Function-Based Instruction and Critical Reading for Adult Malaysian Learners of Arabic

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Abstract

This study investigates the effect of a Function-Based Instructional (FBI) program on critical reading skill for a group of adult learners of Arabic at Al al-Bayt University in Jordan. The researchers proposed an FBI program and built up a pre-posttest of 12 multiple-choice items to measure the levels of critical reading for the learners. The sample of the study consisted of 56 adult Malaysian learners from the Language Center at Al al-Bayt University for the academic year 2019/2020. The researchers purposefully selected and randomly distributed the sample of the study into to two equal groups: one control group and another experimental group. The findings of the study revealed that there were statistically significant differences in the pre-posttest of critical reading skill in favor of the experimental group due to the proposed FBI program.

Keywords: Function-Based Instruction; Critical Reading; Adult Language Learning; Instructional Program

Introduction

There has been a worldwide expansion and growth in the educational teaching and learning processes. This growth accompanied an ongoing interest in building up a critical learner of language. The learner of a certain foreign language does not only learn about that language but also develops their thinking levels. That is why modern educational systems urge language learners not to highly concentrate on information storage. These modern systems ask language learners to develop critical thinking levels, which include analytical and critical thinking processes. This critical thinking connects a piece of information with another, and it allows language learners to classify, categorize and analyze information in a way that upgrades the learner's critical thinking levels.

In foreign language learning, developing thinking for language learners is one important function in education. This educational function is very much concerned about by both language teachers and curricula designers. Lots of questions and challenges arise while attempting to meet such an educational function. What educational aspects of a reading comprehension passage should be included? Which criteria to implement to assure developing language learners' critical thinking?

Critical thinking is one of the high thinking levels or compound thinking processes that are suitable for adult foreign language learners. These compound thinking processes include higher thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis, problem solving, and application (Keefe and Walberg, 1992). Decision-making would be a result of critical thinking and innovative thinking. However, learners need knowledge and information to think and rethink. Such knowledge is synthesized, analyzed and applied. After that, learners under the guidance of the teacher need to take a decision. Critical

thinking involves objectively selecting options and variables in a way that meets the observed learning environment. Learners and teachers' regular discussions need to be unbiased, accurate and functional. The discussion aspect in critical thinking could be very important for developing critical readers.

Critical readers interact very comprehensively and positively with reading comprehension passages. They keep asking questions such as what do you think? Do you agree? Why? Why not? In addition, what do you prefer or expect? Moreover, they evaluate what they read. They are critical thinkers, learners and decision makers. All of their reading experience and knowledge function critically. Critical readers experience involves reading comprehension passage structure (vocabulary, syntax, and clarity of author intentions), reading comprehension different tasks (locating specific details, writing a critical analysis, deriving meaning from text) , reading comprehension basic strategies (using prior knowledge, identifying main ideas, making inferences, and retelling) and knowing self-characteristics (Collins, 1994).

Critical thinking significance becomes clear by readers' adaptation to new and complicated situations. Readers' abilities to evaluate, refresh and enhance their reading experience become significant. Clarifying the meaning of all reading concepts, judging the reliability of learning resources, recognizing differences and contradictions, deep observing and identifying of the problem, suggesting hypotheses and selecting the most appropriate option are all indicators for critical thinking significance. Developing critical thinking results in many advantages to readers. First, they will deeply understand the content knowledge they read about. Second, knowledge acquisition becomes a very active mental process that leads to perfect learning of content. Third, learners can achieve accurate and clear ideas after reading.

As the concept of reading develops for different communities, it becomes clear that critical reading plays a role in creating a mature reader who takes responsibility, follows recent innovations, and positively participates in solving communities' problems. Developing critical reading protects learners from propaganda tricks and intellectual and psychological pressure it has on learners and especially young or even less experienced readers. Comprehensive mental development is a matter of concern for curricula experts and designers. Language learners and particularly readers in different stages and levels need many critical reading skills. Because of the rapid changes and ongoing knowledge update, readers need to become critical and respondent. Selecting reading comprehension passages and updating their content could help learners educate their inner psyches, develop their deep mental activities and become conscious of what they read.

