



## Critical Thinking in Academic Reading: EFL Students' Perceptions and Challenges

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### Abstract

Academic reading and critical thinking are pivotal in higher education, particularly for university students, including those who are English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. This study explores the perceptions of second-semester English Education students at Yogyakarta State University regarding the interrelationship between academic reading and critical thinking skills. It identifies the challenges they face in this area. The research involved 19 participants and employed a mixed-methods design, utilizing both Likert-scale questionnaires and semi-structured interviews for data collection. The data were analyzed through descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. Results indicate that participants generally hold positive views about their critical thinking and academic reading capabilities across all aspects of Bloom's Taxonomy. The findings suggest a correlation between students proficient in academic reading and those who exhibit strong critical thinking skills. They expressed confidence in their ability to understand, evaluate, and analyze texts. Furthermore, the study reveals that these students face several challenges, such as language complexities, interdisciplinary comprehension issues, and subjective biases, which affect their learning processes in critical thinking and academic reading.

**Keywords:** EFL learners, English language study, perceptions, challenges, academic reading, critical thinking skills

### INTRODUCTION

Academic reading is a cornerstone of education, research, and personal development, serving as the primary medium for acquiring a broad array of knowledge—including facts, theories, and concepts—essential for understanding various subjects and fields (Castillo-Martínez & Ramírez-Montoya, 2021; Lopatovska & Sessions, 2016). Its significance in fostering academic success is well-documented; Cheng and Good (2009) emphasize that reading proficiency is crucial for mastering university tasks, tests, and assignments.

Similarly, [Nguyen and Henderson \(2020\)](#) highlight academic reading as a critical scholarly activity necessary for university students. Unlike everyday reading, academic reading is focused, complex, and discipline-specific, demanding a purposeful and critical approach ([Maguire et al., 2020](#); [Sengupta, 2002](#)). It involves a rigorous social practice that requires sustained effort and practice, underpinning success across various academic disciplines.

However, university students frequently need help with academic reading. [Singh \(2014\)](#) found that students often need more initiative to overcome these challenges. According to [Miller and Merdian \(2020\)](#), many students need fundamental academic reading skills to enter university. This deficiency is attributed to their reliance on non-university reading strategies and a superficial approach to reading as they transition from high school to university ([Hermida, 2009](#)). [Hirano \(2015\)](#) noted that academic reading in English, which is common in higher education, presents significant challenges for students. [Sengupta \(2002\)](#) explains that academic reading demands multiple skills, such as questioning, interpreting, synthesizing, and reflecting.

Additionally, some students may need more critical reading skills to evaluate sources, understand complex arguments, and conduct thorough analyses. Conversely, [McKinley \(2015\)](#) argues that academic writing should be understood within a social construction framework. [Sohail \(2015\)](#) emphasizes that success at the university level depends significantly on the academic skills students bring, including reading, writing, critical thinking, and oral presentations. These insights highlight the urgent need for students to develop robust academic reading skills, including critical thinking, to manage the transition from high school to higher education effectively.

Moreover, critical thinking in reading is crucial. [Samsudin and Hardini \(2019\)](#) describe this ability as a metacognitive thinking capacity, noting that metacognition significantly influences critical thinking. [Cansoy et al. \(2018\)](#) characterize metacognitive skills as the ability to interpret and reason logically. Given the critical role of thinking skills in learning foreign languages and other academic disciplines, students need to develop these competencies. [Dwyer et al. \(2014\)](#) state that cognitive elements are essential in critical thinking, contributing to information assessment, decision-making, and problem-solving. Bloom's Taxonomy, developed by Benjamin Bloom and colleagues, is a well-recognized cognitive framework in education. It includes levels such as knowledge, understanding, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, each with specific subcategories, though excluding application ([West, 2023](#)).

