. She believed that teachers had the potential to make use of different strategies, but only if they have more time.

Maya: I don't think the problem is just with the teaching strategies. I think a major issue is the time here you've seen how the lessons are, you see, I'm literally running from one to another.

4.3.1.6.2 Lack of Competency in English Language

Another major challenge was a lack of competency in English language. Teachers felt that their 11th grade students were struggling with basic literacy in English. Consequently, most English teachers tended to focus on improving basic

English skills as their students lack the basic skills that could allow them to think critically and analytically in that language. They stated that their students did not achieve sufficient competency in terms of vocabulary and grammar. Therefore, the focus in English reading classes was on identifying vocabulary and general ideas, and finding key information from the text, while critical and analytical reading was largely ignored. The teachers expressed dissatisfaction with the level of English in their classes and argued that low-level language skills hindered creative thinking.

This is illustrated in the following excerpts by Helen, Inna, and Kate:

Helen: [Pause] hm ... there is a kind of struggling. I think the focus is just getting the basics level of English. We are not able to teach them now. Not at that stage. Yeah, they're still trying to develop the basic skills of – you know, what the general meaning of the text and then finding the key information. Still the level of the girls. It's not that they're not proficient. It's like they haven't been trained properly. They're not in the correct grade or level where we can actually help them.

Inna: It's not really applicable to all the classroom and because I have high achievers and the middle in between. Usually this is critical thinking, the higher order thinking is only happening with the higher achievers who can actually engage in fluent English, because English is their second language which is also a barrier ... [pause] to be honest-most of my students don't read critically. They tend to read to answer the comprehension questions, and that's it for the day. They are challenging and they're struggling with their everyday basic English.

Kate: They are creative, and they want to be – even if they don't have the language, they can still be creative. But the problem comes when they want to express that creativity in – in English, that's where we have trouble [pause] ... um low skills in language could hinder students from thinking creatively. I think they can express their ideas, particularly in Arabic for many, but when it comes to

English because of the language barrier. Yeah, they couldn't, we have a language barrier.

Maya suggested that critical thinking was more applicable in Arabic classes, where they can analyze texts and ideas better than in English class where language issues hindered critical thinking. This is depicted in Maya's following excerpt:

Maya: I mean basically thinking critically. You have people with native language in Arabic class you have some people they can articulate in in Arabic but with English language, it could be a factor that may hinder students to read critically.

For Mike, 11th grade students lacked basic language skills. He mentioned that he had some students who did not even know the alphabet. Thus, he was convinced that using English language as a second language was a huge obstacle to his students developing their critical thinking.

Mike: They're nowhere near that sort of level they should be on. They don't know much about English – you know! They don't know the alphabet! Some students' English is quite low, it's probably seven grade level or four grade level. I've got students who can't read a single sentence [pause] ... students' low level in English hinders them from developing such skills. Student's low level in English is an obstacle. It's such a huge obstacle. To be honest, I have one student who can do critical reading only one. So, you compare that to our class of 30-29.

Rina expressed doubts as to the importance of critical reading in English classes. Based on her experience in public high schools, most students lacked basic language skills. Thus, she believes that students must first develop their language skills before teachers can make use of critical pedagogy. This is clearly exhibited in the following excerpt:

Rina: Umm ... [pause] I know my students have limited reading. I think that this goes back to the limited vocabulary that they have. The students lack language skills, they lack vocabulary, grammar skills, and for them to be able to identify themes. It takes a lot of effort to build the vocabulary. I think what is more important is developing grammar skills which they do lack because of the translation from other tongues to English. I still go back to my saying that these students need a strong grammar background with them to be able to apply that critical reading and understand it, they need to understand the language [pause] ... the problem that hinders developing critical thinking or critical reading in English subject is there linguistic skills.

Selin also felt that English language was a barrier since students lacked the ability to form a complete and meaningful sentence in English. This in turn affects their confidence when expressing ideas, judging other opinions or criticizing an argument.

Selin: It is really hard for them to look at anything beyond what's been right in front of them. I think – I think that, you know, any type of second language that you're learning, that's one of the last things that actually really starts developing. So, some of them may be a language barrier. I think it's causing a lot of stress and anger with the students. They seem to intimidate them, and they don't trust themselves to know the right answer. So, there's a big issue about being afraid to put anything down because they may be wrong [pause] I've got to 12th grade class that inshallah they understand now that simple present is a base verb! [Laugh], just imagine, how did they get that far?

Similarly, Zaya characterized student language skills as very basic, and thought that critical reading would be difficult because it requires higher linguistic skills to state opinions, explain other people's ideas, and to evaluate arguments.

Zaya: Their language is very basic ... [pause] this task is actually quite difficult, because just most of them just getting the main idea is can actually be quite difficult alone. I struggle with them, even the high level that there comes a point where they can get the main idea and the gist of what's going on and take small things out. When it comes to the explanation, again, it is very difficult for them. They can say yes, for the main idea. They like something or not, when it comes to getting more information, providing more information to explain why they agree or disagree, or support that with evidence. It's very brief, or it's nonexistent. It's – it's difficult.

4.3.1.6.3 Lack of Appropriate Learning Resources

Another challenge for teachers was a lack of suitable learning resources. Four teachers mentioned this as a major issue. They claimed that English language narrative books, access to educational websites, an Internet connection, interactive smart boards, LED screens, and even data shows were either non-existent or available only in a specific room. This affects the choice and implementation of teaching strategies in general, and critical pedagogy, in particular. The teachers believed such strategies to be essential if students are going to be exposed to tools so they can read different kinds of texts from the library, access a variety of websites and be exposed to different types of information and points of view. Without such resources, they cannot organize their thoughts via a graphic organizer, watch videos or debate certain issues. Anna's comment below was typical of the sentiments expressed by four of the teachers during their interviews.

Anna: Materials that we received from the curriculum department that is also frustrating. I don't even have a smartboard technology available, which is an interactive tool and vital for watching videos, elaborating on different texts ... [pause] They won't give us audio files. They won't release them. We have a listening exam. They are

looking for high grades in IELTS, TOFEL, and PISA, but there's no, there's no way without such resources and then the internet in schools is poor, many websites are blocked, and I'm not talking about things like Facebook I'm talking about resources are blocked. It seems to be really bizarre and arbitrary ... [pause] If it's a homework, then they just copy what they see from the Internet. I need active tablets with search engines in the classroom for every student, so they can research ideas we can talk about citing sources and how to use resources and how to find proper resources, academic resources

Mike reiterated that teachers only had a textbook and a workbook, which they use intensively and constantly, as these are the only resources they have. He believes that students need to read different kinds of texts, such as narratives, poems and fables, which they can analyze for hidden themes and messages. However, the schools do not have such resources or access to the Internet to search for, and read, other texts and literature. This is illustrated in the following excerpt:

Mike: The reality is that thing we hear about are all on paper. We don't have the resources that enable us to apply the tasks and activities you are talking about ... [pause] there is no Internet. We don't have smartboards. We can embed critical reading like in discussion, but in reading! Those resources may save a lot of time and offer potentials of applying critical reading in our classes.

4.3.1.6.4 Teachers Lack Autonomy

One obstacle for the teachers was that they could not choose to skip any activities or content from the textbook. Therefore, they tended to focus only on the textbook to prepare their students for exams, which are supposed to be aligned to the textbook. Four of the respondents felt that they could not develop skills such as critical reading if they have no autonomy and must stick to prescribed textbook

activities and questions in order to prepare their students for exams. For instance, Anna thought that there was no autonomy for teachers to create their own activities. At the same time, they do not know what is going to be in the exam. As such, even if they follow the textbook, they may find unexpected questions on the exam. The following excerpt illustrated Anna's comment:

Anna: There no autonomy for the teachers to create their own activities. We can pick and choose activities from the textbook. But, here's the problem. We have no idea what's on the exams. We're teaching blind. So, we have no idea for skipping something that the students are going to be resolved responsible for. So, are we doing them a disservice?

Adam said that he tended to focus on the textbook, because he had to prepare his students for the exam. He felt that the exams did not assess higher thinking abilities, but focused on comprehension and finding information. Therefore, that is what he tried to focus on during his classes. This is depicted in the following excerpt:

Adam: We tend to just focus on the textbook, because the students will have third test exams in a term ... [pause] I think we tend to focus just on the main idea, you know! Neither textbook nor exam really have questions or tasks for critical thinking, and we don't have any other choices to bring up different activities such as critical reading.

Kate was also a strict adherent to curriculum content and did not plan any further activities beyond the scope of the textbook. She stated that while teachers can bring their own activities to class, neither the curriculum nor the schedule allowed for such thing to take place, especially in English classes.

Kate: We have a book and we have to follow the book. The exams are almost from the book. We can't skim any single activity or task. We don't have that choice.

Maya was mainly concerned about preparing her students for the exam too. She said that she worked hard to cover every lesson and unit, so that her students would learn everything in the textbook and so do well in the exam. This in turn stifled any opportunity to teach skills beyond those assigned in the textbook, or even give extra reading activities to enhance critical reading. This is exhibited in the following excerpt:

Maya: [Pause] ... to be honest with you, I don't give my students anything beyond the textbook. They have exam, and they need to learn so many things. If I give them extra reading or tasks of what you are saying [laugh] trust me the scheduled end and I wouldn't have completed the book and they have an exam and they wouldn't have learned so many things. And, it's something that we feedback to the ministry all the time. I can try different things, but if they're not going to get it, I think okay, let's think about the exam. What they need to know for the exam? And, what they need to be able to do in the exam? And, it becomes a case of training them to pass the exam.

4.3.1.6.5 Student Sensitivity to Criticism

Another major challenge was the students' lack of interest in activities that required them to think deeply or spend time analyzing ideas. The teachers suggested that when it came to critical thinking, students mostly seemed uncomfortable, hesitant and shy of criticizing ideas or coming up with counter arguments. They mostly noticed this in speaking classes, as they do not have any argumentative texts in the reading curriculum, just rare oral discussions of certain issues. Four of the teachers mentioned that even when it was a straightforward discussion only one or

two students would interact, while the others would just sit and listen. Some teachers attribute that to cultural background, while others thought that it was a problem to be overcome as it prevents students from voicing their thoughts openly. The following excerpt illustrated teachers' comments on this impediment:

Anna: [Pause] ... but they are not comfortable with that. They're much more comfortable with identification. Once I start asking them to criticize, they get very shy ... [pause] a lot of times the girls will restate facts, regurgitate information, they have difficulty in supporting that opinion. So, it's not enough to say I will be beside this or that, but why you are with this! They're very accustomed to ticking the boxes. When you move this into discussion of ideas, they get really nervous because they don't know how to navigate these waters. They don't know what's right and what's wrong. And, so that's why I tell them your opinion is not right or wrong, how you support your opinion is right or wrong.

4.3.1.6.5.1 Permissible Boys vs. Restricted Girls

Anna elaborated on this point from an etic perspective by referring to the cultural background of the students, especially the girls. She thought that students in UAE society, especially female ones, were raised to be polite and respectful because whenever girls make a mistake, they are blamed and unfairly labeled. On the other hand, when boys make mistakes it is mostly excused.

Anna: I think I can tell you as an outsider, but it doesn't mean this is wrong, it is just my view. They are afraid to say something because then they might be labeled, and so this is something that's embedded in them. They want to be good girls. They want to be pleasing to their teachers and also, when it comes to reading, and then giving feedback, they're very cautious about what they say and what they even not say. But even what they allow themselves to think. And so, I'm not saying that this is wrong. You know,

I – think – I think there's a beauty in this part of the culture, but maybe it could be facilitated in a way that the girls have a healthier sense of self and a healthier idea.

Anna: In this society like many societies, if a boy makes mistake is excused because he's a boy, if a girl makes a mistake, it's a reflection of her family, her sisters, everyone that she loves and – I noticed that some boys – I found them that when they have discussion – discussion, listen, it's very interactive and listen to them asking questions, saying the opinions loudly and bravely they. For girls it is completely different!

Anna also added that criticizing others is considered rude and offensive in UAE society. That is why students felt nervous and uncomfortable when they were asked to criticize ideas or voice contradictory thoughts. She attributed this to a cultural mindset where girls tend to be docile and not criticize others, while boys are allowed to speak their minds. This is exhibited in the following excerpt:

Anna: As an outsider. I have a couple of ideas. The first thing is that they don't like being rude. It makes them nervous. They feel like – the girls that I met, – especially this idea of being rude, they hate it. They may think something that's rude [laugh].

Selin also thought that most of her students were not interested in doing activities like debating, justifying their ideas, criticizing or voicing their opinions on certain issues:

Selin: They're just not that interested in doing it. They seem to intimidate them, and they don't trust themselves to know the right answer. So, there's a big issue about being afraid to put anything down because they may be wrong.

Along the same lines, Zaya highlighted the issue of students being hesitant and shy about elaborating on ideas. They would just provide brief answers. She attributed this to low confidence and a fear of making mistakes.

Zaya: When it comes to the explanation, again, it is very difficult for them. I think it's a lack of vocabulary and sometimes confidence, they're worried about if they're saying the right thing or not.

4.3.1.7 Focus on Teaching Basic Skills

Since the purpose of this study was to explore critical reading practices in 11th grade, teachers were asked about the strategies they used in their reading classes. The data revealed that they used different reading strategies. Teachers provided various examples of strategies they had used during reading classes. Some of them covered lower order thinking skills, whereas a few were concerned with higher order thinking skills such as critical reading.

The lower order thinking skills were mainly using recognition, recall and identification of general ideas from the text. The teachers mostly focused on teaching vocabulary and understanding new concepts, which they considered to be the cornerstone for building English vocabulary. For instance, Helen tried to elicit new vocabulary and information that the students had found in a text, and to recall information students already learned to check comprehension of the text. This is exhibited in the following excerpt:

Helen: Well, the best thing we will try to see if they understand the concept, they have awareness of the concept, for example, let's say we're going to do a reading about conservation of endangered species, then I will check to see if they know about animals in general. Um ... recall information, ask them to describe what they have read,

make a list of animals for example. For comprehension, first of all before you do that you need to pre-teach some of the vocabulary because the advanced class that I teach or – not really advanced – so you really need to support them with the vocabulary and the concepts.

Similarly, Adam confirmed that he tended to focus on vocabulary, as a pre-reading activity to help students better understand the text. He also indicated that he tended to use the textbook questions to focus on getting the main ideas from the text. This is depicted in the following excerpt:

Adam: Umm ... [pause] I think some strategies that we use – we try to maybe pre-teach vocabulary also, we try to discuss the topic that the reading is about before we read. And, we might do multiple readings of the same text, even spend two, maybe three lessons on the same text to make sure they have a very in depth understanding of the text [pause] ... well, the textbook has a lot of pre reading questions that that might focus on the topic.

Adam described how he checked his students' comprehension of a text. He asked them to write a summary and do activities such as gap-fills, short answer questions and true/ false questions.

Adam: A good way we try to do that is to have them write – maybe –summary or even in-depth paragraph about what they think not just to get their comprehension but also get their opinion about the topic ... [pause] ask them to explain some terms or define them, there's a lot of gap fill activities in the text the students can complete that will test the vocabulary. We try to get them to explain either by talking about the article or writing it down. Short answer questions, discussing the article, maybe in groups or in pairs and true false questions.

Kate, Selin, and Anna all focused on vocabulary as a key to the comprehension of a text. They believe that it is very important for students to grasp new vocabulary and put the words in context to aid comprehension. This is depicted in the following excerpts:

Kate: I think it's quite difficult to check that they fully understood the reading text, I think before we start, I will check the vocab that they know what the words are, maybe the words into the context. So maybe in our brainstorm, I'll pick out some of the words, some of the vocabulary, pre-teach the vocabulary, and then ask them to read.

Selin: They understand the vocabulary with their comprehension and you're working more with context and how the vocabulary works and developed in context of the reading.

Anna: Okay ... well, the first thing that I like to do is – I like to pre-teach vocabulary so that we can identify words new words and put them in context before we read them in the text. Another thing that I like to do is after – the students – let's say girls read the text and go through it and underline the words they don't understand, and then we will often broaden those words, translate them into Arabic, discuss them and go back again. So really, I like to focus on that. This is a place to build the vocabulary, to use vocabulary and to understand the vocabulary.

Inna provided an example of how she checked her students' knowledge and comprehension of a text. She asserted that the best way to ensure understanding of a text is to relate the text to the student's own experience and background knowledge. This is exhibited in the following excerpt:

Inna: First of all, for my reading is always categorized in to three stages. So, I start with the pre reading while and then the post reading. For the pre-reading phase always to ensure that I introduced the vocabulary items that are difficult, words that they will encounter while reading. So, I try to

isolate them and make sure that they understand them by linking them and activating the background knowledge and also linking them to their personal experience. So, I try to make this difficult word familiar word to them, so that when they come across it in the text, they understand perfectly what they are reading. Then we move on from the pre-reading phase to do introducing the vocabulary words.

When asked how she ensures her students build knowledge and comprehend a text, Maya said that she used a brainstorming strategy to check if students have a good understanding of a text. She confirmed that she used multiple questioning techniques to stimulate thoughts about the different ideas in the text in order to gain a better understanding of the text. This is illustrated in the following quote:

Maya: Yeah [pause] ... so – I – sometimes it's like brainstorming, let's say they're just brainstorming ideas just to access the start and know what do they know about the subject? Sometimes it might be discussion. So, they're discussing that in pairs or groups about reasons why ... like yesterday's lesson we talked about endangered animals. They also might be a picture actually, where I try to just activate their prior knowledge.

Mike also provided examples of strategies he used to build his students knowledge and comprehension of a text.

Mike: Basically – basically, I usually use concept-checking questions, and to make sure that they are aware of what I've done, and a lot of repeat and practice as well. So, if they read something, because they're focusing on what they are reading, they're not focusing on what the reading text means, and I think that's the main issue, you know define words, what do they mean, and how do they figure the context.

4.3.1.7.1 Limited Application of Knowledge

Though the teachers provided many examples of reading practices and strategies they used with their 11th grade students, when it came to apply these strategies, they confirmed that they rarely used such tasks in reading classes, as their main concern was with building knowledge and making sure students fully comprehended a text. Therefore, eight of the teachers highlighted projects every semester as the main opportunity to apply multiple strategies, different kinds of knowledge and understanding and to come up with a variety of outcomes. The projects were topic based and students worked in groups to come up with their own plan of what they were going to choose and create. This is depicted in the following examples provided by the teachers:

Adam: We do have once, once a trimester, we have projects that where the students can apply their knowledge and they can create their own like project. For example, last trimester, we had a unit about fitness and exercise. And, the students had to create their own fitness gadget. And then, they had to write about it, describing the gadget and how it's improved or serve fitness and health.

Helen: Um ... [pause] for application! Well, generally after the whole lesson students have to build up one final project. Yeah, so they're really applying what they have learned. They have to apply the knowledge like something about environmental problems in the UAE where they have – have to come up with different products. Yeah!

Mike: They do that with their project where you can see that we give them information, then have to find out some information, put it down and bring it back and for some information they would have to go and a research for the answer

Rina used multiple strategies to apply knowledge in reading classes. She believes this makes the classes more interactive and plays a major role in the learning process.

Rina: The application is basically through interaction. Most of the times we usually have a response to reading activity, finding solutions and alternatives, create a graphic organizer or a mind map, it can be a spider web, it can be a brain brainstorming thing. It can be like a chart where they get all the ideas from the reading text, and then they applied to the writing.

