

The Effectiveness of SPAWN Strategy on Developing Critical Reading Skills in the English Language for University Students

A Research in Curriculum & EFL Instruction

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The Effectiveness of SPAWN Strategy on Developing Critical Reading Skills in the English Language for University Students Abstract

ABSTRACT:

The current study was conducted to investigate the effectiveness of using the SPAWN strategy in developing critical reading skills for university students. A pre-post experimental group design was employed to achieve the study objectives, as the researcher used the explicit teaching promoting prompts of the SPAWN strategy in a classroom to develop critical reading skills for university students. Thirty-four students were randomly chosen for the experimental group and thirty-four for the control group from the second level of EAP courses. Students were trained to develop their reading skills using the SPAWN strategy, while the control group received regular instruction. Instruments of the study included a reading checklist to determine the most needed reading skills by the second level of critical reading learners and a pre-posttest in critical reading skills. Analysis of the data obtained by critical reading students revealed that the experimental group significantly achieved higher scores on the post-critical reading test, as the difference in the mean scores of the two administrations was statistically significant in favor of the experimental group. Discussion of these findings, recommendations, and suggestions for further research are presented.

Key Words: SPAWN Strategy, Critical Reading Skills.

**فاعلية استراتيجية سباون SPAWN في ضوء التعلم المدمج لتنمية
مهارات الكتابة الأكاديمية باللغة الإنجليزية لدى طلاب الجامعات
الكندية بمصر**

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المخلص

تستهدف الدراسة الحالية دراسة فاعلية استراتيجية سباون في تنمية مهارات القراءة الناقدة باللغة الانجليزية كلغة الأجنبية، حيث شارك في الدراسة ٨٦ طالبا من المستوى الثاني لدراسة اللغة الانجليزية لأغراض اكااديمية من طلاب الجامعات الكندية بمصر بالعاصمة الادارية الجديدة. تم اختيارهم عشوائيا و تقسيمهم إلى مجموعتين، (مجموعة تجريبية) ٣٤ طالبا (و أخرى ضابطة) ٣٤ طالبا. اعتمد البحث على التصميم القبلى- البعدي. تم تقديم اختبار مهارات القراءة الناقدة في اللغة الإنجليزية من إعداد الباحثة للمجموعتين التجريبية و الضابطة. تم تدريب طلاب المجموعة التجريبية من خلال استخدام استراتيجية (سباون)، بينما تم استخدام الطريقة التقليدية مع المجموعة الضابطة، كما تم إعداد قائمة لمهارات القراءة الناقدة و نموذج لتقييم التجربة يهدف إلى كشف فاعلية استراتيجية (سباون) في تنمية مهارات القراءة الناقدة باللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، و أوضحت نتائج تحليل البيانات إلى تفوق المجموعة التجريبية على أقرانهم في المجموعة الضابطة في التطبيق البعدي لمهارات القراءة الناقدة عند مستوى دالة (٥.٠)، و قد تم الاستنتاج من هذه الدراسة إلى فاعلية استخدام استراتيجية (سباون) بين طلاب المجموعة التجريبية و الضابطة. في ضوء هذه النتائج الإيجابية يوصى الباحث باستخدام استراتيجية (سباون) في تنمية مهارات القراءة الناقدة باللغة الإنجليزية كلغة اجنبية بالإضافة إلى مهارات التفكير النقدي.

1.1 Introduction

Language serves as a medium of communication, enabling individuals to express their opinions, perspectives, thoughts, reactions, and emotions. As a result, language holds immense significance in people's lives, serving as a crucial tool for conveying messages and viewpoints, fulfilling daily communication needs. English, the language of science, commerce, economics, communication, computer services, the Internet, modern technology, tourism, and travel, holds a prominent position in our contemporary era. In the current age characterized by rapid transformations, heightened creativity, and abundant information, the capacity to understand written content in English, a global language, is becoming a skill that necessitates continuous refinement throughout one's lifetime (VanDeWeghe, 2007).

According to Jones (2002), English stands out not only as the native language for less than four hundred million speakers but also as a language spoken by a substantial number of second-language speakers, surpassing 600 million individuals in Africa and Asia. Furthermore, English holds global prominence, ranking as the third most spoken language and extensively used in diverse scientific and educational fields. Fuller (2011) emphasized the importance of English as a requirement for scientific and economic progress, which emphasizes the need to reconsider teaching practices and the goals of learning English to keep pace with current demands and by preparing students for social and professional life through the development of higher thinking and communication skills to help build a qualified generation that is able to contribute effectively to the progress of their country.

According to Rhman (2011), mastery of English language skills is a prerequisite in many fields of work and study, as it has become a requirement that students must obtain to continue their higher education in universities, and the need imposed by many labor markets on many applicants. Furthermore, on a global scale,

people consider gaining proficiency in English as a fundamental necessity in the present era. As a result, learners are urged to explore new approaches to mastering the English language. (Boser, 2020)

According to the Egyptian Ministry of Education (2012, p.5), English language education includes four main skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Traditionally, the focus is on teaching reading, listening, and speaking skills before introducing writing. Reading is acknowledged as a source for acquiring knowledge and information and enhancing other language skills (Robert, 2003). The emphasis is not solely on reading; students should also acquire the skill of critical evaluation while engaged in reading.