One main educational goal is to build up a good citizen who is able to think critically and objectively, and follow the scientific method. Having a variety of teaching methods to achieve that educational goal makes up a credit. The teaching-learning processes using different methods for different learning situations add to the development of the learners' positive characteristics. Inside the classroom, the learners' voice makes a difference in discussing, presenting and reflecting on what they read with their teacher. Moreover, giving learners the chance to read critically enables them from knowing every types of intellectual and psychological pressure that may affect negatively their interests, attitudes and beliefs.

Providing learners with critical reading skills gives a room for comprehensive intellectual awareness sustainability. Because of the rapid technological changes and expansion of knowledge, critical reading skills prepare learners to encounter any potential difficulties in reshaping well-educated citizens. A curriculum designer has to

include what educates and addresses the inner depths of the reader, the way of thinking and the mind. Creating an innovative and creative reader results from developing learner's anticipation, awareness of writers' beliefs and attitudes.

One major educational goal focuses on preparing learners to become objective, critical thinker citizens. Learners can reach this goal by following scientific method procedures of observation, searching for knowledge and problem-solving strategies. Teachers of foreign languages mix different teaching methods that suit different educational situations and settings. Each method gives a different room for teacher's voice when learners use group work discussions and debates. To help learners become objective, critical thinkers, teachers give learners the chance to double check, test different views, and take suitable decisions by themselves (Jill & Jolanda, 2004).

Function-Based Instruction (FBI) is one teaching method that depicts both teachers and learners in a positive image. In this image, a problem, an issue or a subject matter becomes under discussion. Exchanging different views helps reach a certain level of efficient learning within a suitable environment that creates motivation for both teachers and learners. This motivation enables learners from obtaining knowledge through active participation and sharing ideas effectively. Learners do not wait for teachers to bring about knowledge. Because of some social functions of language that include doing business, asking for and offering things, expressing emotions and views and exchanging information, FBI emerges as a very potential teaching method.

Real learning situations of language learning begin with challenging learners abilities through FBI. These learning situations include different problem-solving strategies, asking real-life questions, and putting learners under situations that urge and activate all their language abilities to solve that certain problem. When teachers succeed in building up these situations and real-life questions, then they must have learners'

critical reading skills developed (Vector, 2005). Reading skill could have two main purposes. First, an educational purpose implies readers' interests and wishes to know more about scientific facts and others views and their life experience. Second, a learning purpose has to do with organizing learners' views and ideas, developing their personal abilities and character, building up their skills and motivation in a way that copes with modern information technology and explosion of knowledge.

Warner & Hample (2008) restricted some functional reading skills in order to teach critical reading functionally. These skills can be in the form of different abilities:

1- The ability to comprehend reading texts: this is accurate reading in the light of reading to know more about a certain problem, reading to judge something, reading to check a certain opinion or idea and reading to follow some instructions.

2- The ability to identify information: this includes knowing contents and topics of the book and their purposes via book title, introduction, bibliography, list of maps and diagrams, book chapters, headlines and subtitles, tables and graphs. It also includes the ability to use the table of contents and references and the ability to use dictionaries, atlas and maps and utilizing the function of the library.

3- The ability to select and evaluate a reading material.

4- The ability to organize the reading comprehension text: this involves identifying main idea of a paragraph, recognizing the relationships between paragraphs, underlying the most important information, mind mapping the whole text, summarizing and organizing ideas.

It is important here to assure that reading for real life situations with a critical value needs inferring text idea with a suitable reading speed. This accompanied using dictionaries and even encyclopedias. Moreover, a sense of evaluation could take the form of distinguishing a main idea from a secondary one, a fact from an opinion. Learners need to distinguish strong and weak pieces of evidence. In addition, they have to recognize what is relevant or irrelevant to the main topic. Scanning the text to underline and highlight helps reader develop the paraphrasing and summarizing skills. Information resources of daily life reading materials include product manuals, newspapers ads, instruction signs, telephone directory and electronic written forms of the language.