Hm ... Classify the words according to the group like nouns, pronouns, but the categories it's already there. I ask them to go and research based on a certain topic that will depend on especially the project because we do two projects every term and these projects are research based so there is some research that they do [pause] we do role playing.

Anna usually helped her students to apply what they had learned from a reading text. They did writing activities where they organized their thoughts by using mind maps, expressed their point of view, and summarized the main and sub ideas of a text. She facilitated the application of such knowledge by making the text more personal, so that the students could elaborate on it and remember what they learned.

This is depicted in the following transcript:

Anna: Usually the writings – easily through writing. I like to connect reading and writing to see again what they can discuss because in writing I will see do they understand the idea, or they are able to think critically with regards to the idea. A lot of times the girls will restate facts, regurgitate information, they have difficulty in supporting that opinion ... [pause] it's been my experience that students learn when they can identify themselves within the situation. So, it's very important to make it personal to

apply it to their daily lives because that's something they will remember.

Kate and Zaya also felt that their students mostly applied what they had learned through writing in order to reflect whether they have fully comprehended a text or not.

Kate: They're going to write something along the similar lines of their experience. We do ask them to use what they've read, what they've learned about and to use it in a practical, different ways like they can organize their thoughts by brainstorming or making a mind map or doing jotting down notes. Bullet points.

Zaya: Taking the vocabulary words and creating their own sentences, or using situations perhaps, for example, we will do writing ... [pause] we did a lot of mind maps.

4.3.1.8 Limited use of Higher Order Thinking Skills

The teachers were asked about reading practices that required analysis, synthesis, and evaluation and thus required higher order thinking skills. The data showed that such skills were not used very much as the majority of students did not engage with the text very deeply. They got the main idea and discussed specific information. The teachers felt that practices that required analysis, synthesis and evaluation were not part of the curriculum (especially in reading lessons), which was mainly concerned with building vocabulary and answering comprehension questions. This is exhibited in the following excerpts:

Adam: No, things aren't really touched on too much. We might discuss them, but not really deeply ... [pause] yeah, main idea is something we focus on the most.

Helen: That's not part of the curriculum. I try to help them by asking questions, trying to relate to their lives, but I don't make any specific lessons to do that because it's not required.

Selin: I try to encourage that with the questions that. I asked them to see if they're actually looking for things like that. I don't think they may look for anything – any deeper meaning of what they're reading, and I don't really think they understand the importance of looking for a deeper meaning to what they're reading. Those processes seem to have been missed because a lot of things when you're talking about critical thinking skills and analytical skills. In the curriculum, we don't really have that.

Zaya and Maya thought that tasks that required higher level thinking skills were difficult for their students as getting the main idea itself was difficult enough for most of the students. Therefore, when it came to elaboration and deeper reading, things were difficult and classes ended up with little, or no, real interaction. This is depicted in the following excerpts:

Zaya: I would say, yeah, but with this class, this task is actually quite difficult, because just most of them just getting the main idea is actually be quite difficult alone. So, going in to this higher-level thinking, actually, this is when it becomes extremely difficult for them to start, you know. I struggle with them, even the high level – there comes a point where they can't get the main idea and the gist of what's going on and take small things out. I think the majority of students just approach the text for the surface value may 95%. Most of them for the surface value basis yeah, but maybe like 5% in that class can go a little bit deeper.

Maya: I'd probably say there's only two or three students that interact with you when you ask such questions.

The teachers sparingly used questions or tasks that required higher level thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation; however, they mentioned some practices that they did try to develop in reading classes. For instance, Adam reiterated that his main concern was finding main ideas, but on some rare occasions, he used other questions to investigate alternative ideas and make comparisons.

Adam: We may have investigating the alternatives of ideas, this is done a little, I think. This is done a little I think [pause] there's a lot of comparison.

Kate stated that in most reading activities she uses scaffolding strategy to help students to improve their skills, as analyzing or scrutinizing ideas was difficult for her students.

Kate: They don't grasp that, no they don't. They read it, and that's it. most of our work is scaffolding and we start with the text, we break it down.

Rina reported that although her students perceived questions requiring analysis and a critique as challenging, she tried to use questioning techniques to push them beyond the text. She did this through drawing, matching activities, comparing ideas, and most importantly, relating the text to the students' own experiences, so they can think about it more deeply.

Rina: I use questioning techniques; I use a different of questioning techniques to find out what distance they got from the text. I use what is like if this had happened [pause] ... imagine, you're this, or imagine you're one of the people in this way, imagine me this character. Imagine, you're this, or imagine you're one of the people in this way, imagine me this character. Matching ideas...drawing. I ask them to relate it to their daily lives,

but they perceive those questions as challenging and don't contribute well.

Zaya added that although her students' levels did not encourage her to use many such questions or tasks, she still tried to break down the text to help students to understand small details in the text. She used games to get them excited and interested. She also used a comparison strategy and related the text ideas to the students' lives to allow for elaboration.

Zaya: I'm constantly breaking things down, I use grammar games to get them excited about the text ... um [pause] we are comparing things. A lot of the time we're trying – I am trying to personalize everything with them, use things that are personal to them to compare what it is that what we're learning.

When asked about synthesizing ideas and connecting textual information to creative materials and concepts, teachers indicated that this was mostly non-existent in English classes. The students never created conceptual maps, extracted creative concepts from text, or juxtaposed ideas or textual information to form general concepts. Six teachers said that students created their own products or outcomes only through the projects assigned in the textbook, where they had to read about a topic and come up with alternative ideas, or solutions, to different problems. Most students came up with brochures, presentations, videos, short movies and on very rare occasions, they performed roleplay. This is exhibited in the following excerpt:

Adam: I think when that does happen, it's mostly about the main project we do once a trimester. I shouldn't say it's not done too much. But it's done – mostly done with the project that we do, which is done over several weeks.

Anna: They come up with creative concepts, this shows up often in project work is when they're asked to do this sort of thing [pause] ... one of the activities I like to do at the very beginning of class, they start by doing this with words and then we create a story that's usually related to the text. It's like a warm up for me. In addition, it is a way for me to assess their ability to be creative, assess their ability to work on the spot to think in English.

Mike: We have projects; they have to create their material, like create their own surveys and questionnaires.

Zaya: They have made different brochures, they have made interviews, they were able to use vocabulary and practice the grammar to create sentences.

Inna and Maya suggested that for synthesis activities, their students mostly had a reading activity where they synthesized a text to find ideas, relationships between ideas and came up with a summary or reflective essay that showed their understanding and ability to put things together:

Inna: After reading usually comes the writing productive skill where they create a lot of mind maps to synthesize their ideas.

Maya: I guess that would be given in the book – to be honest with you – because often in the book it will say things like write a summary or it does actually say a mind map – you know, in the workbook they probably find activity. There is also like presentation. The way to show their works. Yeah, that kind of thing. Or have multiple sorts of presentations, like groups, maybe prepare a drama, for example, or to present their work as a drama or a role-play.

Maya also felt that tasks that required the connecting of ideas, investigating alternatives, and creating creative materials and concepts were tough and time consuming. Thus, her students preferred to show their work through more

conventional ways such as PowerPoint presentations. The following excerpt illustrated Maya's comment:

Maya: I guess it would be tough task. We were just trying to think of designing creative writing materials or conceptual maps [pause] ... I had that in England that's what you do in English class, but here it's more like ESL class, where we focus on vocab and grammar.

4.3.1.8.1 Lack of Literary and Argumentative Texts

Teachers were also asked if their students evaluated ideas, justified different arguments, debated issues from a text, or criticized different point of views. The responses indicated that 11th grade did not have any argumentative texts. All they had were either descriptive or informative texts. Consequently, practices that required evaluation were mostly ignored in reading sessions. Three teachers stated that they sometimes had oral discussions on the advantages and disadvantages of certain things, and they also discussed student preferences on different issues, or highlighted the positives and negatives of certain issues. Otherwise, evaluating arguments in a text, or highlighting contradictory mostly did not happen due to a lack of argumentative texts in the textbook. Teachers did not ask students to evaluate ideas in reading texts, and if they had any arguments, it was mostly a discussion of the topic.

Adam: But as far as argumentative work, it's not something we've taught. I haven't taught argumentative reading, it's mostly descriptive. We may have open discussions when the students can voice their opinion and maybe argue against each other. This might happen sometimes. But, it's not something that's done every reading class.

- Anna: They're much more comfortable with identification. They don't criticize the contradictory ideas or any ideas they find in the text.
- Helen: We really ... – are – actually, it is more a grammar, where they don't have to learn how to find opinions of someone else but that was more grammar and language. It was a text reading, but it was more focused towards identifying how you can tell someone's opinion and how to differentiate between facts and opinion, but we haven't done what you were saying. We didn't have any kind of argumentative text in which they argue with the writers or the authors. That we really don't have. We haven't actually studied anything where they have any opinion – anything. It's more factual.
- Maya: But for 11th grade, I don't try to give them such text that are argumentative, and if we have such thing – that's more – vocal –that's more vocally, I mean, if it's in the texts, or it is a writing then yes, they would do that. But, for the reading no, unless it is there in the textbook. But, generally, I would have it as an open class discussion. What do you think? Do you agree with this?

Selin and Zaya suggested that debating, arguing and justifying did not occur in the English class for the same reason that they did not have any argumentative texts in the textbook.

- Selin: No there's no argument or debating. They don't have anything like that in the textbook. They don't have any real testing in the in the curriculum we have.
- Zaya: We don't do this. But, I think when it comes to the explanation; again, it is very difficult for them. Okay, fair enough. Sorry. Yes, – yes – yes. In that sense, again, it does relate to again, they are able to do that to say yes and no, but they are still lacking being able to give their opinion.

4.3.2 Interview Analysis: Part B

Interviews were conducted with ten 11th grade students to get an in-depth look at their views of the critical reading practices they had experienced in English classes. The students were asked to recall critical reading practices they had experienced when using the textbook and in standardized tests. Their responses provided substantial views on the reading practices they experienced during English classes, which in turn highlighted how many of the critical reading strategies employed by the English teachers enhanced learning.

In this section, a thematic analysis was used to answer the fourth research question: How do 11th grade students view their critical reading experiences? From this research question, seven major themes emerged and provide a guiding framework when reporting the perspectives of the students toward their critical reading experiences in English. The themes that emerged were as follows: a) a focus on literal comprehension and basic skills; b) reading as a ‘banking’ system; c) female students using more comprehension strategies than male students; d) a lack of in-depth reading and analysis of texts; e) a lack of critical reading in the curriculum; f) a lack of critical reading in standardized tests, and, g) a lack of pragmatic and functional language skills.

4.3.2.1 Focus on Literal Comprehension and Basic Skills

The students provided multiple examples of reading practices and strategies they had experienced in English classes. They highlighted that their teachers mostly focused on identifying new vocabulary, finding information directly from the text, and describing what they read in the text. This is shown in comments from Hamdan, Hind, Manal, Omar and Sara.

- Hamdan: When we read a text, the first thing we do is to find the main idea, our teacher asks us some questions and we try to find the answers from the text, like list ideas or information from the text [pause] describe information.
- Hind: Our teacher asks us to find and underlie the key words and the words we didn't understand, so she explain them to us. Sometimes, our teacher tries to relate what we have read to some other information [pause] recall, or list information found in the text, also we describe what we read, but our teacher, maybe because of the time constrains, takes just one answer, so we don't get a chance to have multiple answers which may reflect many experiences, and backgrounds.
- Manal: First of all, we look for key words and words we didn't know or understand, then ask our teacher for the meaning of each word, then we exchange key words with other colleagues, discuss them to build enough idea about what we have read. Our teacher asks us some questions related to the text, we read and find the answer from the text.
- Omar: We used to work in groups where we read a text and answer some questions about the text, then we write a summary. Most questions require finding direct information from the text, we just read and find the answer there in the text [pause] recall information, list information, describe information in the text.
- Sara: Most of the time our teacher gives us some questions, like true/ false questions, so we look for the key words to find the answers of those questions ... find or recall information from the text to answer questions like listing, filling the blanks.

Hazza, Kamal, and Salem thought that their English teachers were mostly restricted to using the textbook questions and tasks. Consequently, all the students had to do was to read a text, open the workbook and answer the questions. They also indicated that they did not have open-ended questions, or discussions of ideas or a chance to elaborate on the information found in the text. For instance, Hazza felt that

they did not have any real reading activities, but that the reading lesson was about doing workbook activities and answering the questions contained there. The following excerpt illustrates Hazza's comments:

Hazza: We don't have reading activity. Our teacher just asks us to open the workbook, read the questions, and then try to find their answers from the text [pause] we just search for the answers.

Kamal reiterated Hazza's point of that reading class in English was mostly focused on workbook activities. He said that that most questions in the workbook were direct and did not need deeper thinking. That is why they used to read the questions first and tried to find the answers from the text. The following excerpt depicts what Kamal said:

Kamal: Honestly, we don't have so many reading classes. We just open the workbook, read the questions, and then try to find answers from the text. Most of the questions are direct. We just have very few questions that need deep thinking. We are restricted to the workbook activities, and our teacher also asks us the questions found in the workbook. Maybe, one or two times he asked us such question.

Salem, who had a previous enriching experience in a private school, stated that now he never experienced before, during and after reading strategies. He also felt that reading and discussing ideas from the text was completely non-existent. He just had to answer questions in the workbook and that was it for reading lessons.

Salem: Now in this school there is no communication (mokhataba) with the teacher before we read the text. So, we read then we start solving the questions directly. So, the teacher doesn't ask any question before we read. The teacher tells us to open the book and start answering the questions which depend on information presented in the

text without presetting opinion [pause] teacher tells us that you will find the answer in the text itself.

4.3.2.2 Reading as a Banking System

The students were also asked if the reading practices they experienced in English classes enhanced their comprehension and understanding of the text. They indicated that their teachers tended to focus on identifying the main idea of a text, and more importantly on understanding the new vocabulary. Though both male and female students provided examples of different practices they experienced in English reading classes, female students seemed to use more varied strategies to enhance their comprehension, than the male students who allowed themselves to be more restricted to textbook questions. They rarely took part in tasks or activities apart from those in the textbook or workbook. For example, Hamdan and Hazza stated that for comprehension they always had questions such as true/ false options, defining words, and highlighting the main ideas. The following excerpt illustrated their comments:

Hamdan: Most of the time, um, for each reading lesson, our teacher gives us a worksheet, where we work in groups to answer the questions based on our understanding of a text. Our teacher gives us some words and asks us to define them [pause] highlight the main idea.

Hazza: We just answer the workbook questions. Our teacher is restricted to it. Find the main ideas of a text [pause] um most of questions depend on information we find from the text. We read the question and try to find its answer from the text using the keywords.

Kamal confirmed that he never dealt with questions that measured his understanding of a reading text. His teacher focused on the textbook and did not bring any other tasks or activities to class to enhance their understanding of a text. He also

stated that the students tried to answer the workbook questions and then shared their answers with the teacher to check if they had got them right or wrong.

Kamal: To be honest, we don't have a lot of questions that measure our understanding or deepen our comprehension of a text. To be honest. No, [pause] ... he is so direct and mainly restricted to the textbook, and always follows the book activities.

Salem too, indicated that his teacher did not care whether the students comprehended the text or not. He felt that there was no comprehension taking place. Most of the questions in the textbook and workbook were directly based on the text and students did not need to relate ideas to each other or elaborate on them to gain a better understanding of the text.

Salem: To be honest. No_ [pause].. he (the teacher) is so direct and mainly restricted to the textbook, and always follows the book activities. The questions depend on information directly and not on comprehension.

4.3.2.3 Female Students used More Comprehension Strategies than Male Students

On the other hand, female students used different strategies and activities in English classes to enhance their comprehension of a text. They indicated that their teachers usually asked them to relate the textual information to their own experiences and background knowledge. This created fruitful discussions that helped them to better understand a text. They also suggested that their teacher often asked them to describe and retell what they had learned from the text in their own way. This, in turn, enhanced and enriched their comprehension. This exhibited in the following excerpts:

- Manal: Sometimes we exchange ideas we found in the text, we also discuss some information from our experience and prior knowledge. We describe what we have read in your own words. I remember in the last term ... last term ... we had a text about UAE in the past, so we tried to connect that text information to our readings in national studies subject and also other information we already have about our culture. Sometimes we find new information that we hear for the first time, and sometimes we add information to our teacher as she is not Emirati
- Muna: The teacher conducts a competition or arrange things. She writes things on the board like questions that are not included in the curriculum. This question helps us understand more the field we are reading about. The teacher writes the keywords that helps us to comprehend the subject we read about [pause]. The teacher helps us understand more than to memorize. If there is a difficult word that we do not understand, the teacher helps us to understand it.
- Sara: We always underline the words that we didn't understand, and try to define them, and look for their meanings in the dictionary, so we can better comprehend the text. Sometimes, we read a text, then write a short summary. After that we exchange what we understood with other colleagues. Through that we used to get good amount of information and reach different levels of understandings of the text.

Additionally, the students were asked, in what ways they applied the information or ideas they read in texts? Although the students provided some examples of applying such practices in reading classes, their responses were paradoxical in terms of male and female student experiences as to how they applied the ideas and information they found in the text. The female students highlighted different applications of these strategies and skills in the reading class. They found

solutions for problems, wrote paragraphs and essays, and created their own projects.

This is depicted in the following excerpts:

Hind: If we have new vocabulary, our teacher asks us to write these new words in three sentences, and then each student will talk about her sentences and exchange that with other students. After that, we create a paragraph. This is done mostly for applying the information of a reading text.

Manal: We had a project about fitness, so we read a text about fitness and then each group created a product for fitness like fitness pant, fitness watch, etc. then each group prepared a presentation for their products [pause] Sometimes for vocabulary, our teacher gives each group a set of vocabulary, and asks us to look for the meaning and then come on the board and present them whether using some pictures, drawing or matching activity.

Sara: After reading and discussing a text, our teacher always asks us to write an essay. This is the only way we apply what we have read.

Muna: We apply thing by writing things down, the teacher gives us a paper before we read the text and tells us to write anything we don't understand. Then the teacher asks one student from each group to write what they understood. We solve some problems and do some projects.

4.3.2.3.1 Boys Applied their Knowledge and Skills Less than Girls

By contrast, the male students said that they did not apply information or ideas from the text, because in reading classes they only answered workbook questions. They never focused on problem solving, classified information, or used mind maps. They also never thought outside of the text or connected it to other readings. Some of the students mentioned a project, but this was done as group work and was research-based more than a reading project. This is illustrated in the following excerpts by Hazza, Kamal, and Salem:

- Hazza: No, we don't apply what we read, especially this year, because we just have questions to answer, but no passages or texts to read ... finding solutions, creating mind maps, classifying information. No, we don't do such activities, we just restricted to the workbook activities, and as I said most of them are fill in blanks, matching, and multiple-choice questions.
- Kamal: We rarely apply what we have read, and our teacher doesn't give us activities that require the application of information. To be honest we don't apply the knowledge we gained from the reading texts.
- Salem: It can be assignments or projects that we grade it? At the end of the year, but no application in the middle of the year. Find solutions for some problems found in the text [pause]. No, we have it in creative design but not in English in which we read the text and answer the questions from the textbook.