1.2 Critical Reading

1.2.1 Critical Reading as an active process:

Reading is a fundamental skill in English and other languages, serving to acquire and expand knowledge while exposing individuals to diverse experiences. In today's society, marked by heightened information exposure, individuals are required to actively engage in reading, synthesis, and comprehension, as highlighted by Bilici and Subasi (2022). Reading serves as a means of written communication through textual materials and stands out as an effective method for acquiring information and knowledge.

Critical reading is an active engagement with a text, requiring analysis to form opinions or draw conclusions. This process entails scrutinizing the content, understanding the author's purpose, and evaluating the material's credibility and relevance to

one's beliefs and values. This analysis implies that critical readers should approach reading with increasing interest (Li, C. S., & Wan, R., 2022).

Reading, as defined by Keskin and Akyol (2014), is the intricate process of deciphering codes and constructing meaning within one's mind. It is a highly sophisticated cognitive process that individuals acquire over time, and nobody possesses innate expertise in reading from birth. People engage in deliberate study and mental training to become acquainted with words, eventually developing proficient reading skills. Reading comprehension, as outlined by Snow (2002), involves the active creation of meaning through interaction with written language.

According to Imam et al. (2014), achieving reading comprehension requires various skills, including establishing connections between words, sentences, and paragraphs, as well as mastering synthesis, analysis, evaluation, and interpretation. When engaged in reading activities, students are expected not only to grasp the content of the materials but also to meet their objectives and expectations. Furthermore, reading comprehension encompasses the ability to convey the essence of sentences or texts in one's own words, along with the application of the text's teachings to one's life and thoughtful reflection on how the text relates to personal experiences. Articulating personal life experiences in connection with the text signifies a genuine understanding, as it indicates that the individual has emotionally connected with the material (Wilhelm, 2018).

Shihab (2011) stated that reading is a multifaceted task encompassing psychological, linguistic, and sociological components. It goes beyond merely decoding text; it involves the synthesis of textual fragments with the reader's pre-existing knowledge to construct meaning. The reader plays a crucial role in

imparting significance to the text, interpreting it through the lens of their own understanding and prior knowledge, as well as considering the author's perspective.

1.2.2 Critical Reading and Critical Thinking:

According to Windham (2014), the significance of reading skills in university is paramount and should not be overlooked. Reading is an essential aspect of the curriculum, and having excellent reading skills and comprehension will help students achieve their academic goals. Hence, honing the critical reading skills of the students will help in improving their reading comprehension.

Throughout the reading process, individuals encounter two layers of reality: the visible layer and the invisible layer. However, readers typically perceive only the visible dimension. Consequently, for effective critical reading, it becomes imperative to distinctly formulate the invisible layer. In essence, critical reading involves the transformation of the unseen layer into something perceptible (Köse, 2006). As per Köse (2006), this transformation aligns with Bloom's Revised Taxonomy.

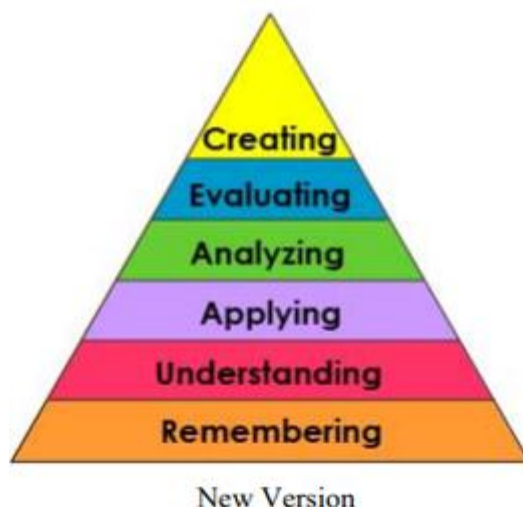


Figure (1) Bloom's Taxonomy, Kose (2006)

Wilson (2016) emphasized that acquiring proficiency in critical thinking is crucial for success in higher or postgraduate education and constitutes a prime emphasis in most university preliminary courses. The ability to critically read and assess information is a key prerequisite for students aspiring to pursue higher education. English for Academic Preparation (EAP) courses usually incorporate elements dedicated to critical reading, although the specifics may vary across different educational institutions.

According to Din (2020), critical thinking requires the ability to analyze data and put such analysis to productive use after giving some attention to one's own perspectives and several potential courses of action, the objective of critical thinking is to arrive at conclusions that are logical. It requires sorting through information, making inferences from that

information, and resolving disagreements using logic and reason.