Statement of the Problem

As critical reading concentrates on comprehension functionally and on developing foreign language learners reading skills, this paper suggests an instructional program that follows function-based teaching method. Because of the reading difficulties encountered by adult Malaysian learners from the Language Center at Al al-Bayt University, the researchers decided to check whether FBI helps them read critically. The suggested FBI program could be an attempt to reconsider the current teaching method and to enhance learners' critical reading skills. This study checks whether FBI could solve students' critical reading problems or not. It also attempts to see to what extent could FBI be efficient in developing students 'critical thinking for reading. The FBI program would better help students face and treat difficulties in critical reading comprehension by asking one question.

The Question of the Study

The study attempts to answer the following question:

Are there any statistically significant differences at (α=0.05) between the mean scores of Al al-Bayt University adult Malaysian learners of Arabic on a suggested critical reading test due to the use of the FBI program vs. the traditional teaching method?

Operational Definitions

1- Function-Based Instruction (FBI) is a language teaching and learning method that appeared in the 1970s as one structuralism option in the Arab World. It treats language as social exchange tool rather than being an independent system. Learners are social beings in search of the suitable method to acquire and use language to communicate with others within the surrounding social environment.

2- Critical reading skills are adult Malaysian learners' performance levels on comprehension relevant to critical reading. They include distinguishing between facts and opinions, paraphrasing the learning outcomes very precisely in a comparing and contrasting way, distinguishing between causes and effects, summarizing ideas and inferences through learning real life situations. The partial and complete grades of the learners on a suggested reliable and valid critical reading test make up the measurement designed for this purpose. In this test, learners face a certain learning situation that urges them to show the critical reading responses.

3- Malaysian learners of Arabic are the group of students who joined the academic program for Non- native speakers of Arabic at Al al-Bayt University in Jordan for the academic year 2019/2020.

Significance of the Study

This study suggests an FBI program that could be useful for teaching and learning a foreign language reading critically. It focuses on utilizing the learners' personal language skills to upgrade their performance. More focus on cultural content of language is dominant in the suggested FBI program. This study was the first to use FBI to enhance critical reading skills among Non-native speakers of Arabic in Jordan. A room for further research on FBI and critical reading connects theory and practice in this study.

Limitations of the Study

First, the convenient sample of the study is the whole population of Malaysian learners for the academic year 2019/2020. Second, the suggested FBI program is restricted to one teaching method and not generalized for other teaching methods. Third, the critical reading skills involve only distinguishing facts from opinions, identifying similarities and differences, distinguishing causes from effects, and making inferences.

Review of Literature

The current study researchers did not find any Arabic study that tackles FBI and foreign language teaching and learning with reference to critical reading. This led the researchers to chronologically review studies that dealt with an effect or influence of a certain program, model or strategy on reading comprehension with reference to critical reading level.

Naser (1996) investigated the effect of using writing and oral activities accompanying reading comprehension texts on developing five critical reading sub-skills. The sample consisted of 107 students of the tenth grade in Jordan. The researcher used the pre-posttest technique with a critical reading test designed for that purpose. The results of the study showed that there were statistically significant differences on the critical reading test due to the accompanying language activity.

Khader (2002) conducted a study to investigate the effect of using PORPE test taking strategy on improving some critical reading skills. The sample of the study consisted of 60 students of the tenth grade in Jordan. The students were two equal groups: one control group of 30 students and one experimental group of 30 students. The instruments of the study were a critical reading test and PORPE test taking strategy. After conducting the test and data collection and analysis processes, the results showed that there were statistically significant differences on the critical reading test due to the PORPE test taking strategy in favor of the experimental group.

Muhaidat (2003) measured the effect of a thinking guided reading model and some learning styles on reading comprehension for female students of the tenth grade in Jordan. The sample of the study consisted of 58 female students. The students were two groups: one control group of 28 students and one experimental group of 30 students. After conducting a 24-item test, that covers the inferential level and the critical level of reading comprehension for both groups, the results showed that there were statistically significant differences on the reading test due to the reading model in favor of the experimental group. The results also showed that there were not statistically significant differences on the

reading test due to the learning style and even to the interaction between the reading model and the learning style.