4.3.2.4 Lack of In-depth Reading and Analysis of Texts

The students were asked about reading practices that required higher thinking as well as critical and analytical approaches to a text. They all indicated that they never read texts very deeply in English classes, nor did they analyze ideas in order to figure out any hidden messages or conduct a deeper analysis. All the reading texts in 11th grade were either descriptive or informative. Additionally, the students felt that their teachers focused more on vocabulary, and understanding the main idea, rather than on identifying implicit meanings or hidden messages embedded in the text. The following excerpt illustrated students' comments:

- Asia: We never had texts that need deep and analytical thinking. Most of the texts are descriptive and informative texts. All information is direct, we don't need to dig deep to find underlying meanings or lessons. There are facts and information.

Hazza: To be honest I don't read deeply, because the questions are very simple, and you can find the answer directly.

Hind: Securitize the deep meaning of the text, um, we rarely do that, I hope we do that. I like to read a text deeply, but we always have the same direct questions.

Omar: We have scan reading, we read a text to take a general idea, then we read it again to answer the questions. One or two questions need deep and careful reading, but most of them are simple.

Hamdan: We scan the text, read it fast to get an idea, then we try to find answers to the question in the worksheet. Most of them are simple question.

Kamal and Salem thought that their English teachers underestimated their ability to think deeply and analytically and that was why they tended to focus on textbook activities and direct and simple questions. They never tried to engage higher-level thinking by using questions and activities that required analytical or critical skills. For instance, Salem felt that all the questions that they came across in English class were direct and easy. Most questions did not require higher-level thinking or the evaluation of ideas and opinions. He believed that the evaluation and analysis of ideas and arguments were essential skills that are necessary to achieve high scores in standardized tests like the IELTS exam. This is illustrated in the following excerpts from Kamal and Salem:

Kamal: we just worked on the workbook activities and questions which are mostly true/ false, matching, crosswords questions. He just asks us to open the workbook, read the questions and answer them in-group [pause] he is just following the work book activities because the questions are simple, and he underestimate our abilities.

Salem: No. We don't have in the curriculum, but I read this at home by myself. Most texts in school are straightforward.

Even if we have a listening or speaking exam all things are easy and direct. I feel that these things should start from grade four not grade 11 or 12 and has foundation and IELTS exam.

4.3.2.4.1 Arabic is Deep, English is Shallow

Despite some examples of practices that required critical reading, Salem and Hind thought that unlike in Arabic reading classes, English reading classes were very conventional with the same repetitive question types and activities that were very easy and straightforward as they never required deeper or analytical thinking. On the other hand, in Arabic class they dealt with complicated texts that required a deep analysis and higher-level thinking in order to understand the implicit meanings of the texts. For instance, Salem stated that he used to read stories in the Arabic class, which were difficult and needed deeper, more analytical thinking so he could understand implicit meanings embedded in the texts. This is depicted in the following transcript:

Salem: Arabic stories are very difficult and condensed that require us to read it at least 3 times to understand it. While the English paragraphs are small and easy. Once you read you understand it; but in Arabic, we need to go deep and to analyze.

Salem also believed that they skipped a lot of literature in English class as he claimed that he did not even read one single story, or poem, in 11th grade. He was unhappy with English reading classes. He mentioned that unlike public schools, the private school where he had studied for 9 years, taught literature as a separate subject and that they used to read Shakespeare and so were exposed to rich literary content in terms of texts, stories and poems that required analytical and critical reading.

Salem was concerned about having such easy texts in 11th grade. Previously, he had read more literary texts in grade 4 at a private school.

Salem: Let's say for William Shakespeare; we never read for him in grade 11. In private school, we start to analyze everything from grade 4. In this grade, they used to give us literature texts, which is a separate course. We used to have two subjects and one of them we used to have deep analysis of stories, which is English, literature course .and other one is the main English course. So, we used to analyze these stories

Hind agreed that in Arabic classes they were used to reading deeply and analyzing different texts. She also mentioned that in Arabic classes they had stories, which were interesting and could lead to a deep analysis, debate or discussion. On the other hand, they never had higher-level thinking activities or analyzed texts in their English classes.

Hind: If you go to Arabic class, we have all those things that you mentioned in your questions. We read and analyze each text deeply and analytically, but in English class, we don't have any of those activities. We never had critique or higher thinking. In Arabic class, we create conceptual maps; we argue ... we analyze ideas. We connect ideas and come up with alternatives and different solutions for many problems. For example, today we had a descriptive text, but our teacher tried to ask us some questions which require higher thinking, so spent long time on one question because we had to dig deep to find the answer. We also have stories from which we find the implicit meanings and underlying themes. It is really interesting.

Moreover, in Arabic class students were asked to synthesize ideas and think creatively. All the students stated that they did not get questions or activities that required synthesis, creative thinking or imagination in their English classes. They felt

that they always had the same question types such as matching, gap-fill, crosswords, and definition questions. They rarely worked on connecting ideas from the texts or extracting creative concepts from the texts. This is captured in the comments from Hazza, Omar, Manal and Salem.

Hazza: Our teacher never gives us such activities. We never read a story, and our teacher as I said he is restricted to the workbook, except in some occasions when we have a guest from the administration or Ministry of Education.

Omar: Connect information and ideas in a text to come up with new, innovative, and creative outcomes. We rarely do that, maybe once a year! We don't read stories, and we never did that ... prediction or imagination ... no, at all.

Manal: No, we just have direct questions like matching, fill in the blanks, and crosswords, but we don't have questions by which we can express our feelings, opinions or even imaginations. All we have is word definition activities, fill in the blanks ... you know ... and this is what we had since elementary schools.

Salem: All our work focuses on the workbook. We had a story the course book. But, we did not use it. In the second semester, we did not open course book and never read any text from it. Most of our work was on the course book but how to solve this if I do not read the text. Most our solutions were based on our own strategy: how you think about things.

4.3.2.5 Lack of Critical Reading in the Textbook

One of the questions was, "to what extent does the textbook enhance critical reading?" The data suggested that the students had only a superficial experience with critical reading practices. They pointed out that the textbook did not include tasks or activities that engaged critical reading, nor reading texts that required analytical and critical thinking. Some students used words such as 'boring' and 'dull' to describe

the prescribed texts. Additionally, the students were dissatisfied with textbook content in terms of activities, question types, and texts that did not seek to develop higher order thinking skills such as critiquing or evaluating a text. Most texts were oriented towards developing linguistic skills rather than critical or creative thinking. The following excerpt provided by Salem was typical of the sentiments expressed by the interviewed students:

Salem: No, we don't have arguments or opinions in the curriculum. Most texts are straightforward. The book is not helping us developing such skills [pause] in the book we have small paragraphs and direct questions, how can I use them? English focused on listening and speaking and extracting the information directly without thinking [pause] I don't use my mind. I open the book and find answers.

Like Salem, Manal expressed her dissatisfaction with textbook content. She thought the textbook was more about quantity than quality. She described the textbook as dull and boring with many ordinary activities and questions that they have encountered ever since first grade (e.g. matching, fill in the blanks and crosswords).

Manal: The textbook is dull and boring. We just have direct questions like matching, fill in the blanks, and crosswords, but we don't have questions by which we can express our feelings, opinions or even imaginations. They are depending on the quantity not quality, and I remember once I read that 'learning is about quality not quantity'. So, imagine a textbook with 200 pages. Just imagine.

Manal argued that having less content but with more activities and questions engaging higher order thinking skills would enhance learning and students to improve their skills and abilities. She referred to her mother as an example quality

learning that enhanced skills rather than exposing students to huge amounts of information without opportunities to improve their skills.

Manal: My mother was a student and she used to have a textbook with few contents, which they study deeply and elaborate on it through the whole academic year. That's why my mother who is 50 years old still remember what she had studied when she was in her 4th and 5th grade. But, our situation is completely different.

Manal suggested that instead of having five periods of boring activities from the textbook, schools could allocate one period for extra reading activities. Then, students could read what they find interesting and elaborate on their ideas through criticism, analysis and synthesizing ideas as they read literary, argumentative texts and scientific texts, rather than just descriptive texts.

Manal: I think instead of having five periods a week working on the textbook, why not they give us one period for extra reading, or activities that develop our higher thinking. Unfortunately, we are always adherent to the book activities and questions, which are boring.

Similarly, Hind felt that English reading classes were not interesting, as they did not have texts that required deeper thinking and analytical skills. She confirmed that in reading classes they just answered the textbook and workbook questions, which were simplistic and direct.

Hind: We just read to answer the textbook questions, which are mainly related to definitions of terms, and some other questions that are simple and direct and we can find their answers in the text.

4.3.2.5.1 Absence of Argumentative Texts

When the students were asked if they evaluated different arguments or ideas from the text they read, they all stated that they did not read any argumentative texts in English reading classes, as there were no argumentative texts in the textbook. Neither did their teachers bring such texts to class to teach the students how to extract arguments and criticize different points of views. Hazza, Hind, Kamal and Manal commented on this:

Hamdan: We don't have texts that have arguments, or different opinions. For reading we just look for main idea, words definitions, and answer some questions. That's it.

Hazza: No ... we don't ... [pause] honestly, I am in grade 11th but yet I don't know the difference between descriptive and argumentative texts. This is the first time I hear about something called argumentative and descriptive texts. Even opinions and facts, we never worked on such things this year. No, all questions are simple and you can find the answer directly in the text.

Hind: We rarely have argumentative texts in the textbook. We don't read argumentative texts, but we discuss different point of views and arguments about several issues. [pause]...and you know what I really don't like about such discussion that our teacher doesn't engage all students, she just asks a question, and take just one or two answers, and this is not discussion.

Kamal: Most questions were for finding the meaning of some terms like definitions, and synonyms, and most questions come in form of multiple-choice questions. We never had arguments and opinions. He [teacher] doesn't try to evoke students thinking or simplify the question in a way that help all students to think. [Pause] ... to be honest our teacher is not focusing on reading. He is mostly focusing on writing because it has 60% out of 100%.

Manal: We rarely have argumentative texts. We do that in speaking, where we discuss different opinions and support them with evidence. We didn't have debate and even the textbook doesn't have such activities, and our teacher is mostly attached to the book activities.

4.3.2.6 Lack of Critical Reading in Standardized Tests

When students were asked about standardized tests and whether they assessed or evaluated critical and analytical reading skills, the majority stated that the questions were simple and direct. They suggested that even low achievers performed well on such tests, as they did not require higher-level thinking or analytical skills. For instance, Salem thought that English exams were as easy as first grade exams. The questions were straightforward, and everyone could pass even with poor skills and very little effort. He also said that the topics on tests were common and predictable, like the ones he had had in elementary schools dealing with hobbies and National day. This is exhibited in the following excerpt:

Salem: The texts provided even in the exam are not complicated. I feel that anybody with English background; if read once it will be very easy. The English exam level is equal to first grade; the questions are very straightforward. The questions are as if there are bold letters on most answers. They are very easy to find. Even the paragraphs they provide like about National day or about our hobbies.

Hazza agreed that most test questions were very simple, and students could find the answers directly from the text without the need to think deeply or critically.

Hazza: Most test questions are very simple. They are at 4th grade level. You can read and answer the questions directly from the text. You don't even need to read the text deeply, from the scan reading you will get the answer.

Manal added that although the test questions were generally simple, there were a few questions that required deeper thinking. She felt that when questions required analytical thinking, most students failed to answer them because they lack critical and analytical reading skills. Therefore, students perceive questions requiring higher order thinking skills as challenging. She also mentioned that sometimes they got questions they had never come across in the curriculum, which were confusing as they were not equipped with the skills to answer such questions.

Manal: Honestly ... all test questions are like the questions in the textbook. They are direct, but we have few questions that require deep thinking. So, I can say the test questions are little better than the textbook questions, but the problem is that most of us are not well prepared or equipped with skills to answer such questions, most of us we get wrong answers or fail to answer. I remember the last test we had some questions that we never studied. There were some word that we encounter for the first time, and because we lack the skills to figure out the meaning from the context, most of us failed to answer those questions.

4.3.2.7 Lack of Pragmatic and Functional Language Skills

The data suggested that 11th grade students had few critical reading experiences in English classes as the main focus was on developing linguistic skills such as vocabulary and grammar. It was also suggested that higher order thinking and critical reading were ignored or rarely experienced in reading classes where the focus was on finding main ideas, and discussing the information found in the texts. For instance, Manal felt that the questions and tasks did not require analytical thinking, drawing inferences, relating ideas to each other or thinking outside of the text. Although she recognized the need to develop her linguistic skills, she still felt that she needs to think things through in the second language and use the knowledge

she gains in school in home and real-life situations. This is depicted in the following excerpt:

Manal: We don't have tasks or questions that help us to use information outside the school, in our homes or make us better understand the world. We just have a book that is focusing on developing our linguistic skills. I agree that we need linguistic skills, so we can talk and write perfectly, but we also need develop skills, which enable us to draw inferences, relate and analyze things and ideas. We spent our half time of our day in school, so we need to develop skills, which enables us to think through the language.

Salem believed that as he is in 11th grade, he should not be treated like a first or second grade student, who needs to focus on developing vocabulary and grammar skills. He thought that students in high schools should read and discuss topics such as, 'Youthism' and should have argumentative texts that discuss different point of view, that they can analyze and evaluate instead of just having descriptive texts with regular question types that even fourth grade students could answer easily. This is exhibited in the following transcript:

Salem: We are in eleventh grade and we should not take this: where are the complicated things. At least, when I entered this school, they never talked about similes. Or youthism? What is this! Let's talk about serous topics or important topics.

Salem had practiced critical and analytical reading in Arabic classes, which he saw as higher level and better than English classes, especially when it came to analyzing texts and criticizing ideas.

Salem: What is more annoying is that we need to make Arabic and English in the same level. Arabic subject is much

higher. As a student, I feel that the English language class is not developing our higher thinking.

Hazza recalled 10th grade when he had interactive and interesting English reading classes. His teacher used to ask questions and give out tasks that required deeper and more analytical reading. On the other hand, his 11th grade English teacher treats him like a first or second grade student. Therefore, Hazza believed that teachers' opinions and teaching methods defined the way students answered questions and whether that was by scanning or through critical reading.

Hazza: When I was in 10th grade, I remember I used to read the texts deeply and analytically because the questions given by our teacher require that, but this year our teacher treat us like first or second grade students. I also remembered the reading classes in 10th grade was very interactive and interesting. We used to read deeply. I believe that the questions brought by the teacher define if we have to read deeply and analytically, or just on the surface level.

Hind characterized English reading as having no deep reading. They just had textbook questions, which focused on identifying the main idea and new vocabulary.

Hind elaborated on this point in the following excerpt:

Hind: If you want me to sum up our reading classes in a sentence: 'there is no deep reading'. We just read to answer the textbook questions, which are mainly related to definitions of terms, and some other questions that are simple and direct and we can find their answers in the text.

4.3.2.7.1 Student's Lack of Interaction

Hind recognized low levels of interest and enthusiasm from students because of a lack of challenging questions to stimulate deep and critical reading. She said that at the beginning of the year her teacher used to ask some questions that required

critical and analytical reading, but because of low levels of interaction from most students the teacher went back to the textbook and focused on grammar and vocabulary rather than critical thinking or reading.

Hind: Honestly, at the beginning of the year our teacher tried to ask us some challenging questions that need deep thinking about some terms, but because students didn't interact with her because they prefer direct and simple questions which depend on reading for gist of information, she turned back to simple and direct questions like defining some terms, explaining some concepts and so on. She also tried to explain the difficult terms in her simple words, so we can understand, so she her concentration was just to understand the text information.

Kamal added that this year had been a miserable reading experience and that he had not read any English texts except for exam texts. He went on that in English reading classes they only focused on workbook activities to find answers to the questions. There was no comprehension, no higher order thinking, no relating ideas to each other, no synthesizing of ideas, or even illustrating ideas found in the text. All they did were matching, crosswords and true/ false questions.

Kamal: To be honest, we don't have a lot of questions that measure our understanding or depend on our comprehension of a text. He so direct and mainly restricted to the book, and always follows the book activities [pause] to be honest with you, we didn't read at all. This year we didn't bring the textbook, we just worked on the workbook activities and questions, which are mostly true/false, matching, crosswords questions etc.

Kamal expressed dissatisfaction with the simple question types and believed that teachers should use more modern teaching strategies, and, most importantly, not underestimate their students' abilities and interests. Consequently, instead of having

the same questions and activities there ought to be questions and tasks that engage critical thinking. The following excerpt depicts what Kamal has said:

Kamal: I agree that there are big number of students who are weak in English, but it doesn't mean that all students are the same. I think we can read, analyze and elaborate on different ideas. To be fair, sometimes he tries to get answers for those questions from student, just one or two students interact while the others keep silent and they even don't try. The problem is that even our teacher he easily gave up. He doesn't try to evoke students thinking or simplify the question in a way that help all students to think. [Pause] ... to be honest our teacher is not focusing on reading. He is mostly focusing on writing because it has 60% out of 100%.

The emerging themes from teachers and students' interviews are illustrated in Table 11.

Table 11: The Emerging Themes from Teachers and Students' Interviews

Teachers	Students
<p>Critical reading fuels creativity</p> <p>Absence of critical reading in the curriculum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Absence of literature in the curriculum <p>Standardized test ad a `banking system</p> <p>Mismatch between instructional and assessment objectives</p> <p>Lack of critical pedagogy in the training programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mitigating the gap between theory and practice <p>Challenges to deliver critical reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adversity of time - Lack of competency in English language - Lack of conducive learning resources - Teachers lack autonomy - Students' sensitivity toward criticism - Permissible boys Vs restricted girls <p>Focus on teaching basic skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited applications of knowledge <p>Limited use of higher order thinking skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of literary and argumentative texts 	<p>Focus on literal comprehension and basic skills</p> <p>Reading as a Banking System</p> <p>Female deployed more comprehension strategies than male students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Boys had less applications <p>Lack of in-depth reading and analysis of texts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Arabic is deep, English is shallow <p>Lack of critical reading in the curriculum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Absence of argumentative texts <p>Lack of critical reading in standardized tests</p> <p>Lack of pragmatic and functional language skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students low interaction

4.4 Classroom Observation

One of the important research questions guiding this study was “What do the actual practices in 11th grade classrooms reveal about critical reading?”, Hence observation checklist was utilized as one of the tools for the second phase of this study to extract the actual practices of teachers and students in the English reading classes and explore what their actual practices reveal about critical reading. Consequently, 28 classroom observations were conducted in 11th grade English reading classes in 4 public schools. An observation checklist was used to record the actual reading practices. The checklist was divided into five categories that were based on the hierarchy of Bloom’s Taxonomy, whereby under each category, a series of items were included to represent criteria for evaluating the implementation of critical reading. The categories were: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (See Appendix F) for the observation checklist.

Ten English teachers who teach 11th grade in public schools were observed 3-4 times in 8 weeks to get an in-depth description based on the actual practices of 11th grade students and teachers during reading classes. The observations provided a clear picture of critical reading practices in 11th grades in public high schools, wherefore classroom observation of students is proved to be one of the most important research instruments, because it enables the researcher to capture the most critical moments of students' interactions with each other and with their teacher during the learning process (O’Leary, 2013).

The observed teachers were the same interviewed teachers, and that provided a rich chance to clarify and elaborate on the actual reading practices. The observation

data was analyzed using SPSS and Excel software. Figure 2 illustrates the observation results for 11th grade reading practices.