As per Grabe (2009), critical reading involves a process where readers not only extract information from what they read but also assimilate and apply it within an academic framework as an integral part of their education. As highlighted by Al Roomy (2022), engaging in critical reading requires students to delve deeper into a text, moving beyond the surface and actively seeking to understand the nuances present between the lines. These critical reading skills play a pivotal role in academic success. Critical reading is not confined to mere information retrieval; instead, it represents a process that enables individuals to consolidate and expand their knowledge base. It serves as a means of broadening one's perspective and refining cognitive abilities. Possessing critical reading skills signifies a more advanced level of comprehension compared to basic reading proficiency. In addition, fostering critical reading skills among students offers the advantage of improving their decision-making abilities. In a world permeated by technology, the capacity to engage in critical reading becomes instrumental in enabling students to stay abreast of the continual advancements in technology, as emphasized by Ennis (2018).

Wilson (2016) emphasizes that university courses in English for academic preparation (EAP) often include instruction in active or critical reading, but the approach to this component may vary across different courses. Critical reading, according to Köse, (2006), involves analyzing and assessing the significance and worth of a text, closely examining it to

evaluate its meaning, relevance, and quality. Critical reading skills encompass the ability to comprehend and make sense of the material being read, involving analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of the content (Halvarson, 1992).

Brten (2017) stated that critical reading, along with critical thinking, has been identified as a crucial talent for today's college grads to have as they enter the workforce. According to Limbach (2010) In recent times, there has been a heightened emphasis on exploring reading comprehension and critical thinking within cognitive psychology (Aloqaili et al., 2012). Cognitive scientists have advanced intricate theories and patterns, providing a theoretical foundation for reading comprehension. Enhancing students' critical thinking skills is considered essential, given the belief that critical thinking plays a pivotal role in the instruction and acquisition of foreign languages. These include concepts such as inference-making, critical thinking, reliance on prior knowledge, and the development of metacognitive abilities. Reading has the capacity to improve critical thinking, broaden views, and offer insights into oneself and the larger world, making it one of the most effective learning activities. Critical reading can also assist students in interpreting events and foreseeing potential future scenarios. (Sumaira, 2015).

1.3 SPAWN Strategy:

SPAWN is a post-reading, reading, and writing strategy founded by Martin, Martin, and O'Brien in 1984 and introduced later in 2003 by Brozo. It is a series of tasks that

require students to examine reading content from multiple perspectives and then creatively apply their knowledge to their writing or discussion tasks (Alvermann et al., 2007; Rasinski et al.; K., 2006). According to Seidel (2007), it is a strategy that begins after reading the required text of a specific topic and allows students to actively participate by using their previous knowledge to form creative ideas and new opinions when they answer the demands of the motivating phrases. It depends on the function and use of each motivating phrase in the SPAWN (Seidel et al., 2007).

The SPAWN strategy is based on the principles of social learning theory and cognitive behavioral theory. Social learning theory emphasizes that people learn by observing and imitating the behaviors of others, as well as by being reinforced for their own actions. This theory suggests that behavior change can be achieved through modeling and reinforcement. It involves providing individuals with the tools and resources they need to learn new skills and reinforcing their positive behavior changes along the way. It is a cognitive instructional strategy that targets different subject areas. It is designed to engage students in flexible and critical thinking and encourage creativity by moving beyond the text and manipulating aspects of the reading selection to produce new possible responses and create new results. SPAWN assignment cues bring complexity and engagement to student-text interaction. It encourages students to be responsible for extending learning (Kett et al., 2007). Students need regular content-focused writing opportunities in the classroom (Graham & Perrin, 2007; Sorcinelli & Elbow, 1997). The SPAWN strategy aims to strengthen individuals' self-efficacy and promote lasting

behavior change by focusing on both the cognitive and behavioral aspects of change. This learning strategy allows students to recall previous knowledge, generate ideas, and employ them in new situations (Seidel et al., 2005).

1.4 SPAWN ACRONYM:

SPAWN stands for five categories of prompts, which can be used in numerous ways to stimulate students' predictive, reflective, and critical thinking about content-area topics (Fisher et al., 2011). SPAWN is an abbreviation for five categories of requests or orders that nominate or secrete thoughtful answers and new ideas:

- **S – Special Powers**
- **P – Problem Solving**
- **A – Alternative Viewpoints**
- **W – What If?**
- **N – Next**

These phrases serve as candidates for innovative new ideas; they motivate students to think purposefully about the subject in question or the lesson. It also motivates students to think creatively to come up with new ideas which students write or discuss about a specific topic and a specific problem posed to them from a specific text that is read to them in the classroom. Everyone participates in reading and then records their answers.

S (Special Power): Students are allowed to change some aspects of the text or topic. Their responses should explain what has changed, why, and the effects of this change.

P (Problem-Solving): Students can find possible solutions to problems that are suggested in the text.

A (Alternative Viewpoints): Students write about a topic or re-tell a situation from a unique and alternative perspective

W (What If?): The teacher introduces a change in some aspects of the topic, then asks students to write new responses based on that change.