Numerous studies have investigated the intersection of academic reading and critical thinking within the scholarly literature. [Anwar and Sailuddin \(2022\)](#) focused on Indonesian university students to explore the challenges they face in academic reading within higher education contexts. Similarly, [Miller and Merdian \(2020\)](#) examined university lecturers' perspectives on the significance and integration of academic reading into teaching practices, emphasizing its pivotal role in students' academic progression. [Asraf et al. \(2019\)](#) assessed whether undergraduates could engage critically with texts, highlighting the importance of teaching critical thinking skills. Furthermore, [Howard et al. \(2018\)](#) explored the alignment between student and faculty perceptions and behaviors concerning academic reading. [Jayanti \(2016\)](#) compared student perceptions of reading challenges with teacher observations. [Baddane et al. \(2024\)](#) reviewed the literature on academic reading and critical thinking, noting studies on various aspects such as challenges faced by Indonesian students,

lecturers' views on academic reading, students' critical responses to texts, and the congruence between student and faculty perceptions. However, perception plays a crucial role in how individuals interpret and organize data and information, shaping their responses accordingly. People develop varied opinions based on their perceptions, which can be categorized as either positive or negative. [Leontopoulou \(2020\)](#) defines positive perception as viewing situations favorably, which contributes to overall well-being, hopefulness, and reduced sadness. This positive outlook involves three components: self-esteem, optimism about the future, and a belief in the inherent goodness of people. Conversely, negative perception is a pessimistic view that contradicts expectations or norms.

Most previous studies have primarily utilized quantitative data analysis techniques. However, there is potential for future research to adopt mixed methods, such as interviews ([Moser & Korstjens, 2018](#)), questionnaires, or focus groups ([Browne, 2016](#)), to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences associated with academic reading and critical thinking skills. Additionally, existing literature often needs a strong theoretical foundation. Future research could address this gap by employing a more comprehensive theoretical framework to study academic reading in higher education. Therefore, the primary aim of this research is to explore higher education students' perceptions of the intricate relationship between academic reading and critical thinking skills and to identify the challenges they face in developing these competencies. This study aims to enhance our understanding of these perceptions within the context of Indonesian tertiary education and to enrich the current body of research on the relationship between academic reading and critical thinking skills.

## METHOD

This study investigated the relationship between academic reading and critical thinking skills among master's degree students in the English Language Education program at Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta. The participant group consisted of 19 students, including 16 females and 3 males, all enrolled in the Scientific Writing class. Prior to participation, all students provided informed consent to ensure adherence to ethical research standards. A mixed-method research design, as outlined by [Creswell and Creswell \(2018\)](#), was adopted to provide a holistic analysis of the data. This design integrated both quantitative and qualitative research elements.

The primary quantitative tool was a Likert-scale questionnaire distributed via Google Forms and shared through WhatsApp. This questionnaire, based on a model by [Anuar and Shidu \(2017\)](#), included 17 statements related to six critical thinking aspects from Bloom's Taxonomy. Participants rated these statements on a scale from 1 (very limited readiness or strong disagreement) to 5 (very high readiness or strong agreement). Furthermore, a range classification system was utilized to interpret the mean scores obtained from the Likert-scale questionnaires. The system categorizes the scores into three distinct ranges: Low, Medium, and High. Specifically, scores ranging from 1.0 to less than 2.33 are classified as Low, indicating a very limited readiness or strong disagreement with the survey statements. Scores between 2.33 and less than 3.67 are categorized as medium, reflecting a neutral position or moderate readiness in response to the statements. Finally, scores from 3.67 up to the maximum of 5.0 are classified as High, denoting high readiness or strong agreement. This classification enables a structured analysis of participants' responses, providing clear insights into their perceptions of academic reading and critical thinking skills.

The questionnaire underwent reliability testing to ensure its accuracy, achieving alpha scores above 0.90 for each section, indicating high reliability. The alpha value above 0.7 denotes sufficient reliability, and values above 0.80 indicate high reliability across all items. Modifications were made to the original questionnaire to meet better the specific needs of the students, which included removing several items from the original set. Additionally, we conducted semi-structured interviews with a purposive sample of three students selected based on their questionnaire scores—one with the highest score, one with an average score, and one with the lowest score. Each interview was structured around six questions, each corresponding to one of the six aspects of Bloom's Taxonomy: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. The interviews were structured using specific guidelines to ensure consistency and depth.