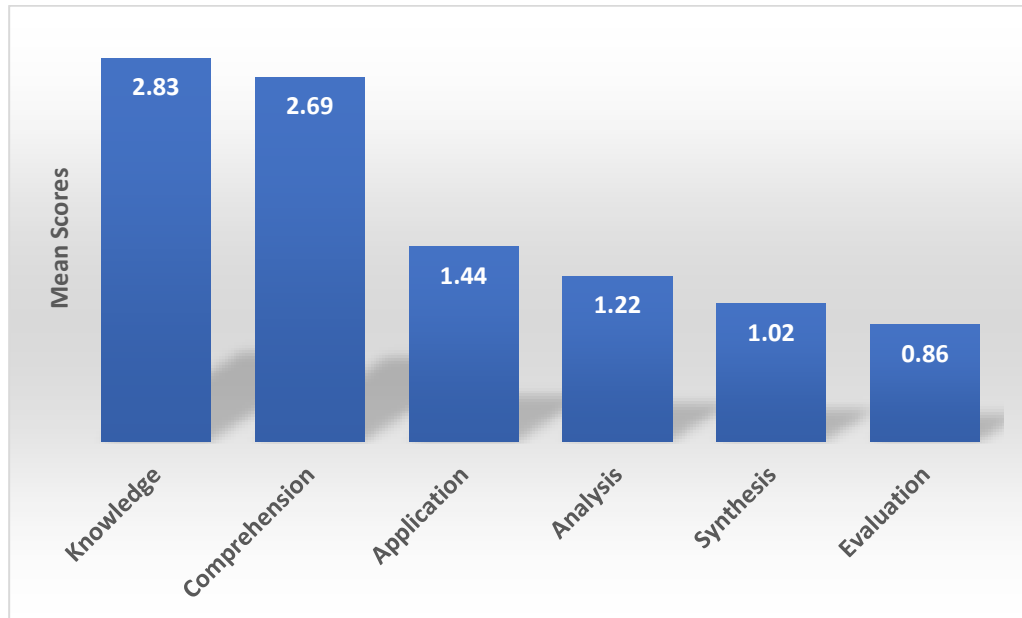


Figure 2: English Reading Classes Observations

The data collected from the observation was illustrated in Figure 2 and indicate that the reading practices that focus on the lower levels of Bloom's Taxonomy and evoke the lower thinking skills got the higher mean scores (M=2.32), wherefore the Knowledge category came first with a mean score (M=2.83). Then came the Comprehension category with a mean (M=2.69) followed by the Application category (M=1.44). On the hand, the higher thinking levels of Bloom's Taxonomy got the lowest mean score (M=1.03), whereby the Evaluation category had the lowest mean score (M=0.86), then came the Synthesis category (M=1.02) followed by the Analysis category (M=1.22).

The data in Figure 2 indicates that 11th grade teachers and students tend to focus on reading practices that enhance knowledge and comprehension of the text. Basically, it was tangible that the reading practices in English classes revolved

around defining words, recalling information from the text and describing information and ideas found in the text. Additionally, most observed teachers were noticed as being dependent on the textbook questions and tasks which were focused on listing information, filling the blanks, matching, and labeling pictures. For instance, one of the teachers (Helen) started her lesson by asking students to open the text book and gave them 10 minutes to read the text. After that, she asked them to do the first task which was mostly fill in the blank activity, followed by matching and true/ false activity located in the workbook. Then, she asked students to share their answer and that was all about the reading class.

It is worth mentioning that although the topic of the lesson was about (space exploration) that could be a fruitful topic for further discussion where the teacher could ask questions to evoke students' imagination about space and science fiction, but the teacher preferred to stick to the textbook questions that were mostly literal comprehension questions and based on direct information from the text.

During the observation, it was noticed that most lessons' topics were related to scientific problems and global warming issues like common health problems, geography of the world, space exploration, and social network channels. Unfortunately, in all 28 classroom observations, the literary and argumentative text were not used even as an extra reading material.

Moreover, during the English reading classes, it was tangible that in most observed lessons English teachers spent intensive efforts in scaffolding students reading and developing their basic language skills in terms of grammar and vocabulary. They were focused on skills such as identifying new vocabulary, finding specific information from the text, identifying grammar rules and eliciting general

ideas found in the text. For example, Rina (an English teacher) invited me to attend one of her acceleration reading classes, which include low achieving students. Rina started the lesson by asking the students about the pictures found in the textbook to stimulate their background knowledge about domestic animals. The warming up activity was quite engaging as the teacher tried to relate the topic to students' own context and prior knowledge. However, after the warming up, Rina asked the students to read the text and underline the new vocabulary items. Then she distributed an oxford hard copy dictionaries on 5 groups and asked them to find the meanings for the new vocabulary items. The whole reading period was about finding the vocabulary meanings.

Another observed lesson was for Anthony (an English teacher) in male school. He started the lesson by displaying some pictures to review the main vocabulary items of the previous lesson. Then, He asked students to read the text in the textbook and underline the hypothetical grammar expressions that were based on (if, will, would). Although it was a reading class, but I felt like I am attending a grammar lesson. The main focus was oriented toward that grammatical rules and understanding the use of those rules in daily life context.

Another male students' teacher was Mike, who also was restricted to the textbook activities and questions. The lesson started with a regular and conventional warming up activity that included some questions about the previous lesson and revising some vocabulary items. Then, the teacher asked the students to read the text for 10 minutes without producing the new topic or activating their prior knowledge about commercial and scientific fairs as the lesson was about Expo 2020. After reading the text, Mike asked his students to work in groups and answer the questions

in the textbook. Finally, they discussed the answers, and that it for the whole reading class.

Though most of teachers were concentrating on scaffolding activities, few of them used questions to elaborate on the text ideas, analyze the information and connect it to the students' knowledge background. For example, Maya (one of the teachers) started the reading lesson through brainstorming activity in which she asked the students some questions as a warming up activity in order to activate their prior knowledge and schemata to make the text more familiar and relevant to the students. Then, she used different questions to help students analyze the text, elaborate on its ideas, and connect it to the students' own knowledge and culture. Finally, she asked students to summarize the whole text in some few sentences to figure out if they really comprehended the idea of the text or not.

Another teacher who caught as implementing some critical reading strategies was Selin who started her lesson with a short video about desertification. Then, she started an oral discussion with students using open-ended questions to evoke students higher order thinking skills by activating their schemata. Then she asked to imagine and predict what will happen if the water and green plants are disappeared. Students started to express their different ideas. Although their ideas were simple, but they were enjoying that discussion as the teacher related the lesson to the students' own lives and future. Selin ended her lesson by asking the students what they will do to decrease the series consequences of desertification. The lesson was very active and students were participating and using their linguistic skills to express their ideas.

Nevertheless, in general, it was observed that most reading lessons followed almost the same pattern, whereby students had warming up activity, followed by

reading the text activity, as they were instructed by their teachers to underlie the key words and new vocabulary items. Then teachers and students moved to the textbook or the workbook activities to find the answers from the text. Some lessons ended up with short discussion about the topic of the reading and mostly the questions were general and direct as they didn't need critical or analytical thinking to be answered.

What was obvious about the observed lessons (n=28) that teachers (n=10) that reading practices that require analysis, synthesis and evaluation were ignored, as both teachers and students were focused on knowledge and comprehension of the text by means of defining new vocabulary, identifying the main ideas of the text, and describing information and idea of the text. For instance, Inna (one of the teachers) was noticed as using different strategies like relating ideas, defining new words, describing information etc. Nevertheless, the main focus was on developing language basic skills in terms of grammar, whereby after reading each passage of the text, the teacher used to ask students some examples on grammar rules they had in the book. Therefore, her lesson was more about grammar than reading.

Similarly, for application which were centered on specific activities like writing paragraphs or essays and doing workbook activities. Eleventh grade students were rarely observed as illustrating ideas using mind maps or other graphic organizers, neither they utilized texts information to come up with viable and new ideas. Most activities were focused on classifying information, discussing advantages and disadvantages of things, and answering workbook questions.

Though the classroom observations revealed that teachers and students used variety of activities and reading strategies, in many cases critical reading activities were not observed, whereby most 7 out of ten teachers were observed as focusing in

the lexical items and identifying the main idea of the text. On the other hand, few teachers were observed as implementing some critical reading strategies like compare and contrast ideas, investigate several alternatives for different problems, and evaluate some point of views. For instance, Selin, one of the teachers was noticed as implementing several reading strategies as she divided her lesson in to three stages: before, during and after reading. In each stage she used different questions to help her students analyze the ideas in the text.

During the classroom observations, it was noticed that students never had literary or narrative texts, wherefore all texts were descriptive which in turns made the reading lessons dry and boring. As a result, it was tangible that students' interaction with teachers was low as they were using the same regular questions such as multiple choice, fill in the blanks, crosswords and complete a table activity. There were no discussions of implicit meanings, underling themes and hidden messages in the text. For example, Helen, one of the teachers used simple and direct questions that didn't require any efforts to find the answers which were located directly in the text. Moreover, it was noticed that 11th grade students didn't have any argumentative texts in their textbooks, whereas most texts were informative and descriptive.

As illustrated in Figure 2, the classroom activities that evoke critical reading and require analyzing, synthesizing and evaluating ideas were rarely observed in 11th grade English reading classes, wherefore just 3 out of 10 teachers were observed as deploying critical reading strategies by analyzing text deeply, elaborating on ideas, and use challenging questions that required critical thinking and deep as well as analytical approaching of a text. For instance, Kate used a video and asked questions that required deep and critical thinking to help students think beyond the text and

approach the text deeply not just on the surface level. She also asked students think about the positive and negative sides of the issue mentioned in the text (social networks) and come up with alternative ideas and solutions to some predicted problems for the issue. Hence, Kate's class were highly interactive and student were observed as being excited about the lesson and the text. It was noticed that the lesson's stimulated their imagination and prediction of several issues related to the text topic.

Another lesson is Anna's reading class, in which she used different reading strategies. The lesson was about social networks. First of all, Anna started her lesson by asking students if they have accounts in some famous social network platforms like Twitter. Then, she asked them if they like all the content they find in that platform. Students were highly engaged as they expressed their different opinions about Twitter. After that, Anna asked her students to read the text which was about different opinions about social networks. Once the students finished their reading, Anna asked them if they agree or disagree with what they read in the text and support their argument with strong evidence. Although the majority of students were highly engaged when they were asked about their personal opinion about Twitter as a social communication platform, few of them participated to express their agreement or disagreement and support their opinions with evidence.

Generally, as it is illustrated in Figure 2, it is obvious that there was a general tendency of 11th grade teachers and students toward focusing on approaching the texts on the surface level, whereby most observed activities were centered on identifying the main idea of the text, finding gist of information, and defining new

vocabulary. Whereas, questions and tasks that require critical reading and approaching a text deeply were almost ignored.

Furthermore, most teachers were observed as being adherent to the textbook and workbook activities which were focused on knowledge recognition, and comprehension of the general ideas rather than enhancing other skills that require critical reading and analytical approaching of a text. For instance, Zaya had a reading lesson about social network and what people think about it. Although the topic was fruitful for evaluating different opinions and scrutinizing several ideas stated in the text, the teacher settled for the textbook activities which were true/ false questions and fill in the blank activities. In addition to one or two open ended questions which also didn't require critical or analytical reading of the text.

4.5 Summary

Chapter 4 has presented the findings from two phases of this study. Through employing a mixed methods explanatory design, the researcher has mined the advantages of both quantitative and qualitative methods to get a broader and deeper insight into the critical reading practices of 11th grade students in UAE public high schools. Therefore, a triangulation of instruments, which included questionnaires, interviews, and observational checklists, were all used to collect data.

4.5.1 First Phase Findings (Quantitative Results)

The critical reading questionnaire (CRQ) was completed by 11th grade students (n=645) and provided quantitative data to answer the first research question. The results revealed that 11th grade students in public high schools had limited and poor experiences of reading practices that could engage higher order thinking skills,

such as critical reading. Although the overall average mean score was high ($M=3.12$), when approaching the upper levels of Bloom's Taxonomy (analysis, synthesis, and evaluation), the mean scores got lower ($M=2.72$, $SD=1.21$). The questionnaire results showed that 11th grade students used many reading practices dealing with comprehension ($M=3.78$, $SD=1.0$) and knowledge ($M=3.63$, $SD=1.10$), which are at the lower end of Bloom's Taxonomy and merely stimulate lower thinking skills such as recognition, identifying specific terms and ideas, and finding factual details. Hence, the category with the highest mean score was comprehension ($M=3.78$, $SD=1.10$), followed by Knowledge ($M=3.63$, $SD=1.08$).

On the other hand, the results indicated that lowest mean score was for synthesis ($M=2.50$, $SD=1.24$), followed by evaluation ($M=2.70$, $SD=1.27$), and then analysis with a mean score of ($M=2.96$, $SD=1.14$).

As above, the results suggested that 11th grade English reading classes focused mainly on practices dealing with knowledge recognition, such as explaining new vocabulary, highlighting main ideas, and finding information from the text. The mean scores were as follows: "explain some terms, events, theories, phenomenon, etc. in texts" ($M=3.97$, $SD=1.04$); "highlight and outline some major ideas in texts" ($M=3.97$, $SD=1.05$); "find some information from our reading" ($M=3.96$, $SD=1.12$), and, "recall what we have already read" ($M=3.91$, $SD=0.93$). Thus, two out of the three highest mean scores were found in the comprehension category, and the other in the knowledge category.

By contrast, reading practices that required synthesis and evaluation were rarely experienced by 11th grade students. They reported lower means for practices like: "predict or imagine a thread of possible ideas or events from texts" ($M=2.44$,

SD=1.14); “design creative writing materials based on our reading” (M=2.47, SD=1.26); “verify sources of information to validate our ideas” (M=2.49, SD=1.32), and, “juxtapose ideas or information in order to form major concepts” (M=2.52, SD=1.22). This suggested that 11th grade students in public high schools had very shallow experiences with critical reading practices that could stimulate higher order thinking skills and enable them to think deeply and analytically about a text.

4.5.2 Second Phase Findings (Qualitative Results)

The qualitative data was collected by interviewing ten 11th grade teachers, and ten 11th grade students. The data was analyzed in order to answer the second and third research questions. As a result, several themes were emerged from both teachers’ and students’ interviews. (See Thematic Map Appendix I)

4.5.2.1 Part A: Teacher’ Interviews

The results of the teacher interviews suggested the following:

4.5.2.1.1 Critical Reading is Essential for Creativity and Innovation

1. Generally, 11th grade English teachers were aware of the importance of critical reading and valued the skills that could enable students to analyze and scrutinize the thoughts of others to better understand hidden messages and meanings in a text. The teachers believed that critical reading fuels creativity and innovation as it helps students to think beyond the text and look at various issues from different perspectives. Reading is not just about factual details, but rather about opening up many different angles to allow us to look at things differently.

2. Some teachers felt that although critical reading was important, it could be developed in other subjects as they believed that the main point of English classes is to grasp the basic skills of the language in terms of grammar and vocabulary. Those teachers referred to factors like low competency, a lack of basic language skills and the textbook content as reasons why they focused more on developing linguistic skills than on critical reading.

4.5.2.1.2 Focus on Lower Level Reading Skills

3. The data showed that although English teachers used different reading strategies and activities, the majority of these practices engaged lower order thinking skills that only required knowledge recognition and identification of factual details. Practices that required higher-level thinking skills like analysis, synthesis and evaluation of ideas were poorly served in English reading classes as the teachers had to abide by a curriculum that does not promote higher order thinking skills.

4.5.2.1.3 Critical Reading across the Curriculum

4. Although the textbook had a variety of topics that were relevant to the students' culture and life experiences, critical reading was mostly ignored in the curriculum. The teachers felt that the English curriculum did not stimulate critical reading as it focused only on developing linguistic skills. As such, they thought that the textbook had little benefit when it came to critical and analytical reading.

4.5.2.1.4 Absence of Literary Texts

5. The teachers agreed that the curriculum had no real literature in terms of narratives, poems, or plays. This made their texts boring and dry, as most of the texts in the textbook were either descriptive or formative. They believed that literary texts were more fruitful for analysis and evaluation and that students could find implicit themes, and hidden messages.

4.5.2.1.5 Absence of Critical Reading in Standardized Tests

6. The teachers viewed the standardized tests as a 'banking' system that focused on either recognition or finding specific information. They suggested that most questions were literal rather than inferential or evaluative.

4.5.2.1.6 Teaching to the Test

7. The teachers highlighted a mismatch between instructional and assessment objectives. They pinpointed an inconsistency between the test questions and what students and teachers had studied in the textbook. They believed that this placed a lot of pressure on teachers and students who were restricted to textbook activities and expecting that test questions would be like those they had in the textbook.

4.5.2.1.7 Absence of Critical Pedagogy in Training Programs

8. Regarding training programs, the teachers indicated a lack of critical pedagogy. Training programs were mostly theoretical, reviewed teaching theories, grammar structure, and outdated teaching strategies. Critical reading was mostly ignored.

4.5.2.1.8 Crucial Challenges to Delivering Critical Reading

9. The main challenge to delivering critical reading in English classes was a lack of time. Teachers are struggling with the amount of content in the textbook that has to be covered in short time. Another challenge was the low competency of the students. They thought that the students were capable of thinking and reading critically, but because of the language barrier, a low competency level in English meant that they could only read at surface level and did not use their higher order thinking skills. They also indicated a lack of resources to help teachers implement critical reading strategies. These missing resources included the Internet, smartboards and access to educational websites. Teachers believed that 11th grade students were comfortable with finding factual details and knowledge recognition rather than with deeper, analytical and critical reading. Furthermore, teachers lacked the autonomy to add or skip activities or tasks. As such, they tended to focus on a textbook that does not cater to critical reading.

4.5.2.2 Part B: Student Interviews

The data from the 10 interviews with 11th grade students showed a consistency between teachers and students' views on critical reading experiences in the English class.

4.5.2.2.1 Students Value Critical Reading

1. Critical reading was important to the 11th grade students who valued it as an essential skill to think outside the text and apply knowledge in real life situations.

4.5.2.2.2 Limited Forms of Reading Practice

2. The students mostly experienced reading practices that enhanced knowledge recognition and identification of factual details, such as identifying new vocabulary, finding specific information and describing what they have read in the text.

4.5.2.2.3 Absence of Critical Reading in the Curriculum

3. The students all agreed that in English reading classes they were restricted to textbook questions and activities with no scope for elaborating on ideas or discussing texts deeply or critically. They complained that in reading class they had the same repetitive textbook and workbook activities regularly and rarely did tasks different from those in the textbook.
4. Approaching texts analytically was almost completely ignored in English reading classes. The students interviewed said that they had never approached any text in a deeper manner, nor criticized ideas or points of view.

4.5.2.2.4 Students are Cognizant that they are Underestimated

5. The students believed that their English teachers underestimated their ability to think and read critically. Therefore, they tended to give them simple and straightforward questions and tasks that did not require higher order thinking.

4.5.2.2.5 Arabic Class is More Advanced

6. Arabic reading classes required analytical and critical reading of a variety of texts, while English reading classes were conventional and boring with often repeated activities.

4.5.2.2.6 Lack of a Literary Genre

7. Literature such as narratives, poems and plays were almost non-existent in the English curriculum. These are genre rich areas in hidden meanings and messages and requiring deeper and more critical reading. Students said that they had not even read a single story or poem in English reading classes.
8. The students highlighted that they had no opportunity for the evaluation of different arguments or highlighting contradictory ideas as English reading classes never had any argumentative texts. All the texts they had were descriptive.

4.5.2.2.7 Textbook Load over Teachers and Students

9. The students reported that the textbook content was very large and not interesting. They were constantly working hard with their teachers to cover the material and all the activities that were aimed at developing linguistic skills like grammar and vocabulary.