N (Next): Students can write anticipation of the author's discussion, explaining the logic behind their conjecture.

SPAWN prompts are tailored to fit the learning goals in any subject area. The goal is to encourage students to write thoughtfully and verifiably about a topic, the prompts are designed in a way that helps students use the textual evidence in their written responses and promote critical thinking about aspects and ideas behind the content (Brozo, 2017).

1.5 Influence of the SPAWN Strategy on Developing Reading Skills:

Reading is the key through which anyone enters the various fields of science, and it helps the individual to adapt psychologically. It satisfies psychological needs such as communicating with others and sharing their thoughts and feelings (Al-Busais, 2011). With the increased attention to the need for adopting effective learning instruction, the SPAWN

strategy is an effective multi-purpose learning strategy. It is a cognitive instructional strategy integrating reading and writing to target different subject areas. It is designed to engage students in flexible and critical thinking while examining a text and forming their targeted responses.

The SPAWN strategy, as seen by Christensen (2000), is one of the strategies that provide reinforcement and praise for courage, activity, and participation in voicing his opinions in front of his classmates. It is possible to expand the participation outside the text or integrate one of the concepts contained in the text with what the student has experienced in his life. It also creates an interaction between the subject and real participation from real people. Interaction with the lesson occurs. This method leads to the participation of all students, even those who hesitate. SPAWN is a reading style in any field and content. It is exciting and works to expand the scope of learning, and teachers using this strategy can provide the opportunity to engage students in critical and creative thinking in an orderly manner. It also promotes SPAWN retention of content goals because the more students use the information they have learned, the more likely they are to remember. If students use the insights that they learned at SPAWN to examine texts more critically, they will have more creative problem-solving options. This brings the long-term benefit of the SPAWN strategy (Seidel et al., 2007).

According to Fisher et al. (2008), the SPAWN strategy entirely engages with Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive learning objectives as follows:

- Remember: recalling what has just been read from the text in as much detail as possible.
- Understand: Summarize parts of the reading material.
- Apply: determining how this information is helpful to his/her understanding of the subject.
- Analyze: Determine how your suggestions are different from the author's.
- Evaluate: Why do you believe your ideas might be better than a classmate's idea? Do you think your ideas were better than what the character did within the text?

Moreover, according to Kett et al. (2007), SPAWN emerges as a captivating method for reading that goes beyond conventional learning approaches. Through the implementation of this strategy, educators can guide students to engage in both creative and critical thinking in a systematic manner. As students progress toward the ultimate objectives of the SPAWN strategy, they will leverage the insights gained to scrutinize texts more analytically and explore more imaginative alternatives. Consequently, the SPAWN strategy empowers students to generate creative outputs in response to the prompts. For instance, prompted by the "Next" category in SPAWN, students can craft new narratives, foresee upcoming events, or devise original concepts as a novel series for their reading materials. These outcomes align with the "create" category in Bloom's taxonomy.

The SPAWN strategy provides boundless opportunities for enriching students' thinking. Its efficacy hinges on teachers' capacity to craft compelling prompts that assist students in eliciting more profound levels of thinking about the subject at hand—an essential skill in effective teaching (Adler, 1982, as cited in Sujariati, Rahman, & Mahmud, 2016). According to Rojas (2008), the SPAWN strategy brings advantages by showcasing comprehension of texts and fostering the development of ideas through concise responses. It aids in reinforcing interpretations and explanations with evidence from the text. Through discussion, students can articulate opinions and make judgments that reflect their perspectives and establish connections between the text and their own lives. SPAWN facilitates the generation of imaginative responses characterized by development, organization, insight, and effective language alongside judgments that convey viewpoints and establish connections between text and personal experiences, enabling students to share their ideas in response to written texts.

SPAWN prompts urge students to combine tremendous and exciting ideas with information related to the subject. This information is derived from the reading of the subject and the observations and opinions of students. The teacher can use SPAWN prompts for any subject because the phrases are designed to suit any subject's learning and study objectives.

1.6 Research Problem:

The problem of this study was concerned with university students' weaknesses in the required critical reading skills. The existence of the problem of the present study was emphasized through a number of steps as follows:

First: Observation:

Based on the researcher's background as an English instructor, it is evident that a significant portion of university students need to possess the critical reading abilities necessary for effective communication in English. Despite the crucial role that critical reading skills play at the university level, students often need to receive adequate emphasis on this aspect. Consequently, they need help to apply and utilize these skills effectively.

The researcher's findings of the present study based on six years of fieldwork in teaching English language and critical reading skills to university students, revealed the following:

1. Weakness in advanced students' proficiency in reading skills, evident from the results of placement tests for university admission.
2. Weakness in university-level students' proficiency in critical reading skills within the classroom, as indicated by low test scores.
3. Limited ability of most students to engage in dialogue and discussion, present their opinions, support them with valid and logical evidence, and subsequently express their ideas in discussions or written form in the correct academic manner.