Abu Al-Haija and Saadi (2003) explored the effect of a learning model and a learning style on developing critical reading skills. The sample of the study consisted of four groups: two for males and two for females. The control group consisted of one male group and one female group; the experimental group consisted of one male group and one female group. After teaching the experimental group using the critical reading model and conducting statistical analyses and treatments, there were statistically significant differences on the reading test due to the reading model in favor of the experimental group.

Arabyyat (2004) aimed at identifying the effect of using the cognitive and Meta cognitive strategies on reading comprehension for upper compulsory stage female students in Jordan. The study also aimed at increasing and controlling students' awareness of their responsibility to learn via some cognitive strategies. These include activating prior knowledge, summarizing, inferring, predicting, controlling, and evaluation. The results of the study showed that there were statistically significant differences between the means of the control group students and the experimental group students on reading comprehension in favor of the experimental group and at three levels of reading comprehension.

Al-Zubaidi (2007) conducted a study to explore the effect of reciprocal teaching model on developing inferential and critical reading comprehension with reference to gender. The sample of the study consisted of 118 male and female students. They were four sections: two sections make up a control group and the other two sections make up the experimental group. After doing the necessary statistical procedures, the results of the study showed that there were statistically

significant differences between the means of the control group students and the experimental group students on both reading comprehension levels in favor of the experimental group. In addition, the results showed that there were not any statistically significant differences between the means of the control group students and the experimental group students due to gender or to the interaction between the reciprocal model and gender.

Al-Sukhni (2008) designed an instructional program based on the CORT thinking to develop critical and creative levels of reading comprehension among the tenth grade students in Jordan. The program provides students with opportunities to train and develop the two levels of reading comprehension taking into account the flexibility in learning principle. The sample of the study consisted of 113 male and female students from the tenth grade. In order to answer the questions of the study, the researcher designed an instructional program and a test to measure reading comprehension. The results of the study showed that there was a statistically significant effect due to the CORT thinking teaching method in favor of the experimental group. In addition, the results showed that there was not any statistically significant effect due to gender or to the interaction between the CORT thinking teaching method and gender.

Based on the previous literature, there is some kind of weakness among students relevant to reading comprehension skills of critical level. This urges the researchers to conduct this study on critical reading. Two studies (Al-Zubaidi, 2007; Muhaidat 2003) explored the critical and inferential levels. Other studies tackled critical reading (Naser, 1996; Khader, 2002; Abu Al-Haija and Saadi, 2003). Most of the studies utilized the quasi-experimental methodology with a control group and an experimental group. The majority of the studies proposed

instructional programs that developed critical reading. The researchers of this study got benefit from previous literature, and had a different perception on developing critical reading and the theoretical framework of this study. Therefore, this study utilizes FBI in developing critical reading, depends mainly on pragmatic strategies of problem-solving, asking questions, and debate and discussion through certain settings.

Method

The Sample of the Study

The sample of the study consisted of 56 adult Malaysian learners from the Language Center at Al al-Bayt University for the academic year 2019/2020. The researchers selected a purposeful sample and randomly distributed it as two equal groups: a control group of 28 learners and an experimental group of 28 learners. The teaching of the control group was as prescribed by the teacher's manual, and that of the experimental group was as suggested in the FBI program.

The Instruments of the Study

In order to achieve the goal of the study in answering its question, the researchers designed the following instruments:

First: *A critical reading test*: It consisted of multiple-choice objective questions to measure the skills of critical reading. This test building was according the following steps:

a- Identifying the critical reading skills and the behavioral signals that refer to them, see appendix (A). This was done based on the previous educational literature (studies, researches, essays...etc.) on reading comprehension (Abu

Gazleh, 2009; Al-Sukhni, 2008; Al-Zubaidi, 2007; Catts & Kamhi, 1999; Ausbel et al, 1978)

b- Asking a jury of well-experienced specialists in Arabic teaching methodology, Arabic language teachers and supervisors as well as specialists in measurement and evaluation to judge the critical reading skills and the behavioral signals that refer to them. This jury of experts double-checked the extent to which the behavioral signals belong to these critical reading skills. The researchers took most of the remarks and suggestions of the jury of experts into consideration and followed them up.

c- Selecting some texts to prepare the test items in a way that suits the levels of learners and language abilities. The researchers conducted texts analysis processes to underline concepts, lexical items, values and attitudes to build up the test items critically.

d- Preparing a table of specifications in which the test questions were at the critical reading comprehension level. This table of specifications showed the content of the test itself, the levels of goals that are subject to measurement by the test and the number of questions.