4.5.2.2.8 Lack of Critical Reading in Standardized Tests

10. In terms of standardized tests, the students stated that most test questions were easy and straightforward. They rarely had questions that required critical reading or a deeper approach to a text.

4.5.2.2.9 Lack of Interaction when Higher Order Thinking Questions are used

11. Students said that their teachers sometimes used challenging questions that required critical thinking skills, but that most students showed little interest,

as they liked to have direct and simple questions because they had become used to having such questions since their early schooling.

4.5.3 Classroom Observation Findings

The findings from the classroom observations answered the fourth research question and shed some light on the actual practices of 11th grade teachers and students with regard to critical reading. The results of the classroom observations (n=28) showed that 11th grade classes tended to focus on reading practices that dealt with knowledge recognition and the identification of specific information in texts, this was done by highlighting main ideas and defining particular vocabulary items.

Furthermore, data from the classroom observations showed that these teachers and students were restricted by textbook and workbook activities, which were narrowly focused on developing basic language skills, rather than on critical and analytical skills. Therefore, although 11th grade teachers employed different reading strategies, critical reading practices that required evaluation, analysis, and synthesis were rare.

In addition, the results of classroom observations (n=28) pinpointed that teachers never exploited literary text such as narratives, poems, plays, or argumentative texts including contradictory statements and thoughts. Thus, activities that required evaluation, analysis and synthesis were almost non-existent.

4.5.4 Mixed Methods Findings

The complete dataset (questionnaire, interviews and classroom observations) produced some general findings:

1. Data collected from student self-reporting, classroom observations consistently revealed a consistency in student self-reporting, and actual classroom practices. The two datasets provided evidence of lower critical reading skills and the avoidance of higher order critical reading skills.
2. Both teachers and students indicated that they valued critical reading as an essential skill to develop higher thinking skills and enable students to think deeply and critically in the English language and to become active constructors of knowledge rather than passive recipients.
3. The multiple means used in this study (questionnaire, interviews and observations), revealed that both teachers and student were cognizant of their practices regarding the focus on developing basic language skills such as grammar and vocabulary, rather than critical reading. This was also validated by classroom observation.
4. Teachers and students recognized that the English textbook materials did not include materials, tasks or activities that engaged critical reading.
5. Teachers and students also highlighted that the English curriculum did not include literary texts or literature, which could help students in analyzing, synthesizing and evaluating texts, and in turn fostering critical reading.
6. Both teachers and students thought that their curriculum was exclusively focused on teaching to the test. Thus, teachers focus on preparing students to take standardized tests and neglect teaching them critical reading skills.
7. Several challenges imbedded in the use of critical reading were expressed by teachers and students alike. These included a lack of time, a lack of resources, low language competency, low motivation, a lack of curriculum choices and a constraint on teacher.

8. In terms of training programs, teachers indicated that there was a huge gap between theory and practice, as most training sessions organized by the Ministry of Education enhanced theoretical pedagogy, rather than practical and critical pedagogy to equip teachers with the necessary skills and effective teaching strategies to enable them to apply what they have learned from such training sessions.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This study explored the critical reading practices of 11th grade students in UAE public high schools. The study employed an explanatory mixed method design, where data was collected by questionnaire, interviews with students and teachers, and also by classroom observation. This chapter considers the results of both phases of the study in terms of the consistency and relationship between the quantitative and qualitative results. In addition, this chapter discusses the contribution of the study to the already extant research on critical reading pedagogy in general and critical reading in particular. Finally, an interpretation of the findings, recommendations and implications are presented with regard to employing critical reading in English classes.

5.2 Discussion

5.2.1 Question 1: What do 11th Grade Students Report about their Critical Reading Experiences in English?

In terms of the first research question, the questionnaire data indicated that the majority of 11th grade students had a shallow experience only of critical reading practices. They did little in terms of higher order thinking skills that ought to be found at the upper end of Bloom's Taxonomy. For example, 11th grade students reported higher mean scores for activities and practices on the lower levels of Bloom's Taxonomy ($M=3.50$, $SD=1.09$). Furthermore, the results of the pair samples t-test revealed that there are significant differences between all rating scales. This indicated that reading practices in their English classes merely engaged lower order thinking skills that required nothing more than recognition of facts and the identification of

specific information through memorization and rote learning. This finding is in line with a study by Taleb and Chadwick (2016) who confirmed that education in the Middle East still emphasized rote learning and viewed critical literacy as challenging and problematic in English language classes. Therefore, teachers preferred to use conventional learning strategies within a conventional education system which emphasizes more traditional pedagogic methods. Additionally, Mozafari & Brajesteh (2016) found that despite the emphasis placed on the importance of developing critical reading skills, English teachers tended to focus on lower level question types, which serve to activate only the lower level cognitive skills identified in Bloom's Taxonomy. That is, remembering, understanding and applying. Similarly, Choy and Cheah (2009) conducted a study to investigate teachers' perceptions of critical thinking in language classroom and found that the majority of teachers were solely focused on the comprehension of subject content as they apparently lacked an understanding of critical thinking approaches.

In the context of the UAE, studies like Abo-Salem (2004), Dakkak (2010) and Ridge et al., (2017) have asserted that teachers in the UAE tend to focus on lower level thinking skills and that the assessment procedures emphasize memorization and rote learning and thus do not develop critical thinking skills.

The 11th grade students recorded low mean scores for practices on the upper levels of Bloom's Taxonomy ($M=2.75$, $SD=1.21$), and a significant difference was also obtained between the lower levels (Knowledge, Comprehension, Application) and the upper levels (Analysis, Synthesis, Evaluation). This indicates that reading practices that require analysis, synthesis, and evaluation are mostly ignored in English class and that the students had, at best, a superficial experience of critical

reading. This result has been supported in studies by Coirki et al. (2015), Dakkak (2010), Stapleton (2008d), Rezaei et al., (2011), Ridge et al., (2017) and Yee (2007) that have studied the implementation of critical reading in different parts of the world. For instance, a study by Stapleton (2008) to investigate the implication of higher order thinking skills by Japanese ESL students found that the students were successful in identifying facts but less successful in extracting big ideas or thinking about content critically. Similarly, Yee (2007) who conducted a study in Hong Kong's secondary schools to investigate the implementation of critical thinking in English language classrooms and found that critical literacy was neglected in ESL. Additionally, Rezaei et al., (2011) found that teachers in language classrooms rarely use inferential questioning to stimulate thinking processes.

Those claims emphasize that critical literacy is still neglected in English language education whereby the focus in ESL/EFL field is developing basic language skills such as vocabulary and grammar which go under the bottom-up approach of reading process rather than critical literacy which follows top-down approach of reading.

5.2.2 Question 2: How do 11th Grade Teachers View their Teaching of Critical Reading?

The second research question revealed that English teachers were aware of the importance of critical reading, which they believe enables students to think outside of the text to expand their understanding of different issues. This is supported by Abd-Kadir, et al., 2014; Chris, 2005; Hughes, 2014; Kabilan, 2000; Macknish, 2014; Mayfield, 2010) who found that critical thinking was not an isolated subject that should be taught separately from other subjects, but rather an important skill that

should be incorporated into every subject, most importantly into English language. Additionally, Paul Freire (1983) a leading figure in the world of critical literacy, believed that critical reading enabled students to read and understand the world, and to connect their own world and experience by exploring their beliefs, fears, values and tastes. Critical reading goes far beyond just memorizing facts.

Despite the fact that critical reading is often neglected in English classes, the teachers' responses showed how they valued critical reading. They believed that critical reading fueled creativity and innovation, as it helps students to look at things from different angles. They confirmed that reading is not just about finding out factual details, but about opening up minds and thinking critically through language. This view is similar to that of Abd Kadir et al., (2014) who posited that critical reading enabled students to think outside the text and come up with creative solutions to a variety of problems by being active creators of knowledge rather than just passive consumers of that knowledge.

Nevertheless, although the teachers valued critical reading, some teachers argued that critical reading should be developed in other subjects, rather than English, as they believed that they should focus on developing basic language skills. They believed that English classes should be developing basic language skills as most students exhibited low language proficiency. Therefore, developing critical reading takes second place to the development of basic language skills. This view is in line with many language teachers around the world who think that critical thinking and critical reading skills can develop once students are older and become more experienced readers and have more life experiences. However, this view has been criticized by many educators, who feel that critical thinking must be taught to

students in the earlier grades, and that it is the responsibility of schools to develop the ability to read and think critically (Taglieger, 2003).

This controversial argument has been raised by scholars such as Macknish (2011) who believes that critical reading has been assigned lesser importance in English classes. He attributes that to the assumption that ESL/ EFL students have a limited capacity for criticality, as they lack the basic language skills to enable them to voice their thoughts critically. Macknish (2011) thinks that those assumptions are overgeneralized and that ESL/EFL students have the ability to analyze and evaluate texts critically if the premises of critical literacy are made clear to them. Similarly, Wallace (2003) believes that language development and critical reading can occur in tandem, with both language proficiency and critical reading constituting vital learning opportunities. Additionally, Kabilan (2000) has stated that for students to become proficient in a language, they need to think creatively and critically using that language.

It could be inferred from those claims that students don't need to be high proficient in language to approach a text critically, whereas criticality is a way of thinking and a skill that students could acquire through continuous and consistent teaching strategies and questioning techniques that evoke their higher-order thinking skills and stimulate their curiosity about the hidden messages in any text. Janks (2012) asserts that critical reading requires certain ways of thinking to approach any text critically, whereby reader's proficiency and interest is not enough to have critical reading.

The textbook was a major concern for teachers. Although some teachers had a positive view of the topics and content of the textbook, they felt that critical reading

was mostly ignored. The teachers felt that the textbook had a variety of topics that were relevant to the students' culture and life experiences, thus allowing them to elaborate on different ideas and activate schemata to better comprehend different texts. This finding is in line with studies by Rosdiana (2016), McDonald and Thornley (2009) and Stabback (2016) who believed that a good quality curriculum makes space to activate prior knowledge and recognize the learner's personal, social and cognitive capacities.

In contrast, although the teachers indicated that the English curriculum was varied in terms of topics that were related to the students' culture and personal experiences, critical reading was virtually non-existent. They felt that the curriculum focus was on developing basic language skills rather than critical reading. For instance, Selin, one of the teachers, thought that the curriculum did not help students to improve their critical reading skills. This point is in tune with studies tracking curriculum development and change in the UAE (Dakkak, 2010; Ridge et al., 2017). They suggested that textbooks in the UAE, developed linguistic skills, while neglecting the critical thinking and problem-solving skills that are essential if we hope to enhance learning through language. A good curriculum is the one that enables students to achieve their potential and promotes higher order thinking skills, while stimulating critical questioning and the imagination (Stabback, 2016). For example, Fadlallah (2016) asserted that a perfect language curriculum should have a broad content and look beyond simply developing linguistic skills but must promote critical literacy. Cheng & Wan (2017) affirmed that one of the crucial challenges to the effective implementation of critical literacy in education is the nature of the content taught in the class. They argued that the content of the curriculum should allow

students to experience uncertain knowledge and evaluate conflicting views to develop their critical thinking.

Moreover, the teachers suggested that the English curriculum had no literary input, despite an understanding that literature is the cornerstone of language learning and reflects the beauty and deeper meanings of literary texts, which in turn makes the reading experience more interesting and memorable. The teachers confirmed the absence of literary texts and thought that most English reading classes were rigid and boring, as most of the reading texts were either descriptive or informative.

It is well known that literature is an integral part in any language education as it is regarded as a fruitful field for analysis and critical thinking as it is widely believed that literature reflects real life and it is a valuable tool in promoting critical thinking. As such, several scholars and educators (Al-Jubouri et al., 2018; Jasim, 2007; Markham, 2007; Taglieger, 2003; Rosdiana, 2016) support the use of literature in developing critical thinking, as they believe that literature provides a fruitful literary context for drawing inferences and requires deeper and more analytical approaches to texts, which may often incorporate hidden meanings. Al-Jubouri et al.,(2018) thinks that language teachers should use reading strategies and literary texts to engage with higher order thinking skills. As such, reading poetry, drama, novels and narratives ought to be encouraged to stimulate opinions, make inferences and recognize faulty reasoning, bias or prejudice (Jasim, 2007). Additionally, reading different genres like fables, stories, journals, biographies and non-fiction articles enhances the student's lifelong desire to read and leads students to recognize and seek out texts that can fulfill their personal needs (Markham, 2007).

The teachers also referred to standardized testing and its role in the teaching and learning process, as it tends to guide their choice of teaching strategies. The teachers indicated that standardized tests measured different skills and were objective indicators of the students' skills and abilities. Thus, such tests should incorporate different types of questions to assess both the lower and higher-order thinking skills. Nevertheless, teachers perceived standardized tests from the Ministry of Education as a form of banking system which focused on the recognition of factual information. They stated that most tests questions were literal rather than inferential and did not require analytical or critical reading skills. This is supported by Farah & Ridge (2009) who claimed that despite new curriculum reforms, aimed at introducing student-centered materials and textbooks, a lack of corresponding reforms in assessment means that assessment in the UAE still emphasize rote learning and the mere recognition of facts. Examinations in UAE public schools do not assess how students apply the skills they have learnt or how they use critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Ridge et al., 2017). Similarly, Dakkak (2010) indicated that despite the educational reforms in the UAE aimed at achieving a 'knowledge economy' and encouraging critical thinking, the structure of the examination system in the UAE still promotes rote-learning and memorization over critical thinking and analysis.

Additionally, the teachers highlighted a mismatch between instructional objectives and assessments goals. There is an inconsistency between what students and teachers cover in the textbook and do in classroom activities and what is assessed on tests. This is similar to the views of Farah & Ridge (2009), Dakkak (2010), Ridge et al. (2017) and Raddawi & Troudi (2018) who all recognized the mismatch between test content and the content of textbooks in the UAE. Therefore, to encourage critical thinking and problem-solving skills, students need to be assessed on how they apply

these skills. This is currently lacking in the examination system in UAE public schools, where students only give limited responses and are not assessed on their higher order thinking skills (Ridge et al., 2017). A good education system has a curriculum that requires students to acquire and apply knowledge, skills and values, and an assessment system that reflects this (Stabback, 2016).

Without a doubt, the most important part of any educational system is the teacher. With their academic qualifications, knowledge, and experience, teachers are central to the implementation of any curriculum. Therefore, effective and comprehensive training programs are required to prepare qualified teachers, who are equipped with a variety of skills and teaching strategies. However, training programs organized by the Ministry of Education were seen as theoretical rather than practical. The teachers felt that most training programs were pedagogical and theoretical in nature with the absence of practical techniques and strategies that they could use in their classrooms. In addition, critical reading and critical literacy are mostly ignored in many training programs. For example, Selin, indicated that critical reading was never touched on in training programs which were theoretical, rigid and without any practical applications that could allow teachers to exchange ideas and acquire practical skills for language teaching. This is supported by Farah & Ridge (2009), Raddawi & Troudi (2018), Ridge et al., (2017) and Warner & Burton (2017). For example, according to Farah & Ridge (2009), training programs in the UAE still focus on the pedagogical side of training, and do not support that with practical techniques that would help to develop highly qualified teachers, equipped with knowledge they can implement in the classroom. Ridge et al., (2017) recommended that the scope of training programs in the UAE must extend beyond typical pedagogical topics and create a balance between the pedagogical and the practical to

enable teachers to develop their instructional materials effectively and independently. For example, Warner & Burton (2017) believe that inadequate training programs from the Ministry of Education have resulted in a lack of well-trained teachers with a strong pedagogical background and an ability to develop effective teaching materials.

Brining change to any educational context is shared responsibility, we can't expect success of any new initiative or program without engaging all stakeholders in the process of change. This includes preparing teachers who are important agents in the implementation of the new plans. Hence, teachers need effective training. Without the proper development of teaching skills, teachers will not be effective instructors in their classes (Khan, 2011). According to Khan (2011, p. 70), "teaching is an art as well as a science," (Khan, 2011p. 70) and failing to deal with both aspects results in inadequate training programs. Additionally, training programs should be a space for teachers to meet, interact and exchange their experiences (Pickering, 2002). Teachers start training programs with prior experiences, personal values and beliefs that have been shaped through their teaching experience (Cheng & Wang, 2004). Furthermore, Freeman & Johnson (1998) believe that, "teachers are not empty vessels waiting to be filled with theoretical and pedagogical skills" (as cited in Cheng & Wang, 2004, p. 3), but individuals who have rich experiences and precious background knowledge.

Teachers were forthcoming in describing the challenges they faced in delivering critical reading strategies in 11th grade English classes. First, a lack of time was a serious challenge as teachers battled against the teaching schedule, textbook and enormous amount of content that had to be covered in a short time. This has

created massive pressure on both teachers and students, who are overwhelmed by content and trying to grasp the prescribed skills. Teachers reported that if they had time, they would bring in extra reading texts, and use different learning strategies from those suggested in the textbook. However, time constraints and content did not allow for any extra activities. This is consistent with studies by Pickering (2002), Raddawi & Troudi (2018), Singh (2014), Stabback (2016) and Taglieger (2003), which all found that one of the major challenges to implementing critical reading is a lack of time.

Insufficient time was a major issue that prevented teachers from adopting other practical teaching strategies. It is often cited in research as a significant source of stress, frustration, fatigue and anxiety. Therefore, teachers who suffer from such stress feel dissatisfied as they cannot meet their own expectation in delivering proper learning strategies to their students (Pickering, 2002). Therefore, a flexible approach, curricula and educational systems that provide space for teachers to adopt different teaching and learning strategies would enhance student learning (Stabback, 2016). Singh (2014) agrees that a lack of time in ESL/ EFL classes affects both the teachers' and the students' ability to read and engage in critical reading experiences. Similarly, Taglieger (2003) confirmed that in schools that follow a hierarchy of skills for teaching reading, both teachers and students have little time for critical thinking.

The second issue raised by teachers was low student proficiency. They thought that the 11th grade students lacked sufficient proficiency in language and that this represented a real obstacle to the adoption of critical reading in English classes. They also felt that most 11th grade students were struggling to develop basic language skills, and that activities that required analysis, synthesis and evaluation were

difficult for them. As such, they preferred direct and simple question types. Although, students are expected to acquire basic language skills in high school, their proficiency in English is generally low and this creates a serious challenge for teachers who wish to adopt strategies that require critical reading. This is supported by Singh (2014) who found that one of the main challenges for many teachers was low language proficiency, which prevented their students from reading fluently and comprehending the texts at a deeper level. Similarly, Khan (2011) believes one of the critical challenges faced by ESL/EFL teachers is a deficiency in English language. She remarked that teaching becomes painstaking and difficult if English class serves the limited purpose of developing basic language skills. Therefore, many language teachers lose their interest in using different strategies and approaches.

Although teachers' responses make sense as it is difficult to expect higher order thinking and deep analysis of a text from students who struggle at the lower levels of decoding a sentence. However, there are some arguments were raised by some scholars like Macknish (2010) and Wallace (2013) who state that critical literacy is a skill that should be developed in tandem with the basic language skills, as approaching text critically accelerate the language acquisition.