The combination of Likert-scale questionnaires and semi-structured interviews enabled us to collect both quantitative data, which was analyzed using SPSS, and qualitative insights, which were examined through thematic analysis (Kazemi & Soleimani, 2016). This mixed-method approach enhanced the study's thoroughness by capturing both the measurable aspects of skills perception and the more nuanced, qualitative dimensions of academic reading skills and critical thinking skills (Gonzalez & Moore, 2020). This methodological approach not only broadened our understanding within the scope of the study but also has implications for future research in related areas. However, it is important to note the limitations of our methodology. The study was limited to a specific group of master's degree students at one university, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data from the questionnaire could introduce response bias, influencing the results.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The current study explores participants' critical thinking in academic reading as reflected in their questionnaire responses. We further investigate the perceptions of 19 participants regarding their academic reading and critical thinking skills. The findings reveal the participants' views on the relationship between these two essential skills. Detailed information about their responses is presented in the following table, accompanied by descriptive analysis.

**Table 1.** Knowledge aspect

No	Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
1.	I can recall the information in a text.	4.11	.676
2.	I am able to identify specific terms in a text.	4.11	.583
3.	I can identify the main ideas in a text.	3.94	1.110
<b>Total Knowledge</b>		4.06	1.790

The data from the questionnaire reveals that participants generally exhibit a strong grasp of academic reading skills, particularly in areas such as recalling information and identifying specific terms within texts. Both these aspects scored highly, with an average rating of 4.11, indicating that the majority of the participants feel confident about their ability to remember details and pinpoint specific terms when reading. Additionally, participants also demonstrated a strong ability to identify the main ideas in texts, with a slightly lower but still high average score of 3.94. The overall average score for the

knowledge-based tasks was 4.06, suggesting that the participants are quite proficient in handling the foundational aspects of academic reading. This high level of competence across several key skills underscores the participants' capability to effectively engage with and analyze written content, which is crucial for academic success.

**Table 2.** Comprehension aspect

No	Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
4.	I read and try to understand the title of a title of a text.	4.56	.511
5.	I can skim and scan through long and complex texts, locating relevant details.	3.67	.767
6.	I can describe the main ideas in a text.	4.06	.416
<b>Total Comprehension</b>		4.09	1.320

Table 2 in the study focuses on the comprehension aspects of academic reading, showing participants' capabilities in understanding and processing information from texts. The responses reflect a high level of proficiency across several comprehension skills. Participants scored highest in their ability to understand the titles of texts, with an average score of 4.56, indicating a strong grasp of initial text analysis. Skimming and scanning long and complex texts for relevant details posed a slightly greater challenge, as evidenced by the lower score of 3.67, though this still falls within the high range of competence. Additionally, the participants demonstrated a robust ability to describe the main ideas in texts, with an average score of 4.06, showing a high level of understanding. The overall average score for comprehension was 4.09, highlighting the participants' effective reading comprehension skills, which are crucial for academic success and deeper engagement with textual material.

**Table 3.** Application aspect

No	Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
7.	I can predict the outcomes of an article.	3.89	.471
8.	I can apply existing knowledge to the reading process.	4.00	.686
9.	I can apply the idea in the text to other contexts	3.89	.583
<b>Total Application</b>		3.92	1.396

Table 3 of the study addresses the application aspects of academic reading, specifically how well participants can utilize their comprehension in practical scenarios. The findings indicate a solid capability among participants to extend their reading skills beyond basic understanding. Participants rated their ability to predict the outcomes of an article at an average of 3.89, reflecting confidence in anticipating what they read. This skill is complemented by their capacity to apply existing knowledge to the reading process, which scored slightly higher at 4.00, suggesting effective integration of prior knowledge with new information. Additionally, the ability to transfer ideas from the text to other contexts also received an average score of 3.89, highlighting participants' adeptness at contextual application of textual content. The overall average score for the application aspect was 3.92, illustrating that the participants are not only proficient in understanding and analyzing texts but are also capable of applying this knowledge in various practical and theoretical contexts.