4. It was also observed that teaching methods and strategies tended to be traditional and ineffective in achieving the desired academic goals, whether in terms of the student's academic performance or in developing personal skills that would enable them to enter the job market with rewarding skills. In addition, there was a lack of interest among EFL instructors in using modern methods and strategies in teaching critical reading.

Second: Reviewing the Objectives of the Course Descriptions:

As per the program aim and course description set forth by the university for the academic year 2022/2023, second level of EAP courses- university students were expected to possess the subsequent essential critical reading skills, which include the ability to:

- 1- Express and differentiate between facts and opinions.
- 2- Identify the main ideas in clearly written texts.
- 3- Offer explanations and enhance skills in interpretation and deduction.
- 4- Express perspectives and ideas with clarity.
- 5- Make inferences and prediction.
- 6- Seek additional information sources.
- 7- Draw conclusion and guess the meaning within a text.

Third: Unstructured Interview:

The researcher aimed to ascertain university students' deficiency in critical reading skills. To achieve this, an unstructured interview was conducted with 10 English

instructors at the university level. The researcher posed the following inquiries:

1. What are the necessary critical reading skills to be developed in university-level students?
2. What challenges might students encounter in their critical reading skills endeavors?

The interview results were as follows:

- A significant number of them confirmed the presence of a weakness in critical reading skills among university-level students. A majority of university students encounter difficulties in articulating their thoughts, presenting supporting evidence, and even arriving at conclusions.
- The use of traditional teaching methods and strategies was identified as weak, which had a negative impact on the performance and skills of the students.
- All instructors emphasized the importance of employing modern teaching strategies and methods that enhance learners' motivation to think, understand, and interact by adopting learner-centered learning strategies.

Fourth: Pilot Study:

To validate the information gathered from the interviews, the researcher conducted a preliminary study by administering an assessment of critical reading skills to a cohort of university students (comprising 34 students) during the first semester of the academic year 2022-2023. The researcher selected second-level of English for academic preparation (EAP) in university students because they should have acquired foundational critical reading

skills, such as employing appropriate vocabulary, utilizing annotation skills, and skimming and scanning skills. The objective of the test was to pinpoint areas of weakness in the student's critical reading. The findings indicated that 68% of the students scored below the average.

Fifth: Previous Studies:

The research problem was reinforced by examining prior studies in the same domain. Many studies have affirmed the weakness in critical reading skills among university-level students and emphasized the necessity of developing them to achieve the desired academic and practical goals. Some of these studies include Din (2020), Hashem & Khalil (2019), Ibrahim (2018), Bråten, (2017), Wilson (2016), Aksu (2015) revealed the persistence of actual problems in teaching and learning critical reading for s teachers and students.

Furthermore, many studies have confirmed the importance of using the SPAWN strategy in teaching English skills and as an effective method, including studies by Alkthery (2020), Brozo (2017), Fisher, Brozo, Fery, & Ivey (2011), Dunn, Halonen, & Smith (2009), Fisher et al. (2008), Kett et al. (2007), and Seidel (2007).

In light of these observations, the current study sought to assess the effectiveness of the SPAWN strategy in developing the critical reading skills of university students.

1.7 Statement of the Problem:

The focus of this problem revolved around the deficiency observed in second level of English for academic preparation courses (EAP)- university students' essential critical reading skills. Consequently, this study aimed to enhance the critical reading skills

necessary for university students by implementing the SPAWN strategy.

1.8 Aim of the Research:

The present research aims at identifying the effectiveness of the SPAWN strategy on developing some critical reading skills for second level of EAP- university students.

1.9 Questions of the Research:

To tackle this problem, the present study attempted to answer the following central question:

What is the effectiveness of the SPAWN strategy on developing the required English critical reading skills for university students?

From this question, the subsequent sub-questions emerged:

- * What are the most necessary reading skills for second level of EAP- university students?
- * What steps are followed in the SPAWN strategy for developing critical reading skills for university students?
- * How effective is the SPAWN strategy in developing the most necessary critical reading skills for university students- second level of EAP courses?

1.10 Hypotheses of the Research:

The following hypotheses were formulated:

1. There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups in the post administration of the critical reading skills test in favor of the experimental group.

2. There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group in the pre and post administration of the critical reading test in favor of the post administration.

1.11 Significance of the Study:

The importance of this research can be attributed to its potential contributions in:

1. Directing the attention of university students towards the significance of theoretically and practically developing critical reading skills.
2. Enhancing reading skills for academic purposes and the academic achievement of university students.
3. Guiding those involved in teaching critical reading towards the importance of using the SPAWN strategy for developing reading skills in English.
4. Allowing researchers to benefit from the guidance and recommendations of this study in conducting other related research or in different branches of language.

1.12 Delimitation of the Study

The study was delimited to the following:

- 1) The required critical reading skills for university students- the second level of English for academic preparation courses (EAP).
- 2) A group of university students- second level of EAP courses

was randomly chosen from Universities of Canada in Egypt. The sample was divided into two classes (34 students each) assigned as the experimental and the control group. The researcher chose university students second level of EAP courses as they need to develop some essential critical reading skills.