The third issue that raised by teachers was a lack of the learning resources required to deliver strategies and techniques that could promote critical thinking during their English reading classes. For instance, Anna felt that resources like narrative English books, access to educational sites, an Internet connection, interactive smartboards, LED screens or data shows were either non-existent or available only in specific rooms. This in turn affects the implementation of teaching strategies in general and critical pedagogy in particular. Cheng (2004), Pickering

(2002), Shirkhani & Fahim (2011) and Stabback (2016) all found that the main factor influencing the successful teaching of critical reading in English language classes is the availability of learning resources so that teachers can implement strategies to engage in critical literacy.

The adoption of teaching strategies that enhance different language skills, such as critical literacy requires adequate learning resources and these should be distributed equitably to ensure the effective use of the best teaching strategies (Stabback, 2016). As such, resources using advanced technology and the Internet can provide information and productive English language input that will enrich the ESL/EFL environment and enhance student learning (Cheng & Wang, 2004). For example, Pickering (2003) noted that inadequate classroom resources was a source of stress and frustration among ESL/EFL teachers. A study by Shirkhani & Fahim (2011) found that the main factor that affected the successful teaching of critical thinking in English language class was the materials and learning resources provided.

A further issue for the teachers was student disengagement, especially with challenging tasks and activities that required a critical and analytical approach to texts. The teachers attributed this to student sensitivity to criticism. When it comes to critical thinking students seemed uncomfortable, hesitant and shy of criticizing ideas or coming up with counter arguments. For example, Zaya (one of the teachers) suggested that when it came to critiquing and analyzing reading, most students become uncomfortable and only one or two students would interact, while the rest of the class become passive listeners. Consequently, teachers step back and focus on developing basic language skills and ignore critical reading. Moreover, Khan (2011) identified that Arab students, in general, have difficulty in expressing their thoughts

and ideas, and this they attributed to poor teaching methodologies, which they have become used to since the very earliest stages of their education. Similarly, Aziz (2017) felt that the biggest problem ESL/ EFL teachers face was low levels of interest in challenging or higher order thinking activities, where deeper and analytical thinking is required. They put this down to students having a lack of confidence in their use of language. Furthermore, Abdullah (2015) highlighted that ESL/ EFL students are taught English language in separate classrooms and thus lack the opportunity to engage in learning activities like critical discussions of issues. Thus, it becomes the teacher's responsibility to reinforce the intrinsic motivation of the students by choosing topics of interest and implementing different tasks in a creative manner. As a result, student engagement and interaction can increase.

It could be inferred from the participants responses that criticality and criticism are sensitive terms that are perceived negatively in the Arab world in general and the UAE in particular. This negativity toward critical literacy is retreated to the cultural background at the first stance, where people are used to deal with a text as an authority of the writer that can't be judged or evaluated. On the other hand, critical literacy stands on a belief that knowledge is collective, and not an individual ownership (Freire, 1983). Hence, developing critical literacy in Arab world and UAE require reframing of those beliefs that are based on rigid view of knowledge and literacy.

Though some scholars have attributed student disengagement with critical literacy to deficiencies in language ability and low confidence, other scholars (Fadlallah, 2016; Freimuth, 2014; Macknish, 2011; Mozafari & Brajesteh, 2016) have argued that ESL/ EFL students' lack of interest in critical reading is due to a

cultural background that may perceive criticality as negative (Macknish, 2011). For instance, Macknish (2011) asserted that ESL/ EFL students, “might be able to read, evaluate, and think critically, but they simply prefer not to display that for various reasons” (p. 448). One reason for this is that most ESL/ EFL students are unfamiliar with critical literacy and how to express their own ideas. As a result, when those students get exposed to different critical reading and thinking activities, they can acquire that skill (Macknish, 2011). Fadlallah (2016) and (Mozafari & Brajesteh (2016) thought that one of that reasons for low student proficiency in English language was that the majority of teachers were still focusing on mastering the lower level thinking skills and were teaching students what to think, rather than how to think. Therefore, Fadlallah (2016) posited that a critical role in developing critical thinking belongs to language teachers, most especially ESL/ EFL teachers who have more opportunity and responsibility than first language teachers in promoting critical thinking skills. Consequently, English teachers should use a variety of methods and teaching strategies to introduce different critical thinking features and so help students to acquire critical reading skills. Moreover, Freimuth (2014) believes that teaching basic language skills, such as grammar and vocabulary, comes at the expense of the higher-level skills (such as inferencing and evaluating). However, without these skills we will not develop the critical readers and thinkers required to create and maintain a knowledge economy.

Another issue pinpointed by teachers is that teachers in general have no autonomy to bring their own tasks and activities into class or to develop skills that are different from those in the textbook. Hence, they tend to be restricted to the content of the textbook, which does not support critical reading. For example, Anna said that she can create and bring her own reading activities into class, but the

problem is that the textbook does not really allow for such thing. She added that most teachers do not have any idea about the test format even though they expect it to be aligned to the textbook. That is why most teachers prefer to adhere to the textbook and cover the prescribed content to prepare students for the test.

Teacher autonomy has been discussed extensively in the literature, as many educators and scholars (Cheng & Wang, 2004; Markham, 2007; Ridge et al., 2017) have highlighted its lack as a huge obstacle to effective learning experiences. Cheng & Wang (2004) believe that teachers are the decision makers at classroom level, and they should have the autonomy to shape and modify the curriculum based on their students' needs and the reality of the classroom. Therefore, neglecting teacher autonomy, "undoubtedly brings problems such as teachers' lack of interest to implement new curricula, passive involvement in the teaching activity, and low motivation to improve in terms of pedagogy" (p. 3). Markham (2007) indicated that a good quality curriculum provides teachers with the flexibility to add, modify or skip the textbook content and ensure appropriate content to meet student needs and capabilities.

If we want to have a strong educational system, then we have to leave a room for teachers to bring their own materials and adopt the teaching strategies that enable them to achieve the educational goals that are assigned by the Ministry of Education. Otherwise, teachers will be more like robots who want to execute the education plan and cover the textbook content without creativity and enthusiasm which is vital to have a successful educational plan. It is hard to expect critical literacy with the absence of teachers input and motivation to implement new teaching strategies.

Moreover, despite major curriculum reforms in the UAE, there is still a strong emphasis on assessments which stifle teacher and student autonomy and prevent the adoption of any further activities and skills that are different from those in the textbook (Ridge et al., 2017). Thus, teachers and students have no choice but to adhere to the textbook and, “put stronger emphasis on tests and passive learning than on new skills and active learning” (p. 9). For example, Ridge et al., (2017) suggest that decision makers in the UAE should broaden teacher autonomy and maintain a balance between learning and assessments so that learning is not only about test preparation. Similarly, Al Shabatat (2017) thinks that a textbook is an important agent in implementing a good quality curriculum, but it cannot work alone. Therefore, teachers should have the autonomy to take from the textbook and add what they feel is suitable for their students. They should be prepared to manipulate textbook content in order to serve educational goals.

Reading is not only a decoding process, or about the literal comprehension of simple and straightforward ideas, but is the art of thinking beyond the simple decoding of words and letters so as to analyze ideas and uncover any hidden messages that the author embeds in the text (Nam, 2013). However, the teachers in this study indicated that most reading practices and activities they used with their classes were oriented toward developing basic language skills, which usually involved lower-level thinking skills that only require a surface decoding of texts, or the literal comprehension of information from the text. However, reading practices that require higher order thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis and evaluation are mainly ignored. This finding is also validated through the classroom observations, whereby it was evident that 11th grade teachers and students tend to focus on lower levels of thinking rather than critical reading.

In general, this finding is also consistent with studies by Al-Shabattat (2017), Day and Park (2005), Erten & Karakas (2007), Singh (2014), Radawi & Troudi (2018) and Wallace (2003) which confirmed that in most ESL/ EFL classes, the focus is on literal comprehension and decoding at the surface level of the text as well as emphasize the banking process of learning rather than critical literacy.

Despite huge educational reforms in ESL/ EFL education, many English reading classes “focus on decoding surface features of texts and teaching discrete skills to mastery of linguistic structure” (p. 4). Al-Shabatat (2017) reports that although English teachers are expected to ask higher order questions, most teachers generally ask lower level questions covering lower levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy, thus requiring nothing more than information recall and a focus on rote-learning and memorization. Erten and Karakas (2007) suggested that moving beyond literal comprehension and engaging students in reading activities requiring interactions between reader and text promotes the comprehension of deeper meanings and more of the details of the text. Day & Park (2005) confirmed that reading should not be seen as a primarily receptive process, from text to reader, but rather as an active process between the text and the reader where readers analyze, synthesize and evaluate every piece of the text. Day & Park (2005) further suggested that English language teachers have a responsibility to alter the reading process from passive to active by using higher order thinking skills and helping students to interact with the text and construct meaning. Similarly, Singh (2014) asserts that reading is not just understanding the surface meaning of the text, but also interacting with texts to figure out implicit meanings through a deeper analysis and evaluation of ideas within the text. Conversely, neglecting any effective analysis or inferential comprehension proves to be an obstacle to the students’ ability to read critically.

5.2.3 Question 3: How do 11th Grade Students View their Critical Reading Experiences?

To gain an in-depth understanding of the critical reading practices experienced by the 11th grade students, ten students were interviewed. The students' responses provided insights into the reading practices experienced during English classes and how many of those strategies enhanced critical reading.

In general, the data indicated that the 11th grade students had only superficial experience of critical reading in English reading classes. This is consistent with students' self-report, teachers' interviews, and classroom observation. According to the students' views, this is due to several factors that they highlighted when expressing their views.

The students stated high levels of interest in critical reading as they valued it as an essential skill to enable them to think deeply and outside of the text. However, they said that they rarely experienced tasks and activities that required deep or critical thinking. On the contrary, most activities they experience are focused on decoding surface level texts and aim at a literal comprehension of texts. The students felt that in most reading classes they had only typical questions that required them to identify new vocabulary, find some factual details, and highlight the main idea. Whereas, questions that required a deeper analysis, a synthesis of ideas or an evaluation of arguments were non-existent. This is supported by studies from Al-Shabattat (2017), McDonald & Thornly (2009), Singh (2014) and Mozafari & Brajesteh (2016) who found that English teachers generally focused on the literal comprehension of texts and neglected any deeper analysis of ideas from the text.

Although many English teachers used a variety of reading strategies, most reading classes still focused on literal comprehension of lexical items that are directly stated in the text, and on surface level reading, while the analysis of deeper meanings was neglected (Mozafari & Brajesteh, 2016). Similarly, Al-Shabattat (2017) indicated that teaching English in most ESL/ EFL classes does not ask students to read critically. Most teachers use lower level questioning and, “tend to ask factual and comprehension questions which are located at a low-level of thinking according to Bloom’s Taxonomy, which requires recalling information” (p. 209). This is instead of using higher-level questioning that would require analysis, synthesis and the evaluation of ideas. Moreover, McDonald & Thornley (2009) agreed that, “students must be able to read beyond the literal recall of facts” (p. 57), and should develop skills to interpret, apply and interact with a variety of texts.

Although all the students reported that their English teachers used different reading strategies to enhance the comprehension of texts, they felt that their teachers were restricted to textbook questions and activities, which depended on simple recognition of facts and information as well as the description of some ideas. This is in line with Freire’s view of education as a ‘banking system’ where learning is framed and articulated within a narrow and concrete framework and students’ minds are filled with different kinds of knowledge and facts instead of liberating those minds to shape meaning and construct knowledge by analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating thoughts and ideas (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Moreover, the students thought that their teachers were always preparing them for the test. For example, Kamal, one of the students, said that his teacher was concerned with preparing students for the test and focused on writing rather than reading as the writing grade is weighted at 60%, while reading is weighted at 40%.

This is supported by researchers (Dakkak, 2010; Farah & Ridge, 2009; Ridge et al., 2017; Stabback, 2016) who claim that most teachers are held responsible for their students' success in exams. Therefore, they tend to restrict themselves to textbook content, which can lead to poor learning experiences as they work within a narrow content framework. For example, Dakkak (2010) stated that, "most teachers tend to teach exactly what textbooks contain, not skills or applications" (p. 3), because they are held responsible for the success or failure of their students in the exams. Similarly, Raddawi & Troudi (2018) who found that most teachers complain of not having a role in the mid-term and final exams which in turn left them overwhelmed to cover the textbook content and be restricted to it in order to not be blamed for their students' failure.

This causes the dilemma for teachers as to whether they should be teaching to the test. This is an issue in educational systems around the world. For example, Chang & Wang (2004) reported that in educational systems where standardized tests play the dominating role, and where teachers are questioned regarding student results, most teachers just prepare their students for the test and focus on what is expected in the tests, and are thus restricted to textbook content. Consequently, their teaching practices are bound to narrow content and restricted learning practices. Similarly, Dakkak (2010) asserted that in most educational systems, teachers were rewarded or valued based on student success or failure in tests, therefore most teachers tended to teach exactly what is required to pass the test and so focus on the textbook more than on skills or their real-world applications.

In an educational context where the textbook is the only resource available for teachers and students, teaching and learning occur within limited constraints of

the textbook content which is also become the main reference for students and teachers to prepare for the test. Therefore, textbook should be a supplementary resource for teachers and students but not a main resource for teaching and learning. This could provide a space for variety of activities and tasks such as critical reading. Stabback (2016) confirmed that textbooks in many countries are the main focus of curricula and play a critical role in the classroom. Therefore, a more flexible curriculum is a must to provide teachers with the space to implement different skills and learning strategies, instead of being restricted to limited content and skills and teaching to the test.

When it comes to reading practices that require higher order thinking skills, 11th grade students felt that in English reading classes, they never approached any text in a deep or analytical way. They neither criticized ideas nor examined the arguments embedded in the text. Therefore, reading practices that extract implicit meaning and find hidden messages, or evaluate contradictory points of view were largely absent. The students stated that in English classes they always had the same repeated question types and activities; ones that required nothing more than decoding at the surface level of the text and identifying vocabulary in order to understand the text. This finding is supported by Day & Park (2005), Erten & Karakas (2007), Stabback (2016), Singh (2014), Taglieger (2003) and the United Nations (2012), all of which found that reading practices requiring students to analyze, synthesize and evaluate are mostly neglected or receive very little attention in many schools around the world. This is why many ESL/ EFL students have difficulty analyzing and evaluating knowledge. For instance, the United Nations (2012) development program reports that thinking critically, and problem-solving are abilities which students in the UAE are poorly prepared for.

In the same vein, Taglieger (2003) reports that the teaching of higher order thinking skills in L2 classes in Brazil is still much neglected, with the focus on mastering lower level reading skills. Singh (2014) and Stabback (2016) argue that the reading process is not just about identifying the meaning of a text, but also about interacting with the text through effective analysis and a critical evaluation of the text. A study by Erten & Karakas (2007) examining the impact of reading strategies that require interaction between reader and text, a deeper analysis and the evaluation of ideas, found that students who had experienced such practices performed better than students who were used to a more standard decoding of the text. This shows that students can make better sense of what they are reading when they move beyond literal comprehension to activities that require interaction with the text, analysis, synthesis and the evaluation of ideas.

During their discussion of critical reading practices, the students exhibited dissatisfaction due to the absence of critical thinking questions and activities that could engage the higher order thinking skills which they believe are essential for academic success. They thought that their teachers underestimated their ability to think and read critically and therefore adopted simplistic and direct reading questions that even 4th grade students should have been able to answer. Scholars like Stabback (2016) and Taglieger (2003) believe that teachers should help students achieve their potential and push their abilities to the limit by promoting and stimulating higher order thinking skills through critical questioning and use of the imagination. Taglieger (2003) suggested that teachers should not limit themselves to narrow approaches that only focus on mastering lower level reading skills, but move towards higher level thinking to stimulate students' curiosity and critical thinking abilities.

Arabic classes were described as requiring deeper analysis and critical reading strategies, while the English classes were shallow, conventional and full of boring and repetitive reading activities. The students felt that in Arabic classes they read and analyzed different question types, synthesized information creatively, and evaluate different ideas and arguments, while in English classes such practices were non-existent. These findings are consistent with studies by Grabe & Stoller (2013) and Sitthitikul (2007) who found that students in L1 classes tended to employ different reading strategies and used higher order thinking skills as they develop both their lower and higher-level reading abilities. For instance, Sitthitikul (2007) explored the strategies Thai students used in L1 and L2 classes. He found that students tended to employ metacognitive reading strategies, such as critiquing the text or author, previewing materials, generating questions, verifying predictions, interpreting, rereading, reading ahead for clarification, relating new information to prior knowledge, and paying more attention to textual structure in their L1 classes than in their English classes. Similarly, Grabe & Stoller (2013) suggested that L1 classes were rich with higher-level reading processes and incorporated a variety of reading strategies that went beyond the literal comprehension of a text. This was done to;

...interpret the ideas represented by the text, combine reading strategies as needed, make inferences of many types, draw extensively on background knowledge, monitor comprehension, form attitudes about the text and author, adjust goals as appropriate, and critically evaluate the information being read. (Grabe and Stoller, 2013, p. 19)

Classes that still operated with lower levels of reading processes mainly focused on word recognition and identifying the general meaning of a text. On the

other hand, this study did not support findings from Alsheikh (2014), Alsheikh (2011), and Alsheikh & Mokhtari (2011) who found more strategies being reported or actually used in second language learning than in first language classes.

Similarly, the 11th grade teachers felt that their textbook only vaguely addressed critical reading, while the students thought that critical reading was not included at all in the textbook. Thus, activities that required a deeper analysis and critical reading were largely neglected. They also said that they never read literary or argumentative texts and did not analyze or evaluate ideas and arguments, as the texts in the textbook were either descriptive or informative. Therefore, strategies like identifying deeper and implicit meanings and evaluating different arguments were mostly not found in English reading classes. This finding is consistent with Farah and Ridge (2009), Freimuth (2014) and Ridge et al., (2017) who found that textbooks in UAE public schools did not include content and topics that could be applied to what students have already learnt or support any deeper analysis of text. For instance, Freimuth (2014) felt that the curriculum in UAE public high schools did not promote higher order thinking skills in English.

The students added that they also did not have voluntary reading activities that could have included different literature genres such as poetry, narratives, fables and novels where they could analyze and explore implicit meanings and enlarge their understanding of the language articulated in the literature. This agrees with a study by Freimuth (2014) who stated that UAE schools did not provide students with a rich literary environment or voluntary reading opportunities.

As for standardized test, 11th grade students thought that standardized testing did not assess higher order thinking or critical reading capabilities. Most questions

were simple and straightforward and did not require a deep approach to analyzing, evaluating or synthesizing the ideas in the text. This is echoed by Dakkak (2010), Fadlallah (2016), Farah and Ridge (2009), Freimuth (2014) and Ridge et al., (2017) who believed that despite extensive educational reforms since the 1980s, the examination system still promotes rote-learning and memorization over critical thinking and higher order thinking skills. For instance, Ridge et al., (2017) wrote that the examination system in the UAE has not changed since the 1980s, and standardized tests do not, “adequately assess how students apply skills learnt to new situations using critical thinking and problem-solving skills” (p. 8-9).

Similarly, Freimuth (2014) confirms this assessment of reading in UAE high school where many questions are literal multiple-choice questions related to the first level of understanding and decoding. Fadlallah (2016) felt that standardized tests that do not encompass different types of questions and assess literal comprehension as well as inferential comprehension could not provide teachers and decision makers with a clear and full assessment of students’ comprehension abilities and difficulties.