**Table 4.** Analysis aspect

No	Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
10	I can predict the outcomes of an article.	4.11	.676
11.	I can apply existing knowledge to the reading process.	3.94	.725
12.	I can identify comparison and contrast in a text.	3.78	.732
<b>Total Analysis</b>		3.94	1.855

Table 4 in the study evaluates the analysis aspects of academic reading, focusing on how participants dissect and interpret textual information. The data shows participants feel confident in their analytical skills, as evidenced by their responses to various statements. Participants reported a strong ability to predict the outcomes of an article, with a mean score of 4.11, indicating a high level of proficiency in foreseeing the direction or conclusions of texts based on initial readings. The ability to apply existing knowledge to the reading process also scored well, with a mean of 3.94. This suggests participants are effectively using their prior understanding to enhance their analysis of new information.

Furthermore, the skill of identifying comparisons and contrasts within texts received a slightly lower score of 3.78 but still indicates a good level of analytical capability. Overall, the total average score for the analysis aspect was 3.94, demonstrating that participants are adept at engaging with texts critically and analytically, which is essential for deeper understanding and academic success.

**Table 5.** Synthesize aspect

No	Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
13.	I can summarize information after reading a text.	4.11	.583
<b>Total Synthesize</b>		4.11	.583

Table 5 in the study pertains to the synthesizing aspect of academic reading, focusing on the participants' ability to summarize information effectively after reading a text. The findings reveal a high level of proficiency in this skill, with both the individual statement and the total category for synthesizing, achieving a mean score of 4.11. This score suggests that participants are quite adept at distilling the core ideas from texts into concise summaries, a critical skill in both academic and professional settings. The uniformity of the mean and standard deviation across the statement and total category underscores a strong consensus among participants regarding their capability in this area.

**Table 6.** Evaluation aspect

No	Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
14.	I can make judgments about the arguments or ideas when I read a text.	3.89	.583
15.	I can evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of an idea in a text.	3.72	.669
16.	I can evaluate the relevancy of an idea in a text.	3.72	.669
17.	I can conclude after reading a text.	4.00	.594
<b>Total Evaluation</b>		3.83	2.029

Table 6 of the study examines the evaluation aspect of academic reading, focusing on participants' ability to assess and conclude from the content they read critically. The results

indicate a competent level of evaluative skill among the participants. The statement "I can make judgments of the arguments or ideas when I read a text" received a mean score of 3.89, reflecting a strong capability to analyze textual arguments critically. Similarly, the ability to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of an idea in a text scored slightly lower, with a mean of 3.72, as did the skill to assess the relevancy of an idea, indicating some challenges in these more nuanced evaluative tasks.

Participants reported higher confidence in their ability to conclude reading, with a mean score of 4.00, suggesting a robust capacity to synthesize and infer conclusions based on the text. The overall average score for the evaluation aspect was 3.83, highlighting a generally high proficiency in evaluating texts critically. This encompasses making judgments, assessing ideas' strengths and weaknesses, evaluating relevancy, and drawing conclusions, which are essential for academic success and informed decision-making.

Furthermore, the analysis of interviews with three participants reveals challenges and obstacles associated with critical thinking and academic reading skills. Thematic analysis was employed to categorize these issues, resulting in the identification of six distinct themes, outlined as follows:

### ***Complex Vocabulary and Comprehension Challenges***

Participant 1 (P1) described challenges in retaining information from academic texts, highlighting "over-complicated content, the use of high-level vocabulary, and convoluted information." Similarly, Participant 3 (P3) faced difficulties with "unfamiliar words, whether they were hard-spelling words or words with similar meanings." In contrast, Participant 2 (P2) discussed her preference for visual learning, stating, "I tend to focus on visual elements such as pictures, figures, graphs, and tables, which I find easily understood and interpreted." However, she noted the challenge of remembering information when "such visual aids are absent from the text."