Goals / Content	Percentage	Critical comprehension
Lexical items and expressions	8%	One question
Main ideas	46.2 %	Five questions
Sentiments and emotions	15.4%	Two questions
Values and attitudes	15.4%	Two questions
Rhetoric	15.4%	Two questions
Total	100 %	12 questions

Table (1) the specifications of the test items

Test Validity

Arabic language specialists in different Jordanian universities and in the Ministry of Education in Jordan revised all the 12 test questions. The specialists gave their opinions and views on how homogeneous are the test items with the reading skills and their behavioral signals. They show how suitable are the test items language for Malaysian learners of Arabic. After the revising process that took about two months, the researchers made all necessary modifications to the test in accordance with the specialists' views and opinions. An example on these modifications was deleting expressions that could make the distracters vague for learners (all of the above, a + b …etc.). Another example was replacing the (d) distracter of item 7 the "writer' sincerity to Damascus" with the "writer's love to Damascus".

Test Reliability

In order to establish test reliability, the researchers assigned a pilot study sample. This sample consisted of 20 learners. After assuring the test validity, this sample took the test. The researchers calculated a Kuder- Richardson reliability coefficient after showing the results of the test. The Kuder- Richardson 20 formula revealed a reliability coefficient of 0.88, which is a suitable percent for the purposes of this study. As for limiting the test time, the researchers decided that it is 25 minutes. This was clear by calculating the average time of the fastest five students and the slowest five students.

Analyzing Item Difficulty and Discrimination

For more assurance of the degree of suitability of test items and their ability to measure, what they are planned to measure, item difficulty and discrimination

factor was calculated. The value of item difficulty factor ranged from 0.23 to 0.78. Whereas items seven and eight had the lowest value of 0.23, item six had the highest value of 0.78. As for the discrimination factor value, they ranged from 0.29 to 0.65. Whereas item nine had the lowest value of 0.29, item 12 had the highest value of 0.65 see appendix (B).

Test Application Procedures

A pre-posttest was according the following steps:

a- Visiting the classes of Malaysian learners of Arabic in the Language Center at Al al-Bayt University and preparing the learners to the test

b- Distributing the test papers to the learners of both the control and experimental groups at the same time

c- Asking learners to put (X) next to the correct answer in the blank provided.

d- Informing learners about the test time which is 25 minutes

e- Monitoring learners' responses and answering their queries

f- Gathering the test papers and counting them carefully

g- Correcting the test based on an answer key.

h- One mark is given for each correct answer, a zero mark for each incorrect answer and any item with more than one answer is deleted

Equality of Groups

In order to test equality of the control group and the experimental group regarding the extent to which learners have the behavioral signals of critical reading skills, the researchers conducted the test on both groups. This was before applying the instructional program. A T-test double-checked whether there were significant differences between both groups. The means and standard deviations of both groups were calculated, see table (2).

Var.	Group	n	Means	St. Deviation	T value	df	Sig.
Reading comprehension skills	experimental	28	9.25	2.91	-0.853	54	0.397
	control	28	9.86	2.38			

Table (2) the critical reading pre-test means and standard deviations

It is clear from table (2) above that there were not any significant differences between the means of scores of the experimental group and the means of scores of the control group. The means of scores for the experimental group and the control group were 9.25 and 9.86 respectively. T value was 0.853 with a statistical significance of 0.397 which means that there were not any significant differences at α=0.05 between both groups. These figures show that both groups are almost equal.