- 3) Restructuring and organizing the content of three units from the academic textbook "Pearson" for university students second level of EAP courses through using the SPAWN strategy.
- 4) The research was conducted during the second semester of the academic year 2022/2023 for the second level of EAP courses university students.

1.13 Definition of terms

1.13.1 SPAWN Strategy:

Seidel (2007) defined It in his framework as a strategy that initiates following the reading of a designated text on a particular subject, enabling students to actively engage their prior knowledge in generating innovative ideas and fresh perspectives when responding to the prompts provided. The effectiveness relies on the purpose and utilization of each motivational phrase within the SPAWN method (Seidel et al., 2007).

SPAWN strategy is operationally defined in the present study as one of the strategies of a contemporary approach characterized by effectiveness and activity. Its impact is evident in enhancing student engagement in the classroom through motivating and stimulating statements that provoke students' minds. The strategy encompasses flexible steps (Special Powers, Problem-Solving, Alternative Viewpoints, What If? and Next) and is applied

by the researchers based on the lesson's requirements. It involves formulating questions derived from the course content, which students then answer individually or collaboratively.

1.13.2 Critical Reading Skills:

According to Tasnimi (2017), critical reading is characterized as an approach that encourages readers to go beyond merely scanning words. Instead, it prompts them to assess the content, identifying both the strengths and weaknesses of the argument. This approach fosters a mindset in readers that leads them to accept only logical and sound information while rejecting distorted or unreliable content.

Abdel Kader et al. (2014) indicates that critical reading skills involve the ability of students to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate the content they read. However, in order to acquire and develop these skills, students must be exposed to and instructed in the techniques of becoming critical readers.

In the current study, critical reading was operationally defined as an active process where students are instructed in the highest level of reading behavior, involving analysis, evaluation, interpretation, and judgment.

1.14 Method of the Research

1.14.1 Design of the Research

The research design used in this research was the two-group (experimental and control) pre-posttest quasi-experimental design. The two groups were a sample of 68 (34 as control and 34 as experimental) second level of EAP courses for university students that were randomly selected.

1.14.2 Variables of the Research

1. Independent variable: the SPAWN strategy.
2. Dependent Variable: development of critical reading skills.

1.14.3 Participants of the Research

The participants were randomly selected from the second level of a foreign university in Egypt (Universities of Canada in Egypt- UPEI Campus for the academic year 2022 -2023). Two intact classes were randomly designated to be an experimental group and a control group. All the participants were attending English academic preparation courses, receiving identical content and regular instruction before the initiation of the study's experiment. This group was chosen due to its significance as a pivotal stage in EFL language learning, essential for the advancement of language skills in the university stage. This stage marks an awareness of the need to employ critical reading skills for reading development, as deficiencies in these skills may lead to reading and comprehension challenges.

1.14.4 The EFL Critical Reading Skills Checklist

Prior to developing the study instruments, it was necessary to identify the essential critical reading skills. Therefore, the study's researchers created the English Critical Reading Skills Checklist, outlining the necessary skills for university students in the EAP course at the second level. The checklist items were informed by relevant studies and literature, including those by Din (2020), Rohmah (2018), Bråten, (2017), and Wilson (2016), as mentioned in previous literature.

1.14.4.1 Aim of the EFL Critical Reading Checklist:

The EFL Critical Reading Skills Checklist, prepared by the researcher of the present study, aimed at identifying English Critical reading skills required for university students in the EAP course at the second level.

1.14.4.2 Construction of the checklist:

The checklist consists of the following skills:

1. Identifying the main idea and supporting details.
2. Distinguishing between facts and opinions.
3. Making inferences and predictions.
4. Identifying the causation and correlation relationships.
5. Distinguishing points of view and detecting the author's tone.

1.14.4.3 Validity of the checklist

The first version of the checklist underwent evaluation by seven expert jury members in curriculum and EFL instruction. Their task was to assess the suitability and relevance of the critical reading skills outlined for university students. The jury members endorsed the checklist and

suggested the following modifications to ensure its appropriateness for university students:

- a. Combining specific skills for cohesion.
- b. Adjusting the number of skills considered to align with the designated timeframe of the experiment.

The modifications of the checklist were taken into consideration.

1.15 Instrumentation

The current research utilizes the following instrument:

1.15.1 EFL Critical Reading Skills Test

1.15.2.1 Test Purpose

The test aimed at measuring university students' Critical reading skills.

1.15.2.2 Test Description

The critical reading test included two reading texts to answer critical questions about them.

1.15.2.3 Piloting the test

The test was applied to a random sample of (34) students from the Universities in Canada in Egypt who have the same characteristics as the sample of the study. The results were recorded and statistically analyzed to assess the validity and reliability of the test as well as the time needed. The items of the test were modified in the light of the statistical results.