To address these challenges, P1 developed a strategy of "organizing ideas into a sequence, simplifying the information she aimed to remember," and structured the information "from A to B, C, D, and so on," adding any exceptions at the end. She also utilized a Thesaurus to "explore word meanings, synonyms, or equivalent words," preferring "to understand English meanings rather than relying on translations into Bahasa Indonesia." Likewise, P3 looked up word meanings using "online dictionaries such as Oxford and Cambridge." It occasionally turned to "AI tools like ChatGPT," emphasizing the importance of "practicing more to enhance her understanding." In a different approach, P2 opted to "read the text repeatedly to commit the information to memory," acknowledging that "it would be time-consuming."

### ***Challenges in Differentiating Facts from Opinions***

Participants 1 and 2 reported relative ease in identifying facts versus opinions, whereas Participant 3 found this task challenging, a sentiment he believes is common among many. Participant 1 shared her method for discerning between the two, noting, "Because sometimes, you can see opinions based on how the person presents it, the way they use language, their choice of words. For instance, when it comes to facts, they usually include numerical data supported by other evidence. For example, this statement is supported by research conducted in a certain year, and so on. If it's contradicted or supplemented with this theory, it becomes a fact. However, for opinions, there are instances where they quote

something, but it's unclear, meaning there's no quotation, or the source of the quotation is questionable. And the language used is much more emotional." She further observed that articles of high quality, such as those ranked Q1 or Q2, might still exhibit biases that sway toward either a pro or contra stance, necessitating a careful reevaluation of the content to distinguish facts from opinions.

Participant 2 described a straightforward approach to recognizing facts, emphasizing that they "can be easily identified through clear and original data, explicit sources, numerical information, graphs, and precise calculations," while opinions are often "recognized by expressions of the author's thoughts, characterized by subjective expressions and personal perspectives." Similarly, Participant 3 underscored the reliability of sources, pointing out the importance of verification through indexed databases like Scopus or Sinta to ascertain the factual nature of the information. Together with Participants 1 and 2, Participant 3 views facts as "information that can be objectively tested or supported by concrete evidence, particularly statistical data." In contrast, opinions are "viewed as subjective expressions or personal sides, often indicated by specific phrases," highlighting the nuanced challenge of distinguishing between objective data and personal viewpoints in academic reading.

### ***Challenges in Drawing Conclusion***

Participants in the study shared various challenges they face in the process of engaging with academic texts, particularly when synthesizing evidence and drawing conclusions. Participant 1 (P1) highlighted fatigue as a significant challenge, particularly when needing to synthesize multiple pieces of evidence. She recounted advice received from a lecturer about concluding, emphasizing the importance of brevity and focusing on the most significant ideas or findings. P1 also reflected on the learning process itself, noting that making effective conclusions involves summarizing and pinpointing crucial information.

Participant 2 (P2) frequently needs help with reading texts from start to finish, often forgetting key parts of the text. This challenge necessitates multiple readings to grasp and retain the essential information fully. Her experience underscores the difficulties in maintaining attention and memory during initial readings, which compels her to revisit the text repeatedly to capture its fundamental elements. Meanwhile, Participant 3 (P3) identified challenges related to concluding, often exacerbated by texts that are biased or unclear. P3 discussed how diverse backgrounds and experiences can influence individual perspectives, contributing to the subjective nature of interpreting texts. To address these challenges, P3 has adopted a collaborative approach, engaging in discussions with friends, professors, or colleagues to gain broader insights and overcome subjective biases. This method helps clarify uncertainties and deepen understanding of complex material.

### ***Complexities in Academic Research Reading***

Participants described a variety of challenges encountered when engaging with academic texts, especially in understanding and synthesizing different types of research. Participant 1 (P1) noted the specific difficulty in comprehending qualitative research that includes numerical data, often found in systematic literature reviews. She mentioned needing help to draw meaningful conclusions from the extensive numerical data presented



in these studies. On the other hand, Participant 2 (P2) made a distinction between research-based and conceptual papers. She found clarity and ease in navigating research-based articles that present explicit findings but needed help in grasping conceptual papers, which often lack straightforward data and findings. Participant 3 (P3) highlighted the importance of titles and abstracts in the early stages of engaging with a research paper, particularly for predicting the outcomes of the research. She pointed out that limited or incomplete information in the abstract could hinder this process, with certain phrases having specialized meanings that add to the complexity of prediction.