Second: *An FBI instructional program.* It followed a functional approach that makes use of every day real life language. In addition, the program enables learners to use language in an interactive environment where they have to do activities and drills living a rich language experience. The researchers selected four critical reading skills with 12 behavioral signals on these skills see appendix (A). The program gives the opportunity to teachers to facilitate learners developing and improving of these skills. This needs assigning some reading comprehension texts. Critical thinking and reading skills range from analyzing topics and discussing main ideas to engaging students in what they read and predicting what the writer is arguing. The program helps students learn new words and ideas in a text and relate them to real world situations.

The Procedures of the Study

The researchers followed the following steps:

a- Assigning the population of the study, doing sampling of both groups of learners and randomly distributing the groups: one control group and one experimental group

b- Identifying the critical reading skills with their behavioral signals, see appendix (A)

c- Designing instruments of the study and establishing validity and reliability for them

d- Taking permission of the administration of Al al-Bayt University to carry out the study

e- Interviewing learners and teachers of the groups under study and illustrating the procedures of the study to them

f- Setting up 4 professional training sessions to teachers who teach Arabic for non-native speakers of Arabic

g- Introducing the FBI program content and training teachers on applying the instructional program as prescribed by the researchers

h- Illustrating the overlap between the reading comprehension skills at the critical level

i- Applying the critical reading skills test to a pilot study group of 20 learners outside the study sample, to assure the reliability of the instrument

j- Preparing the FBI program timetable with 6 weeks; each of which has 3 classes from 1/10/2019 to 14/11/2019

k- Applying the critical reading skills pretest to both the control and experimental groups before starting the FBI program to assure equality of the groups on 24/9/2019

l- Applying the FBI program to the experimental group by the most trained teacher from 1/10/2019 to 14/11/2019

m- Paying the experimental class several visits to assure the quality and method used by the teacher and to provide him with the necessary teaching aids

n- Applying the critical reading skills posttest to both the control and experimental groups after the end of the FBI program at the same time and the same hall on the 25/11/2019

o- Correcting the test according to the test application procedures and saving learners grades to process them statistically

The Results of the Study

The study attempts to answer the question "are there any statistically significant differences at (α=0.05) between the mean scores of Al al-Bayt University adult Malaysian learners of Arabic on a suggested critical reading test due to the use of the FBI program vs. the traditional teaching method?". The means of scores, the standard deviations and adjusted means of learners' performance on the critical reading skill test are clear with reference to the teaching method as shown in table (3).

Teaching Method	Critical Reading Pretest		Critical Reading Posttest		Adjusted Means	n
	Means	St. Deviation	Means	St. Deviation		
Experimental group	4.46	1.64	7.36	1.45	7.36	28
Control group	4.64	1.13	6.18	1.66	6.17	28

Total	4.55	1.40	6.77	1.65	6.77	56

Table (3) the mean scores, standard deviations and adjusted means of learners' performance on the critical reading skill pre-post test

An observed difference in the means of scores, standard deviations and adjusted means of learners' performance on the critical reading skill pre-posttest could be clear. This could be due to the teaching method (FBI program vs. traditional method). To make sure how statistically significant are the differences between the adjusted means, a Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA) test is utilized as shown in table (4).

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Means of Squares	F	Sig.
Pretest (covariate)	14254	1	14254	2.676	0.108
Teaching method	122204	1	122204	22.942	0.000
Error	282317	53	5.327		
Total	410857	55			

Table (4) MANCOVA for the teaching method effect on the critical reading skill performance

It can be shown in table (4) that there were statistically significant differences at (α=0.05) between the mean scores of Al al-Bayt University adult Malaysian learners of Arabic on the suggested critical reading test due to the use of the FBI program vs. the traditional teaching method.

Discussion of the Results

The results relevant to the question of the study show that there were statistically significant differences at (α=0.05) between the mean scores of Al al-Bayt University

adult Malaysian learners of Arabic on the suggested critical reading test that are due to the teaching method variable and in favor of the experimental group. This makes up an evidence on how efficient is the FBI program on developing learners' critical reading skills under study. This also could be due to the way the researchers design the FBI program functionally. The program transforms activities and language drills relevant to critical reading skills into real life situations that learners live. In addition, the program organizes the language activities and drills with all instructional content through cooperative learning environment based on stimulating the mind and asking questions. This result supports what Taasoobshirazi and Hicky (2005) and Vector (2005) agreed upon on the importance of learning environment in activating learners' roles.