1.15.2.4 Test Timing

The timing of the EFL critical reading test was estimated by calculating the time taken by all the students (30) for piloting the test, divided by the number of the same students. This formally shows the time allotted for the test that was counted as follows:

Test time = summation of the time taken by all students / the
number of

the students

= 1200/30

= 40. minutes

Thus, it was estimated that (40) minutes would be suitable to complete the Critical reading tasks of the test.

1.15.2.5 Test Instruction

The teacher asked students to write their names and ID numbers. The test was administrated for the experimental and control groups simultaneously.

1.15.2.6 Test Reliability

Alpha Krumbach were the techniques employed by the researcher to validate the test's reliability:

The reliability of the test was calculated throughout Cronbach's Alpha as the researcher used this method to calculate the reliability of

the test by applying it to a sample of (34) students. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the value of the Cronbach's Alpha for the overall test was (0.894). This value indicates that the test has an appropriate degree of stability, and this means that the values are appropriate to be reliable and indicate the validity of the test for application.

1.15.2.7 Test Validity

In this study, the researcher relied on the expertise of the jury members to affirm the content validity as well as internal consistency. The jury members were tasked with reviewing the test and validating it based on the following criteria:

- 1- The relevance of the test to the assessed critical reading skills and the student's proficiency level.
- 2-The compatibility of the test's content with the student's proficiency level.
- 3-The appropriateness of test items as a whole and tailored for each critical reading skill to align with the student's level.

Following the suggestion of the jury members, the test was adjusted to its final form.

1.15.2.8 Pre-Testing

The experimental and control groups were assessed by the same test before the administration of the suggested framework based on the SPAWN strategy to determine students' level at EFL critical reading skills.

1.15.2.9 post-testing

The same test was administered to examine the effectiveness of the suggested framework based on the SPAWN strategy in developing the students' EFL critical reading skills.

1.15.3 Sessions based on the SPAWN Strategy

Sessions aims and description:

- The aim of the suggested units is to develop the required critical reading skills for the EAP course- second level of the university students by using the SPAWN strategy.
- The suggested units were applied to the students of the experimental group in the second semester of the scholastic year (2022/2023).
- The suggested units include: the students' handouts: the Booklet, syllabus's outline, and the teacher's guide. The teacher's guide represents a resource for the researcher (as a teacher) and for other teachers about how to use SPAWN strategy to improve EFL critical reading skills. It contained detailed step – by – step notes on applying SPAWN strategy effectively while proceeding the tasks.
- The handouts contain the content material of the introductory and the instructional sessions. The handouts are distributed to the students to work on developing their critical reading skills through the SPAWN strategy. The students' handouts are divided into two parts: The Introductory session and the Instructional sessions.

1.16 Procedures of the Experiment

1. Selecting a random sample of 68 university students from the EAP-second level and dividing them into two groups: a control group comprising 34 students and an experimental group with 34 students.

2. Administering the reading skills test to both experimental and control groups before the experiment to ensure their equivalence. This step aimed to attribute any improvements in the experimental group's performance to the use of the SPAWN strategy.
3. Implementing the SPAWN strategy with the experimental group and providing regular instruction to the control group for teaching EFL critical reading skills.
4. Administering the critical reading skills test to both experimental and control groups after the intervention.
5. Collecting and scrutinizing the obtained data.
6. Presenting and discussing the findings of the study.
7. Proposing recommendations and suggestions for further research.

1.17 Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). Both descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) and t-test were used in data analysis. The t-test was used to control the intervening variables and to measure the statistical differences in means between the two groups due to the study variables. Pearson Correlation to determine the internal consistency validity of the test.

1.18 Results

The results are presented in terms of the research hypotheses as follows.

1.19 Verifying the Hypothesis of the Research

1.19.1 The First hypothesis of the research:

The first hypothesis stated that “There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group student and those of the control group student on the post

administration of the critical reading Skills test, in favor of the experimental group.”

the value of “t” test and the level of its significance for the difference between

experimental group and control group in post-test of the overall Critical Reading skills test

Table (1.1)

Variables	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	T	Sig. Value
Total score of Test	Experimental Group	34	17.403	6.429	66	5.963	0.000
	Control Group	34	10.339	3.664	66	5.963	0.000

In order to verify the first hypothesis, the researcher statistically compared the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group on the post-administration of the overall critical reading skills test. The "t" value was (5.963), which was statistically significant at 0.01 level. Thus, there was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group on the post-administration of the overall critical reading skills test, in favor of the experimental group. So, the first hypothesis was verified.

1.18.2 The second hypothesis of the research:

The second hypothesis stated that “There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental

group student on the pre-and post-administration of the overall critical reading skill test, in favor of the post-test.”

To examine the second hypothesis, T. Test paired sample results of the differences between the pre-test and the post-test of the experimental group in the critical reading test. The table below describes those results.

the value of the “t” test and the level of its significance for the difference between the experimental group in the pre and post-test of the overall critical reading skills test.