5.2.4 Question 4: What do Actual Practices in 11th Grade Classrooms Reveal about the use of Critical Reading?

The fourth research question’s major findings were elicited from classroom observation. This provides insights into actual critical reading practices in the real-world classroom. The data described a general tendency to only employ reading practices that promoted lower-level thinking skills with the focus still on decoding at surface level and mastering the grammatical and lexical features of the language, rather than developing higher order thinking and critical reading skills. For instance, Helen (one of the teachers) was almost restricted to the textbook, whereby although

the topic of the lesson was about (space exploration) that could be a fruitful topic for further discussion where the teacher could ask questions to evoke students' imagination about space and science fiction, but the teacher preferred to stick to the textbook questions that were mostly literal comprehension questions and based on direct information from the text.

This consistent with students' interviews, wherefore Hind, Hazza, Kamal, and Hamdan indicated that English reading classes were not deep as their teachers tend to focus on the textbook and the main concerns were defining new terms and identifying some factual details. This supports the data from both the quantitative and qualitative stages and agrees with research by Abo-Salem (2016), Al-Shabatat (2017), Dakkak (2010), Farah & Ridge (2009), Freimuth (2014), Ridge et al., (2017) and Wallace (2003). They found that the majority of English teachers tended to focus on low-level thinking skills and focus on mastery of linguistic structure, vocabulary and grammar. For instance, Ridge et al., (2017) stated that neither teaching methodologies, nor assessment structures engaged with critical thinking in the UAE educational system. Most teaching practices and assessment tools required students to provide limited responses and did not foster critical thinking, nor reflect any capability to evaluate or criticize ideas. Similarly, Abo-Salem (2016) thought that teaching and testing practices in UAE schools did not measure higher order thinking skills. This was evident in the classroom observation wherefore, during the English reading classes, it was tangible that in most observed lessons English teachers spent intensive efforts in scaffolding students reading and developing their basic language skills in terms of grammar and vocabulary. They were focused on skills such as identifying new vocabulary, finding specific information from the text, identifying grammar rules and eliciting general ideas found in the text rather than analyzing ideas

and evaluating different arguments. For example, Rina (an English teacher) in one of her acceleration reading classes, which include low achieving students, started the lesson by asking the students about the pictures found in the textbook to stimulate their background knowledge about domestic animals. The warming up activity was quite engaging as the teacher tried to relate the topic to students' own context and prior knowledge. However, after the warming up, Rina asked the students to read the text and underline the new vocabulary items. Then she distributed an oxford hard copy dictionaries on 5 groups and asked them to find the meanings for the new vocabulary items. The whole reading period was about finding the vocabulary meanings. There were no activity or question that required analysis, synthesis, or evaluation.

Such reading classes lead to a boring and rigid learning experience, which makes learner less interested in the class, and that what was noticed through the classroom observation and indicated by students through the interviews. For example, Manal expressed her dissatisfaction about English reading classes which they described as boring and shallow. Moreover, this was evident in most of the observed classes where students were not involved in classroom activities and interaction was limited to two or three students, while the rest of the class were passive listeners. Two of the students, Salem and Hind, consistently said that English reading classes were boring as they used to have the same, repetitive reading practices where they found the meaning of some items and identified the main ideas of the text. Rosdiana (2016) further added that a teaching and learning environment where students have limited exposure to effective reading strategies and do not engage their critical thinking skills will create a reading experience that is rigid and boring.

On the other hand, two out of ten teachers were observed as implementing teaching strategies and asking questions that require higher-order-thinking skills. For instance, Maya (one of the teachers) started the reading lesson through brainstorming activity in which she asked the students some questions as a warming up activity in order to activate their prior knowledge and schemata to make the text more familiar and relevant to the students. Then, she used different questions to help students analyze the text, elaborate on its ideas, and connect it to the students' own knowledge and culture. Finally, she asked students to summarize the whole text in some few sentences to figure out if they really comprehended the idea of the text or not.

This is consistent with the data revealed from the students' interviews who consistently indicated that their teachers never use questions that require higher thinking skills, nor they ever analyzed a text deeply and critically as the main focus was the literal comprehension of a text. For example, Manal and Salem indicated that they rarely experienced questions and tasks that require analytical thinking, drawing inferences, relating ideas to each other or thinking outside of the text. Janks (2012) asserts that critical literacy is a must for students who are exposed to a huge amount of information on a daily basis through multiple social network platforms, as it enables them to uncover the reality and truth that could be found between the lines in the text.

Furthermore, the data gained from the classroom observations revealed that all reading topics were purely scientific and tackled social and health issues, whereas argumentative and literary texts were almost absent. This is consistent with the data gleaned from teachers and students' interviews which indicated that both study participants never had single literary work in their English reading classes. Al-

Jubouri et al.,(2018) and Jasim (2007) affirm that literature should be an integral part of any curriculum as it stimulates students to express their ideas, make inferences and reason logically.

5.2.5 Question 5: Are there any Consistencies or Variations among Students' Self-report, Students and Teachers' Views and the Actual Classroom Practices?

Finally, the fifth research question looked at mixed results from the multiple methods employed (questionnaires, interviews and observations). This aided the assertion of both the consistency and variation found in the data and discussed below. The data from student self-reporting, teacher and student interviews and classroom observation revealed a general consistency in the findings.

Data from student self-reporting and classroom observation consistently suggested a consistency between students' opinions and actual classroom practices. The two data sets provided evidence that lower-level critical reading skills predominated and of the avoidance of higher order critical reading skills. Students reported lower mean scores for practices placed on the upper levels of Bloom's Taxonomy ($M=2.72$, $SD=1.21$). This is, for practices that enhance critical reading skills. This indicates that reading practices requiring analysis, synthesis, and evaluation were mostly ignored in English classes and 11th grade students in public schools had only a shallow experience of critical reading. This was also evident in actual classroom practices, which revealed that both teachers and student were cognizant that their practices focused on developing basic language skills, such as grammar and vocabulary, rather than on critical reading. In the classroom observation, teachers and students were focused on identifying vocabulary, and finding main ideas instead of analyzing, synthesizing or evaluating ideas and

arguments. These results are consistent with studies by Junining (2013); Khan & Inamullah (2011); Mozafari & Barjesteh (2016); and Nasrollahi & Krishnasamy (2015) who found that critical reading and higher-order thinking skills were poorly addressed in English class where the focus remained on developing language rather than higher-order thinking skills.

For instance, Khan & Inamullah (2011) explored the level of questioning teachers used in high school. Their study found that although most teachers spent 90% of instructional time in questioning, most of the questions were typically factual questions that relied on short-term memory, recall, literal comprehension and the application of basic knowledge. Whereas, questions that involved analysis, evaluation and synthesis were poorly addressed. Similarly, Nasrollahi & Krishnasamy (2015) found that critical reading was mostly neglected in English classes as most students lack the analytical and critical reading skills necessary, due to insufficient exposure to such teaching strategies. Junining (2013) argued that the understanding of a text by merely reading and answering literal comprehension question is not enough to develop critical reading. Higher-order thinking skills, questions and activities must be used so students can develop reasoning, analyzing and evaluating skills. Similarly, Mozafari & Barjesteh (2016) assert that, “in the realm of teaching English language, conventional methods based on non-critical approaches encourage learner passivity and adopting the knowledge transmitted to them by the instructor” (p. 168).

A fundamental theme in both teacher and student interviews was the absence of critical reading in the textbook. Both teachers and students felt that the English curriculum focused on basic skills and did not include materials, tasks or activities

that engaged critical reading. Khan & Inamullah (2011) believe that textbook content plays a central role in encouraging teachers to incorporate higher-order thinking questions and activities into their lessons. As such, we require a comprehensive and flexible curriculum that includes various text types and topics and allows teachers the space to implement different learning strategies, rather than being restricted to limited content and skills (Stabback, 2016).

Moreover, the teachers and students both indicated that the English curriculum didn't include any literary texts which could encourage students to analyze, synthesize and evaluating texts while fostering critical reading. They stated that they never had argumentative nor literary texts such as poetry, drama or narrative texts, which could have led to debate, analysis, evaluation and the building arguments that are the essence of critical literacy. Freahat & Smadi (2014) highlight the fact that research has shown that there is a preponderance of lower level questions and activities in English textbooks, and a lack of higher-order questions and activities. This is supported by Ridge et al., (2017) who indicated that textbook in UAE public schools lack topics and materials that evoke higher order thinking skills such as critical reading. Freahat & Smadi (2014) argue that a textbook with an emphasis on lower level thinking questions, at the expense of higher-level items will limit the students' development of thinking skills and replace them with rote-learning and factual memorizations skills instead.

Another important finding from this study is that standardized tests do not address higher-order thinking skills, especially critical reading skills. Both teachers and students pinpointed that the existing curriculum exclusively focuses on teaching to the test. This, in turn, makes teachers focus on preparing students to take these

standardized tests and neglect teaching any critical reading skills. They also felt that the mid-term and final tests in English did not assess critical reading, because most questions were either literal multiple-choice questions, or true and false questions, that rely only on a literal comprehension of the text. This is consistent with Freimuth (2014) who found that assessment of reading in UAE high schools takes the form of literal multiple-choice questions related to lower levels of thought. Similarly, Jidean & Jidean (2012) found that students are tested only on factual recall and that they do not learn how to think and read critically. Indeed, Jidean & Jidean (2012) asserted that student success is not a matter of what they can remember, but rather a matter of what they can do with that knowledge.

During these discussions, both teachers and students were forthcoming in addressing the issues faced in trying to deliver critical reading in English classes. These challenges included a lack of time, a lack of resources, low language competency, low motivation and a lack of curriculum choice. All of which leads to restricting what students should learn and constrained the teachers' autonomy. This is covered extensively in the literature by Aziz (2017); Cheng (2004); (Freimuth (2014); Khan (2011); Markham (2007); Pickering (2002); Singh (2014); Shirkhani & Fahim (2011); Stabback (2016), Taglieger (2003) and Ridge et al., (2017).

5.3 Conclusion, Recommendations, and Future Implications

Critical literacy has been perceived as a challenging task in ESL/ EFL classes. Research reveals that ESL/ EFL students around the world often lack the skills to think and read critically and struggle to demonstrate those skills in their assessments (Stupple et al., 2017). Unfortunately, the UAE is no exception (Abo Salem, 2016; Ridge et al., 2017; Warner et al., 2017). Therefore, this study explored the critical

reading practices of 11th grade students in UAE public high schools and investigated how critical reading is taught and experienced in English reading classes. This study adopted an explanatory mixed methods design that used both quantitative and qualitative methods. Through this approach, it became apparent that students in UAE public high schools had hardly any real experience of critical reading. Neither the curriculum nor standardized tests supported or promoted critical literacy or higher order thinking skills and techniques.

5.3.1 Recommendations

This study is based on the belief that teaching students how to think rather than what to think is an important aspect of any educational program, including reading programs. Therefore, based on the findings from the multiple means study (questionnaires, interviews, classroom observation) the following recommendations have emerged.

5.3.1.1 Curriculum Planners

A good textbook is integral to the curriculum, but it cannot work alone. Therefore, I refer to Freaht & Smadi (2014) who believe that curriculum developers should devise activities and tasks that develop higher-order thinking skills and go beyond lower-level cognitive skills. Therefore, the balance between lower-level questions and higher-level questions in the curriculum should be such that it encourages students to employ critical reading strategies systematically throughout the reading process (Nasrollahi, Krishnasamy & Noor, 2015).

Moreover, training students to read critically should be an integral part of the curriculum. Critical reading strategies should be introduced through direct instruction

and through diverse and controversial texts. In addition, the teaching of critical reading strategies should be integrated into the curriculum and supported with other materials such as literary resources, so that students are encouraged to read different genres like poetry, drama, novels and argumentative texts so that they can discriminate between opinions, draw inferences and recognize prejudice and bias. Mozafari & Barjesteh (2016) contend that literary texts incorporate plenty of vague, ambiguous and scattered items that will encourage students to be creative in finding hidden ideas. Having only one text type is frustrating for students and does not provide them with challenging reading that requires imagination, creativity and the evaluation of ideas.

5.3.1.2 Instructions

Teachers should seek a balance between low-level and high-level questioning when teaching reading. They should use open-ended questions that provoke analytical and critical reading, and promote higher order thinking. Moreover, this study has suggested a variety of strategies for introducing critical literacy practices into English language classes regardless of the students' level. Nam (2013) states that, "teachers can apply practical strategies taking in to account factors such as grade level, student interests or English proficiency levels" (p. 201). Similarly, Macknish (2011) and Taglieger (2003) suggest that critical thinking must and can be taught to students, and it is the responsibility of schools and teachers to develop the ability of students to read and think critically. They argue that ESL/EFL students have the ability to analyze and evaluate any text critically if the premises of critical literacy are made clear to them and used effectively through extensive teaching strategies and instruction.

5.3.1.3 Decision Makers

The data from both the quantitative and qualitative phases of the study indicated that a lack of time is a critical challenge to delivering critical reading. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers should have flexible schedules and time to prepare their own materials in order to implement different teaching strategies, which will enhance the student experience. Additionally, teachers should have the autonomy to decide what to take from the textbook and what to add from their own resources. Teachers need space to manipulate the content to serve the goal of enhancing the teaching and learning experience. Dakkak (2010) mentioned that much educational literature is reflective of a Western experience, which stresses the importance of teachers over curricula and emphasizes the role of teacher as the monitor who leads student learning in the desired direction.

The quality of teachers is vital. Dakkak (2010) suggests improving teacher quality to ensure the success of literacy practices. Therefore, in order to implement critical reading strategies effectively, teachers should be equipped with a knowledge of critical pedagogy and also the practical methods needed to implement critical literacy in the classroom. Therefore, it is recommended that training institutions should hold practical training sessions, seminars and workshops for teachers which provide a space for teachers to meet, interact and exchange their experiences (Pickering, 2002). Teachers shouldn't be treated as empty vessels waiting to be filled with pedagogical information (Cheng & Wang, 2004), but rather a valuable source for exchanging ideas, experiences and thoughts on the best implementations of different teaching strategies.

5.3.1.4 Assessment Methods

Another recommendation is related to evaluation and standardized testing. Testing should be developed to assess higher order thinking skills, including critical reading skills. Freimuth (2014) emphasized that current assessment methods in UAE schools mainly takes the form of literal multiple-choice questions and should be reshaped to reflect new literacy practices and emphasize the critical interpretation and analysis of texts, rather than factual memorization. Moreover, teachers should become informed and skillful regarding critical thinking skills, how they should be assessed and at which level. It is vital that all the teachers use the same rubrics and assessment guidelines to ensure consistency of measurement and equality within the system.

5.3.2 Implications for Future Research

Based on these findings, there are future possibilities for further studies in the field of critical reading in a UAE context. For instance, throughout this study several factors were identified, by teachers and students alike, as critical obstacles to critical reading. Therefore, further studies are needed to investigate factors that influence the implementation of critical reading strategies in English classes for all grades. It would also be interesting to investigate how critical literacy emerges in student writing and speaking activities in English classes, and find out if there are some factors that can also affect the implementation of critical literacy in writing and speaking classes.

One important theme that emerged was low language competency levels. Some teachers doubted the importance of developing critical reading for students who are learning English as a second or foreign language. They speculated on the possibility of developing critical reading in ESL/ EFL classes but believed that they

should focus on developing basic language skills instead of higher order thinking. This view is supported by some scholars such as Khan (2011) and Singh (2014) who found that language deficiencies are huge obstacles to developing critical literacy. However, other scholars such as Huang (2011), Macknish (2011) and Wallace (2003) argue that these views are overgeneralized and that ESL/ EFL students have the ability to analyze and evaluate any text critically if the premises of critical literacy are made clear to them. Wallace (2003) suggested that language development and critical reading could occur in tandem, where both language proficiency and critical reading constitute precious learning opportunities. Therefore, it would be interesting to conduct experimental studies to investigate the impact of critical reading strategies on language learning of EFL/ESL students.

Another important theme that emerged was through students interviews that Arabic is deep, but English is shallow, indicating that they experience critical reading and higher order thinking skills in Arabic classes more than English reading classes. Therefore, a comparative study investigating the different implementation of critical reading in Arabic and English class will a valuable research area.

Finally, throughout this study, female students employed more critical reading strategies than male students did. Therefore, a comparative study investigating the different implementation of critical reading strategies in both male and female only schools could well be a fruitful research avenue.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Approval from IRB

Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee -Approval-

Proposal number: ERS_2018_5725

Title of Project: Exploring Critical Reading Experience in English of Emirati 11th grade students

PI: Maryam Ali Salem ALSereidi

Co-PI: _____

The above proposal has been reviewed by:

- one member of the Social Sciences REC
 two members of the *Social Sciences REC*

And the decision is:

- Favourable
 Favourable with Additional Conditions
 Provisional Opinion
 Unfavourable Opinion
 No Opinion (Proportionate Review* only)

Reason:

After evaluating this proposal, we see no major ethical concerns. Therefore, the proposal is approved for one year.

Please ensure that you indicate to research participants that your study has received ethical approval from UAE University by referring to the proposal number.

Name Clara Morgan
 (Chair or designee): _____

Clara Morgan

Signature

March 10, 2018

Date

Appendix B: Approval from Ministry of Education and Schools' Administrations



طلب تعميم عن طريق مركز العمليات المدرسية

2018 / 03 / 20	التاريخ :	الثلاثاء	اليوم :
	العمليات المدرسية		القطاع :
	مكتب مستشارو الوزير		الإدارة :
	تسهيل مهمة باحثة من جامعة الإمارات العربية المتحدة		عنوان التعميم :
	السادة الأفاضل / المحترمين		مضمون التعميم :
	وبالإشارة إلى الموضوع أعلاه، وردت لنا استبانة من الباحثة / مريم علي سالم الصريدي من جامعة الإمارات العربية المتحدة تحت عنوان: (ممارسات معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية لتدريس مهارات القراءة الناقدة في الصف الحادي عشر)		
	حيث ستقوم الباحثة بزيارة مدارس الثانوية لتطبيق أدوات القياس للبحث المذكور منها الاستبانة واستمارة الملاحظة والمقابلة الفردية لمعلمات اللغة الإنجليزية والطلاب في مدارس الثانوية بإمارة دبي والشارقة وعجمان ورأس الخيمة وأم القيوين والفجيرة ، وللتواصل والاستفسار مع الباحثة على البريد الإلكتروني 200002920@uaeu.ac.ae، وعليه يرجى الاعاز لما يلزم تسهيل مهمة الباحثة للبحث المذكور		
	شاكرين لكم تعاونكم معنا، وتفضلوا بقبول وافر التقدير والاحترام،		
	مدارس الثانوية بإمارة دبي والشارقة وعجمان ورأس الخيمة وأم القيوين والفجيرة		المرسل له:
	200002920@uaeu.ac.ae		بيانات التواصل (للاستفسارات):
	كشف المدارس المستهدفة		المرفقات (إن وُجد)

يعتمد ،،، د. فوزية محمد سعيد بدري



مستشار معالي الوزير لتطوير السياسات التعليمية

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للاصمالم على الرقم المجاني: 80051115 فاكس: +97142176006 ص.ب: 259 أبو ظبي. الإمارات العربية المتحدة
ص.ب: 3962 دبي. الإمارات العربية المتحدة

Appendix C: Consent Form

Exploring Critical Reading practices Experienced by Emirati 11th graders in English Classrooms

You will be asked to provide or deny consent after reading this form.

You have been invited to take part in a study to Explore Critical Reading practices Experienced by Emirati 11th graders in English Classrooms

This study will be conducted by Maryam Ali Salem AlSereidi, a PhD candidate in UAEU, curriculum and instructions department. The study will take place at public high schools located in United Arab Emirates.