As the suggested FBI program gives teachers the chance to challenge learners' abilities through asking real life questions that need solutions and letting learners live the language-learning environment, it enhances the development of learning effect within the knowledge-based level from remembering through analyzing to creating critical comprehension. Moreover, the FBI program depends on the democracy of learning which results from providing learners with a plenty of opportunities for self-dependence to reach knowledge, analyze its content and the apply it to develop good citizens in their communities. Abu Al-Haija and Saadi (2003), Al-Zubaidi (2007), and Al-Sukhni (2008) shared the same result of developing learners' critical reading skills and building self-dependent learners.

The study revealed a better performance for the experimental group on the critical reading skills test that includes distinguishing between facts and opinions, identifying similarities and differences, distinguishing causes and effects and making inferences and right conclusions.

First, the better performance that is relevant to distinguishing between facts and opinions could be due to the training opportunities provided by the FBI program. This training functions the learning content in a flexible way that supports role-playing and continuous feedback on the writers' views of a certain reading text. This justification agrees with Al-Sukhni (2008) result on the importance of flexibility in learning and providing learners with the needed training. Second, the FBI activities focus on paraphrasing the learning outcomes very precisely in a comparing and contrasting way. This could be the reason why experimental group learners show easily the similarities and differences better than the control group learners do. Cooperative learning strategies in different learning situations could consolidate learners' motivation to classify what is similar and what is different. Third, the experimental group learners distinguished far much better between causes and effects because the FBI program included more cause-effect texts. This skill focused on more evaluation processes and teacher's feedback. Fourth, the FBI program supplied learners with real personal experience examples, wisdom sayings and proverbs. It also enables learners to summarize ideas and inferences through learning real life situations. In this way, learners move towards the practical level of self-learning and problem solving. Learners then become able to take decisions and reach right conclusions about different texts.

Conclusion

The FBI approach is very efficient developing learners' critical reading skills as shown with the sample of Malaysian learners of Arabic under study. FBI gives teachers the chance to urge learners to develop their abilities of asking real life questions that probe comprehension problems to find easier solutions. Because learners live the language-learning environment, FBI enhances the development of learning effect within the knowledge-based level from remembering through analyzing to creating

critical comprehension. FBI enhances the democracy of learning which results from providing learners with a plenty of opportunities for self-dependence to reach knowledge, analyze its content and the apply it to develop good critical readers who start to feel confident that they can solve any reading comprehension problem they may face.

Recommendations

In the light of the results of the study, the researchers recommend the following:

a- Activating functional instructional programs and infusing them into language teaching curricula

b- Utilizing other FBI programs for teaching different language skills

c- Increasing the effort of Jordanian universities with reference to developing Arabic for non-native speakers utilizing FBI

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Montreal, Quebec

Appendix (A)

Critical Reading Skills and Their Behavioral Signals

Level of comprehension	Skill	Behavioral Signals (learners can…
Critical Lower	distinguishing facts from opinions	Underline statements showing opinion Underline statements showing facts Classify text elements to facts and opinions
Critical Middle	identifying similarities and differences	Underline statements showing similarities Underline statements showing differences Differentiate between statements that have similar meaning and different pronunciation
Critical Higher	distinguishing causes from effects	Underline statements showing causes Underline statements showing effects Classify text elements to causes and effects
Inferential and Creative	making inferences	Infer analogies and themes Predict what comes after in the light of the text hints Make judgments

Appendix (B)

Item Difficulty and Discrimination of the Critical Reading Test

Item	Item Difficulty	Item Discrimination
1	0.29	0.37
2	0.24	0.29
3	0.24	0.31
4	0.24	0.37
5	0.39	0.38
6	0.78	0.34
7	0.23	0.33
8	0.23	0.35
9	0.77	0.34
10	0.24	0.35
11	0.24	0.30
12	0.24	0.40