Table (1.2)

Variables	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	T	Sig. Value
Total score of Test	Pretest	34	5.091	2.909	66	3.460	0.00
	posttest	34	17.403	6.429	66	3.460	0.00

In order to verify the second hypothesis, the researcher statistically compared the mean scores of the experimental group on the pre-and post-administrations of the overall critical reading skills test. The "t" value was (3.460), which was statistically significant at 0.01 level. Thus, there was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group on the pre- and post-administration of the overall critical reading skills test, in favor of the post-administration.

1.20 Discussion of the Results

The statistical analysis outlined in this chapter confirmed the study's hypotheses, solved its research questions, and successfully achieved the main objective of enhancing university students' necessary critical reading skills through the implementation of the SPAWN strategy.

The examination of the experimental group and the control group revealed advancements in the critical reading skills of the experimental group compared to the control group in the post-critical reading skills test. The researcher attributed the progress in the essential critical reading skills of the experimental group students to the following factors:

1. The analysis of the research statistics validated all the research hypotheses and solved its questions. Additionally, it demonstrated the fulfillment of the initial objective of the research, which aimed to enhance critical reading skills for university students through the application of the SPAWN strategy.
2. Using the SPAWN strategy proved to be highly engaging and inspirational for the students, fostering active involvement and enthusiasm. Students exhibited strong motivation in completing all assigned activities and tasks.
3. The evaluation of the research groups' performance before and after the experiment indicates the enhancement achieved in the specified critical reading skills in the post-administration.
4. Using the SPAWN strategy tended to create a non-intimidating atmosphere for students, allowing them to overcome apprehensions about pronunciation errors and fostering a conducive learning environment with reduced psychological barriers.
5. The incorporation of both formative and summative assessments enabled students to identify their individual strengths and weaknesses in English language proficiency. Consequently, students with lower proficiency in critical reading could benefit from their peers with higher critical reading abilities, leading to improvement in their own critical reading skills.
6. Cultivating critical reading represents the culmination of previously acquired skills, guiding students on how to approach tasks critically. Constructing an argument that

- revolves around the five critical reading skills mentioned earlier is essential for this process.
7. Using the SPAWN strategy provided students with opportunities for collaborative learning through pair activities and group work.
 8. Fostering a positive, dynamic, and challenging environment while employing the SPAWN strategy encouraged students to engage actively, promoting a reduction in anxiety levels.
 9. The usage of the SPAWN strategy served as a motivational tool for students, inspiring them to learn, read, and assess their own progress.
 10. The teacher's shift from an evaluator to a mentor and facilitator through the SPAWN strategy facilitated a deeper understanding of students' learning challenges and needs. This role transformation not only created a supportive atmosphere but also motivated both the teacher and the students to achieve the objectives of implementing the modified units.
 11. Using the SPAWN strategy encouraged the development of active and creative thinking skills, as students were required to formulate their own expressions and sentences or even use their own words.
 12. Further research endeavors should explore alternative contemporary approaches or strategies for enhancing critical reading skills in learners.

1.21 Conclusion

The analysis results revealed significant development in the targeted critical reading skills, attributed to the efficacy of the SPAWN strategy. Furthermore, a robust positive correlation between the targeted critical reading skills and the SPAWN strategy was identified, indicating the impact of SPAWN strategy instruction.

1.21 Recommendations

In the light of the present study results, the following recommendations are suggested by the researcher as follow:

1) To the learners:

- Attention should be paid to teaching critical reading skills in English as EFL by applying much time and effort to develop its skills.
- The SPAWN strategy should be used in training the teachers.
- The role of the teacher as a guide and facilitator of the learning process should be emphasized.
- Learners should be provided with the opportunity to use the SPAWN strategy tasks in language skills to improve their performance.

2) To the teachers:

- Constructive, positive feedback should be used during the learning process to increase the learners' motivation.
- The teacher must be fully aware of the needed critical reading skills for the students; moreover, the students should know that too.
- The teacher should use the SPAWN strategy to encourage the students to enhance their critical reading skills.
- Teachers of English should vary in using the SPAWN strategy in other teaching EFL skills.
- Teachers should encourage students to form their SPAWN prompts to enrich classroom discussion by expressing their opinions, employing their previous experience in new situations, and developing their thinking skills.
- Contain English curriculum with SPAWN strategy to facilitate students' generating of ideas before composing their

final persuasive writing texts. With the importance of addressing the productive habits of mind in each of SPAWN prompts.

3) To the researchers

- As the current research provided support the effectiveness of the SPAWN strategy on developing the critical reading skills for the university students, further research is needed to investigate the effectiveness of the SPAWN strategy on developing learners' other language skills at different levels of education.
- Further research is needed to use other modern approaches or strategies for developing critical reading skills for learners.
- Further research is suggested to investigate the effectiveness of the SPAWN strategy tasks on improving teachers' linguistic performance.
- Future descriptive studies are needed to determine the difficulties and challenges of critical reading skills faced by university students.

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