Participants in this study will sit to answer the critical reading questionnaire. Additionally, they will be observed for 40 minutes to highlight their actual critical reading practices. After that, participants will sit to answer interview questions which is scheduled for 1 hour. It is worthy to mention that this study is aspired to increase teachers and students' awareness to critical reading strategies.

Make sure that participating in this study is voluntarily and you have the right to withdraw at any stage of the study without any force or being penalized. Moreover, the data collected will be confidential and anonymous, and will be used just for research purposes.

Informed Consent

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the above information sheet and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw.
3. I understand that my data will be kept confidential and if published, the data will not be identifiable as mine.

I agree to take part in this study:

(Name and signature of participant)

(Date)

(Name and signature of person taking
consent)

(Date)

Appendix E: Critical Reading Questionnaire (CRQ)

This questionnaire aims to investigate critical reading teaching practices experienced by 11th graders in English classrooms. The questionnaire consists of six sections grouped according to Bloom's taxonomy which consists of six levels as follows: (Knowledge, understanding, application, analysis, authoring, and evaluation). Each section consists of 5 types of questions taught by English teachers in reading classes. Answering this questionnaire will take no more than 10-15 minutes to complete, as all questions do not require more than one answer.

After reading each statement, circle the number (1, 2, 3, 4, or 5) which applies to you.

Note that there are no right or wrong responses to any of the items on this questionnaire.

'1' means that 'my teacher never does this'.

'2' means that 'my teacher does this rarely'.

'3' means that 'my teacher sometimes does this'. (About 50% of the time.)

'4' means that 'my teacher usually does this'.

'5' means that 'my teacher always or almost always does this'

Category	Question type	Never	Rarely	Sometim	Usually	Always
1. Knowledge: My teacher asks us to:						
K1	Recall what we have already read	1	2	3	4	5
K2	List some ideas or information of what we have read	1	2	3	4	5
K3	Name some processes in expository text	1	2	3	4	5
K4	Find some information from our reading.	1	2	3	4	5
K5	Describe events in narratives	1	2	3	4	5
2. Comprehension: My teacher asks us to:						
C1	Explain some terms, events, theories, phenomenon, etc. in text	1	2	3	4	5
C2	Interpret some terms, key concepts and deep ideas in text	1	2	3	4	5
C3	Highlight and outline some major ideas in text	1	2	3	4	5
C4	Restate texts information in our own words	1	2	3	4	5
C5	Demonstrate our comprehension by choosing true/false options	1	2	3	4	5
3. Application: My teacher asks us to:						
A1	Find some solutions for problems found in texts	1	2	3	4	5

Category	Question type	Never	Rarely	Sometim	Usually	Always
A2	Illustrate major concepts in texts by using graphic organizer	1	2	3	4	5
A3	Classify information found in the texts in categories	1	2	3	4	5
A4	Construct general understanding and relate it to other readings	1	2	3	4	5
A5	Fill in missing information in closed text	1	2	3	4	5
4. Analysis: My teacher asks us to:						
N1	Identify and devise the underlying themes in a text	1	2	3	4	5
N2	Explain relationships among ideas in a text	1	2	3	4	5
N3	Investigate other possible and alternatives ideas in a text	1	2	3	4	5
N4	Compare and contrast information from our reading text	1	2	3	4	5
N5	Analyze, examine and scrutinize some ideas in a text	1	2	3	4	5
5. Synthesis: My teacher asks us to:						
S1	Create a whole conceptual map from our reading	1	2	3	4	5
S2	Predict or imagine a thread of possible ideas or events from a text	1	2	3	4	5
S3	Design creative writing materials gleaned from our reading	1	2	3	4	5
S4	Juxtapose ideas or information in text to form a major concept	1	2	3	4	5
S5	Formulate a creative or innovative concept of reading materials	1	2	3	4	5
6. Evaluation: My teacher asks us to:						
E1	Assess different arguments in expository text	1	2	3	4	5
E2	Justify and come up with evidences to support our argument	1	2	3	4	5
E3	Verify sources of information in texts to validate our ideas	1	2	3	4	5
E4	Evaluate and scrutinize different contradictory ideas	1	2	3	4	5
E5	Deliberate and discuss issues/opinions in a text to find solutions	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix F: Observation Checklist

Subject:Class:.....School:.....Date:.....

Observation Checklist

Category	Strategy	Teacher					Students					Comments
		Excellent	Above average	Average	Unsatisfactory	Not applicable	Excellent	Above average	Average	Unsatisfactory	Not applicable	
A. Knowledge		4	3	2	1	0	4	3	2	1	0	
K1	Use responsive reading	④	③	②	①	①	④	③	②	①	①	
K2	Revising previous reading	④	③	②	①	①	④	③	②	①	①	
K3	Relate reading to students' experience	④	③	②	①	①	④	③	②	①	①	
K4	Exchange information from reading.	④	③	②	①	①	④	③	②	①	①	
K5	Description of events in narrative and processes in expository	④	③	②	①	①	④	③	②	①	①	
B. Comprehension												
B1	Explaining terms, events, theories, phenomenon in texts	④	③	②	①	①	④	③	②	①	①	
B2	Multiple interpretation of text information and deep ideas	④	③	②	①	①	④	③	②	①	①	
B3	outlining some major ideas in texts	④	③	②	①	①	④	③	②	①	①	
B4	Activating schema for the interpretation of the texts	④	③	②	①	①	④	③	②	①	①	
B5	Discussing some major ideas in texts	④	③	②	①	①	④	③	②	①	①	
C. Application												
A1	Finding solutions for problems found in texts	④	③	②	①	①	④	③	②	①	①	
A2	Illustrating major concepts in texts using graphic organizer	④	③	②	①	①	④	③	②	①	①	

Category	Strategy	Teacher					Students					Comments
		Excellent	Above average	Average	Unsatisfactory	Not applicable	Excellent	Above average	Average	Unsatisfactory	Not applicable	
A3	Classifying information found in texts in specific categories	4	3	2	1	0	4	3	2	1	0	
A4	Constructing general understanding of different texts	4	3	2	1	0	4	3	2	1	0	
A5	Using texts information to come up with alternative uses	4	3	2	1	0	4	3	2	1	0	
D. Analysis												
N1	Identifying the underlying themes in texts	4	3	2	1	0	4	3	2	1	0	
N2	Explaining relationships among ideas in texts.	4	3	2	1	0	4	3	2	1	0	
N3	Investigating other possible and alternatives ideas in texts	4	3	2	1	0	4	3	2	1	0	
N4	Comparing between explicit and implicit meanings in texts	4	3	2	1	0	4	3	2	1	0	
N5	Examining and scrutinizing some ideas in texts.	4	3	2	1	0	4	3	2	1	0	
E. Synthesis												
S1	Creating conceptual maps from reading texts	4	3	2	1	0	4	3	2	1	0	
S2	Predicting a thread of possible ideas or events from texts	4	3	2	1	0	4	3	2	1	0	
S3	Designing creative writing materials gleaned from texts	4	3	2	1	0	4	3	2	1	0	
S4	Juxtaposing ideas or information to form major concept	4	3	2	1	0	4	3	2	1	0	
S5	Formulating innovative concepts of reading materials	4	3	2	1	0	4	3	2	1	0	
F. Evaluation												
E1	Assessing different arguments in expository texts.	4	3	2	1	0	4	3	2	1	0	
E2	Justifying arguments with supportive evidences	4	3	2	1	0	4	3	2	1	0	
E3	Verifying sources of information in texts to validate ideas	4	3	2	1	0	4	3	2	1	0	
E4	Evaluating and scrutinizing different contradictory ideas	4	3	2	1	0	4	3	2	1	0	
E5	Deliberating issues/opinions in texts to find solutions	4	3	2	1	0	4	3	2	1	0	

Appendix G: Teachers' Interview Questions Pool

A. Knowledge:

1. What strategies/ tasks/ or questions do you use to cultivate your students' knowledge of a text during English reading classes?

B. Comprehension:

2. How do you stimulate your students' comprehension of a text in English reading classes?

C. Application:

3. What kind of tasks you give to your students to get them apply text information to come up with new uses?

D. Analysis:

4. How do / activities/ questions provided in the English classes and text books enhance the analytical reading skills development of ESL students?

E. Synthesis:

5. what are the tasks/ instructions you adopt to encourage your students to compose text information and ideas to create various and innovative outcomes?

F. Evaluation:

6. How do you lead your students to deal with variety of arguments, contradicted ideas, and assumptions they find in a text?

Appendix H: Students' Interview Questions Pool

A. Knowledge:

1. How do you approach the knowledge and information presented in text you read in English classes?

B. Comprehension:

2. What type reading you adopt to better comprehend the text information?

C. Application:

3. How do you apply information you find in a text in different and new situations?

D. Analysis:

4. What techniques do you use to scrutinize and analyze the deep meanings and messages of a text?

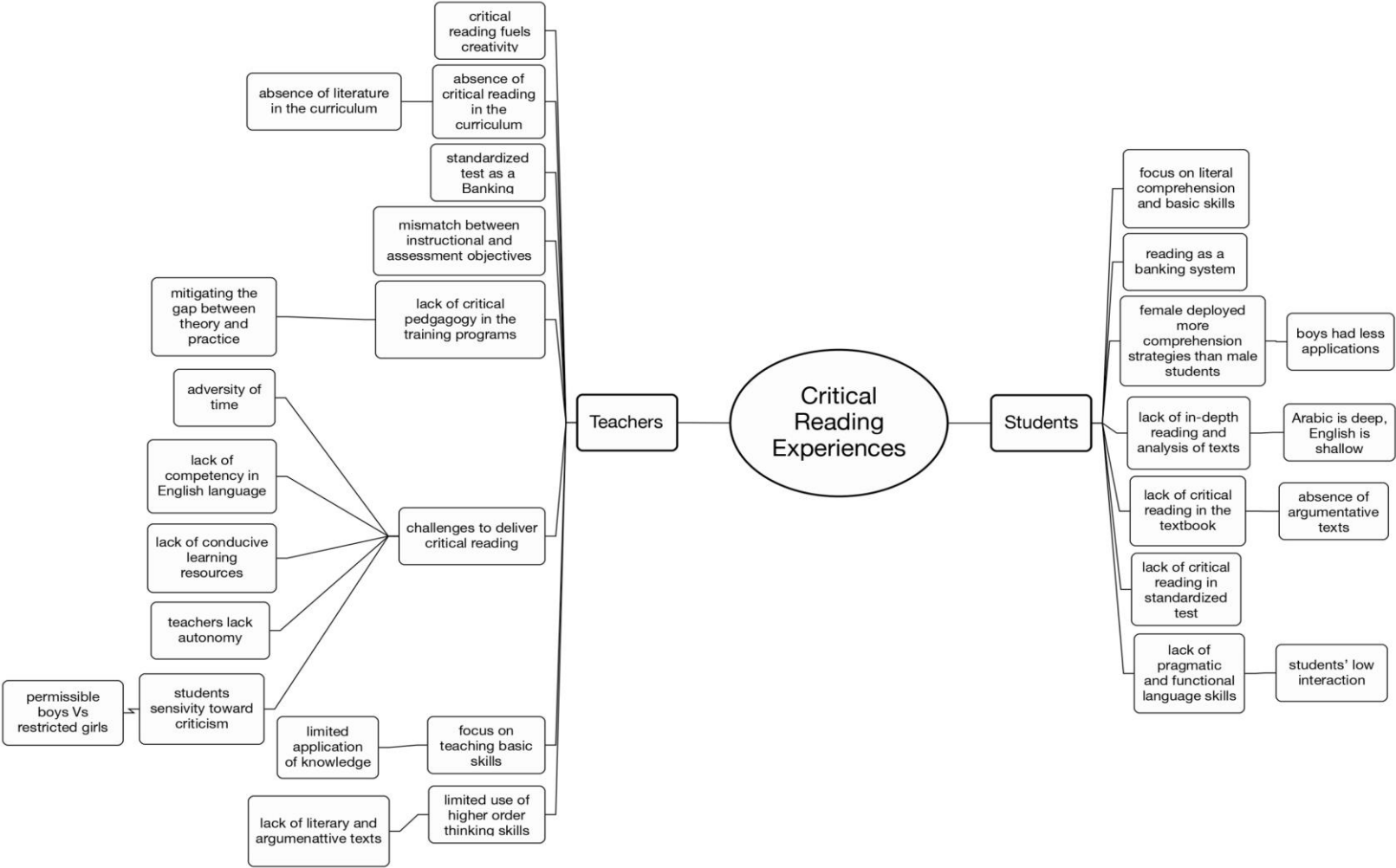
E. Synthesis:

5. Can you list some examples of how you synthesize and compose different information and ideas in a text to come up with new, innovative, and creative outcomes?

F. Evaluation:

6. How do you deal with multiple arguments, contradicted ideas, and assumptions you find in a text?

Appendix I: Thematic Map



Appendix J: Consent form (Arabic)

موافقة ولي الأمر على المشاركة في الدراسة

السيد المحترم ولي أمر الطالب....

تحية طيبة و بعد

نود أن نعلمكم أن ابنك/ابنتك سوف يشارك في دراسة بحثية لإستكشاف كيفية توظيف طلبة الصف الحادي عشر في دولة الإمارات لمهارات القراءة الناقدة في مادة اللغة الإنجليزية. سيشارك الطالب في حل استبانة لإستكشاف كيفية توظيف مهارات القراءة الناقدة في حصص اللغة الإنجليزية كما سيقوم الباحث بحضور بعض الحصص القرائية لمادة اللغة الإنجليزية لتسجيل بعض الملاحظات حول ممارسات القراءة الناقدة وفق معايير محددة ضمن استمارة الملاحظة.

علما أن المشاركة في هذه الدراسة تطوعية وليست إلزامية، و سيتم استخدام البيانات التي سوف يتم جمعها بسرية تامة و لأغراض البحث. كما نحيطكم علما أن هذه الدراسة سوف تسهم بشكل فعال في رفع وعي الطلبة باستراتيجيات و مهارات القراءة الناقدة.

لذا نأمل منكم الموافقة على أن يقوم الطالب بالمشاركة في الدراسة.

لا أوافق

أوافق

اسم و توقيع ولي أمر الطالب:

مع تحيات الباحثة: مريم علي سالم الصريدي

الايمل: 200002920@uaeu.ac.ae

Appendix K: Critical Reading Questionnaire

استبانة آراء الطلبة في تدريس معلميهـم لمهارات القراءة الناقدـة في حصص اللغة الإنجليزية

صممت هذه الاستبانة للتعرف على كيفية توظيف طلبة الصف الحادي عشر في دولة الإمارات لمهارات القراءة الناقدـة تتألف الاستبانة من ستة أقسام مرتبة حسب تصنيف بلوم للمهارات المعرفية و الذي يتكون من ستة مستويات هي (المعرفة، الفهم، التطبيق، التحليل، التأليف، و التقييم). يتكون كل قسم من 5 أنواع للأسئلة التي يتداولها معلموا اللغة الإنجليزية في حصص القراءة. إن إجابة هذه الاستبانة لن يستغرق أكثر من-15 دقيقة لإكمالها حيث إن جميع الأسئلة لا تتطلب أكثر من إجابة واحدة. لذا بعد قراءة كل بند على حدة يرجى وضع دائرة حول الرقم المناسب والذي يمثل إجابتك بشكل دقيق حيث إن الاستبانة تقوم على التدرج الخماسي التالي:

1	2	3	4	5
أبدا	نادرا	أحيانا	عادة	دائما

أود إحاطتكم أن كافة المعلومات المقدمة منكم ستعامل بسرية تامة. مشاركتكم ستضفي الكثير من القيمة على هذا البحث، و ستساهم في إثراء نتائج البحث و دعم المعرفة في هذا المجال.

٥	٤	٣	٢	١	أنواع الأسئلة	٥
1. المعرفة: المعلم يطلب منا						
5	4	3	2	1	1م تذكر بعض المعلومات من النص المقروء.	
5	4	3	2	1	2م وضع قائمة لبعض الأفكار أو المعلومات الواردة في النص.	
5	4	3	2	1	3م وصف المعلومات في النصوص الإنشائية.	
5	4	3	2	1	4م استخلاص بعض المعلومات من النص المقروء.	
5	4	3	2	1	5م سرد الأحداث للنصوص القصصية.	
2. الفهم: المعلم يطلب منا						
5	4	3	2	1	1ف توضيح بعض المصطلحات والأحداث والنظريات والظواهر الواردة النص.	
5	4	3	2	1	2ف تفسير بعض المصطلحات والمفاهيم والأفكار العميقة الواردة النص.	
5	4	3	2	1	3ف استقراء الأفكار الرئيسية الواردة في النص.	
5	4	3	2	1	4ف إعادة صياغة معلومات النص بتعبيرنا الخاص.	
5	4	3	2	1	5ف تأكيد أو نفي بعض المعلومات باستخدام خيار الإيجاب (√) أو النفي (X).	

الدرجة	أ	ب	ج	د	هـ	أنواع الأسئلة
3. التطبيق: المعلم يطلب منا						
5	4	3	2	1	1	إيجاد الحلول المناسبة لبعض المشكلات الواردة في النص.
5	4	3	2	1	2	استعراض المفاهيم الرئيسة الواردة في النص من خلال الخرائط الذهنية.
5	4	3	2	1	3	تصنيف بعض المعلومات الواردة في النص ضمن مفاهيم محددة
5	4	3	2	1	4	بناء فهم شامل للنص وربطه بقراءات أو معلومات أخرى.
5	4	3	2	1	5	تكملة المعلومات الناقصة في بعض النصوص لاستكمال المعنى.
الدرجة	أ	ب	ج	د	هـ	
4. التحليل: المعلم يطلب منا						
5	4	3	2	1	1ح	استنباط الأفكار الضمنية الواردة في النص.
5	4	3	2	1	2ح	تحليل العلاقات بين الأفكار الرئيسة الواردة في النص.
5	4	3	2	1	3ح	تقصي بعض الأفكار لإيجاد ببعض البدائل المحتملة.
5	4	3	2	1	4ح	عقد أوجه المقارنة والتباين في معلومات النص.
5	4	3	2	1	5ح	التحليل، والتدقيق لبعض المعلومات الواردة في النص.
5. التوليف: المعلم يطلب منا						
5	4	3	2	1	1ل	إعداد خرائط مفاهيمية بعد قراءة النص.
5	4	3	2	1	2ل	توقع ووضع تنبؤات للسيارات يوهات والأحداث الواردة في النص.
5	4	3	2	1	3ل	توليف أفكار مكتوبة مستوحاة من النص.
5	4	3	2	1	4ل	ربط الأفكار والمعلومات لتكوين مفاهيم شاملة.
5	4	3	2	1	5ل	صياغة مفهوم إبداعي من خلال قراءة النص.
6. التقييم: المعلم يطلب منا						
5	4	3	2	1	1ق	تقييم الآراء والحجج المختلفة في النصوص الإنشائية.
5	4	3	2	1	2ق	إقامة الحجج البراهين لدعم الأفكار المختلفة الواردة في النص.
5	4	3	2	1	3ق	التحقق من مصادر المعلومات الواردة في النص لدعم الآراء.
5	4	3	2	1	4ق	تدقيق الآراء المتناقضة الواردة في النص وتقييمها النص.
5	4	3	2	1	5ق	تداول القضايا الواردة في النص ومناقشتها لإيجاد الحلول المناسبة.