To navigate these challenges, P1 developed a unique strategy of initially skimming the conclusions and then revisiting the discussion section, effectively reading from the bottom up to gain a better understanding of the study. In contrast, P2 emphasized the importance of the abstract for gaining a preliminary understanding, followed by a focused reading of the discussion and conclusions, which she found to provide a more directed and comprehensive overview of the research. Similarly, P3 adopted a strategy starting with the title and abstract to quickly form an initial understanding of what the text discusses, aiding in a more efficient reading process. These strategies reflect the participants' adaptive approaches to overcoming the specific challenges they face in academic reading.

### ***Evaluating the Strengths and Weaknesses of Ideas in the Texts***

Participant 1 (P1) detailed her approach to evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of academic texts. She first assessed the strengths by considering the novelty of the text—its interest level and the extent of research backing it. She then scrutinized how ideas were presented, focusing on the author's detail in elaboration, as well as the clarity and organization of the results. For weaknesses, P1 looked for potential biases in opinions, questioned the credibility and reliability of sources, and noted whether concise ideas were explained in an overly complex manner.

Participant 2 (P2) found evaluating these aspects challenging. Her method involved reading articles and comparing them to other studies to pinpoint deficiencies or weaknesses, enhancing her evaluative skills through comparative analysis. Participant 3 (P3) concentrated on the credibility of the references used in the texts, evaluated the logical consistency of the author's arguments and assessed the degree of bias in the ideas presented. This thorough scrutiny helped P3 form a critical assessment of the texts' integrity and argumentative strength.

## **DISCUSSION**

The data suggests that most students demonstrate a strong connection between their reading and critical thinking skills, as evidenced by high mean scores in areas such as recalling information and identifying specific terms. These scores underscore a solid foundation in basic academic reading skills. Furthermore, students exhibit strengths in synthesizing information and evaluating ideas, showcasing their ability to integrate and critically assess content. They also display confidence in their analytical skills, particularly in distinguishing between facts and opinions and making judgments about arguments while reading. Moreover, the students show proficiency in organizing information post-reading and forming well-reasoned judgments, indicating effective information synthesis and formulation. Additionally, students are adept at understanding text titles and elucidating

main ideas, and they feel confident in applying existing knowledge during the reading process. This skill set aligns with [Genç \(2017\)](#), who noted a strong correlation between learners' achievements and their critical thinking levels, suggesting that proficient academic reading skills can significantly enhance students' cognitive processing.

Overall, participants exhibit a positive outlook on their critical thinking and academic reading skills across all aspects of Bloom's Taxonomy. This perspective aligns with [Karadağ \(2014\)](#), who described critical thinking as an active process of assessing, questioning, evaluating, and concluding based on reliable sources and personal cognitive efforts. Despite the consensus on these capabilities, some variability in perceptions—especially in tasks like identifying main ideas and applying prior knowledge—points to diverse individual perspectives among the participants. This variability highlights the unique approaches and understandings that different students bring to their academic endeavors.

[Leontopoulou \(2020\)](#) connects effective thinking across various domains to overall well-being, including physical health and adeptness at problem-solving. The findings from our study align with this notion, as participants report feeling confident and positive about their academic reading and critical thinking skills. This positivity is not just about academic competence; it also contributes to their general happiness, hopefulness, and emotional well-being. The data suggest that participants who excel in academic tasks and critical thinking also tend to view themselves more positively, which enhances their overall happiness.

The relationship between academic reading and critical thinking is further supported by [Wilson \(2016\)](#), who notes that proficiency in reading is inherently linked to effective critical thinking. Our data reinforce this link, showing that students who are adept at reading also excel in critical thinking tasks. They demonstrate strong abilities in retention, vocabulary understanding, synthesis of information, and evaluative judgment. They can effectively differentiate between facts and opinions and are skilled at structuring their thoughts post-reading and evaluating arguments. They also exhibit a keen understanding of text titles and can articulate the main ideas clearly, leveraging their existing knowledge effectively during the reading process. The participants' experiences highlight several challenges that underscore the intricate relationship between academic reading and critical thinking skills. These challenges include difficulties in retaining information, comprehending text titles, distinguishing facts from opinions, drawing conclusions, predicting outcomes, and evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of ideas.

Participants commonly need help with retaining complex information, grappling with unfamiliar vocabulary, and remembering key details from initial readings. This difficulty necessitates regular practice and deeper engagement with academic texts to improve retention. Understanding text titles also poses a challenge, especially when they contain specialized terminology or pertain to unfamiliar disciplines. This reflects [Anwar and Sailuddin's \(2022\)](#) observation that academic texts, with their dense paragraphs and complex vocabulary, are inherently more challenging than everyday reading material. The task of distinguishing facts from opinions is another significant hurdle, as noted by some participants and echoed in research by [Kaiser and Wang \(2021\)](#), who point out the frequent blending of factual and opinion-based content in academic writing. This blending can complicate the critical evaluation of texts, particularly in higher-quality journal articles where the distinctions may need to be more clear-cut. Despite these difficulties, effective strategies employed by participants include meticulous attention to language, rigorous

source verification through reputable databases, and a nuanced understanding of the text's context.

The challenges associated with concluding academic texts often stem from fatigue, difficulty in retaining information, and the inherent subjectivity of the texts themselves. [Lamanauskas \(2021\)](#) emphasizes that crafting effective conclusions is particularly challenging: they must be concise and focused yet detailed enough to convey the depth of analysis. To overcome these obstacles, participants employ strategies such as crafting concise conclusions, engaging in repeated readings, and participating in collaborative discussions to gain a variety of perspectives.

Predicting outcomes in academic texts, especially when dealing with quantitative research and conceptual papers, presents another layer of difficulty. This task requires students to identify and prioritize the most critical information within a complex array of data. This process can be daunting due to the density and complexity of academic materials. According to [Phakiti and Li \(2011\)](#), students face broad academic challenges in both reading and writing, including synthesizing information and engaging in academic discourse. Strategies to enhance predictive skills include bottom-up reading approaches, relying on abstracts for initial guidance, and engaging in discussions that foster deeper understanding.

Furthermore, evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of ideas within texts involves assessing aspects such as novelty, clarity of presentation, potential bias, and the credibility of sources. The reliability of sources is crucial; [Stockhausen and Conrick \(2002\)](#) note that reference lists should provide a diverse selection of high-quality sources. To navigate these evaluation challenges, participants utilize comparative analysis, perform credibility checks on references, and focus on constructing logical arguments. These approaches help them critically assess the academic texts and form well-rounded judgments on the presented ideas.

## CONCLUSION

This study explores students' perceptions of the relationship between academic reading and critical thinking skills, alongside the challenges they encounter in these areas. The results from Likert-scale questionnaires indicate a consensus among participants about their proficiency in both academic reading and critical thinking. The data demonstrate a robust connection between these skills, with students exhibiting strong capabilities in recalling information, understanding text titles, and discerning facts from opinions. These findings suggest that students have a positive view of their abilities across all aspects of Bloom's Taxonomy. However, they also face significant challenges, including retaining detailed information and comprehending complex titles.

The qualitative insights from student interviews reveal additional hurdles, such as language complexities, difficulties with interdisciplinary comprehension, and biases that affect their learning process. These challenges highlight the need for targeted support to enhance students' academic reading and critical thinking capabilities. Effective strategies include regular practice, utilization of reliable sources, and engaging in discussions with peers and educators.

Although the study has its limitations, the overall positive perceptions suggest that current academic reading activities are successfully laying a strong foundational base for students. In light of these findings, educators and curriculum developers are encouraged to

consider the diverse challenges students face and strive to create more inclusive learning environments. Specifically, academic programs should incorporate explicit activities aimed at improving critical thinking skills, such as drawing conclusions and evaluating ideas, to equip students better to navigate complex information landscapes. Future research should aim to build on these findings by including larger and more diverse samples, which would enrich our understanding of student perceptions and challenges in the crucial areas of academic reading and critical thinking. This expansion of research could provide deeper insights and more generalized conclusions that support educational advancements in these academic domains.

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