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## DEVELOPING L2 READING SKILLS USING THINKING ALOUD STRATEGIES

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### Abstract:

This study examined the use of the think-aloud strategy to enhance reading skills among students in a public university in Malaysia. Ten participants were involved in this study. All the participants were required to use the think-aloud strategy while reading two pre-determined texts. Data collection included semi-structured interviews with all the participants and the participants' think-aloud protocols that were audio-recorded. These recordings and interviews were transcribed and analysed for themes. The findings from the think-aloud sessions showed that the strategy encouraged participants to engage critically and actively with the texts, which in turn allowed them to understand the underlying messages of the texts. Data from the interviews also suggested that participants found that the think-aloud strategy increased their metacognitive abilities in reading. Participants expressed that the think-aloud strategy in general helped them improve their reading and comprehension skills. The think-aloud strategy can be used in second language (L2) reading classes to develop metacognitive abilities as well as develop critical reading skills. Students and teachers can be trained to use the think-aloud strategy as an activity to enhance their reading skills.

### Keywords:

Think-aloud Strategy, Critical Reading Skills, Metacognitive Ability

## Introduction

It is often lamented that an increasing number of university students lack the ability to read and think critically. In Malaysia, the problem is quite prevalent as many employers often complain that graduates who enter the job market often lack the appropriate skills that are required for the workplace which heavily depend on soft skills and specialized knowledge. The Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (p. 11) states ‘employers report that graduates lack critical thinking, communication skills and the language proficiency, especially in English which are essential for success in the 21st century’. Students often have problems analysing texts critically as these skills are not automatically developed by having the ability to read. It is not enough to be able to read, students especially in higher education need higher level reading skills, among which is critical reading.

Reading is a receptive skill that requires learners to be engaged with the text in order to decode the message. Students need to comprehend and understand various texts and construct meaning from texts using their own experiences and perspectives. Reading is an essential skill that plays a significant role in a student’s life, especially at higher education institutions. In universities, basic reading skills such as decoding and comprehending are insufficient, students also need to be able to analyse texts and information critically and evaluate information that they come across. Reading is not merely a process of reading words from texts, but a complex cognitive process that requires the interpretation and construction of meaning. It demands an active interaction between the reader and the text, where the reader draws upon their prior knowledge, experiences, and analytical skills to engage with and make sense of the material (Maclellan, 1997). It is essential to equip students and undergraduates with good reading habits, as well as critical reading skills so that undergraduates acquire the relevant soft-skills necessary for their work. Cultivating and enhancing reading habits, as well as fostering positive attitudes towards reading both academic and non-academic materials, are essential components of any language learning program or course. The thinking-aloud strategy has been shown to promote critical thinking and reading skills. Critical thinking skills are emphasized in the 21st century as these skills are essential given the amount of information that needs to be digested and processed. However, many graduates still lack essential critical thinking skills and communication skills. Thus, developing critical reading in the university is essential in producing graduates who will be marketable in current times. There is a gap in terms of research that investigates how critical thinking and reading skills are developed in higher education. It is important to develop thinking and reading skills as these are essential in higher education. Thus, this study examines how the use of the think aloud strategy can develop critical reading skills among a group of university students.

## Literature Review

### *Critical Reading*

Reading habits of young people have become the concern of educators, researchers and policy makers all over the world. Studies in Malaysia reported that Malaysian students read very little (Kaur & Thivagarajah, 1999; Ngu & Zainal, 2017; Thang & Azarina, 2008). Reading is a cornerstone of academic success, as it allows students to acquire knowledge, develop critical thinking, and effectively communicate their understanding. However, research suggests that many students struggle to actively and critically engage with academic texts, often attaining only a cursory understanding of the material (Hatteberg & Steffy, 2013; Howard et al., 2018; Maldonado et al., 2023). Proficient critical reading skills are essential for students to make

sense of dense literature, build upon existing knowledge, and formulate their own informed perspectives. Critical reading involves more than just understanding the text; it requires readers to engage actively with the material, question the content, evaluate arguments, and form their judgments based on evidence (Ulu & Tuncay, 2019). This process is essential for developing a deeper understanding of the text and fostering critical thinking skills (Zin et al., 2014). Critical reading is not limited to decoding words but also involves making inferences, analyzing text, and questioning the information presented (Wigfield et al., 2016). It is a skill that goes beyond surface-level comprehension and requires readers to assess, interpret, and reflect on what they read (Maltepe, 2016).

Educators emphasize the importance of critical reading in various disciplines, including science, accounting, and literature (Gallo & Rinaldo, 2012; Cornachione et al., 2008). In scientific fields, the ability to critically analyze primary literature is crucial for success (Raimondi et al., 2020). Similarly, in accounting, critical reading and writing skills are essential for developing a strong foundation in the field (Cornachione et al., 2008). Furthermore, critical reading is closely linked to critical literacy, which involves understanding the political dimensions of literacy practices and encourages readers to question and influence the information they encounter (Park, 2011). Through critical literacy, students can respond intelligently to the vast amount of information available to them (Rini, 2018). Additionally, critical reading is associated with the development of critical thinking skills, enabling individuals to critique texts, identify inconsistencies, and evaluate arguments (Mbato, 2019). In summary, critical reading is a multifaceted skill that requires readers to actively engage with texts, question information, and develop their analytical abilities.

Critical reading is a fundamental skill that underpins academic success, cognitive development, and lifelong learning. Through critical reading, individuals engage with texts in a way that goes beyond surface-level comprehension, allowing them to question, evaluate, and analyze information (Rayner et al., 2001; Whalley & Hansen, 2006). This process is essential for developing a deeper understanding of the material and fostering critical thinking skills (Huber & Kuncel, 2016). Critical reading is particularly crucial in educational settings, as it enhances students' ability to comprehend complex texts, analyze arguments, and develop their cognitive abilities (Hoskins et al., 2011).

Moreover, critical reading is closely linked to the development of scientific literacy and the ability to critically analyze primary literature in fields such as biology (Wigfield et al., 2016; Sala & Castillo, 2023). Additionally, critical reading is instrumental in promoting reading motivation and comprehension, especially as reading materials become more demanding in later childhood and adolescence (Raimondi et al., 2020). Critical reading is a fundamental skill that underpins academic success, cognitive development, and lifelong learning. By engaging in critical reading practices, individuals can enhance their comprehension, analytical skills, and ability to think critically about the information they encounter.

### ***Think-Aloud Strategy and Critical Thinking***

The think-aloud strategy is a valuable tool for enhancing critical reading skills by allowing readers to verbalize their thoughts while engaging with a text. This strategy enables individuals to share important metacognitive processes, facilitating comprehension and metacognitive development (Coiro, 2011; Zayed, 2021). By articulating their thoughts, readers can better understand their cognitive processes, leading to improved comprehension and analytical skills.

(Wang, 2015). Moreover, research has shown that the think-aloud strategy benefits students by demonstrating that reading is a meaning-making process that involves the use of strategies and can be developed through reflection and sharing with others (Kymes, 2005). The think-aloud strategy is described as a “stream-of-consciousness disclosure of thought process” (Cohen, 1996, p.7). This strategy facilitates learners to express aloud what they have understood from their reading comprehension process.

Studies have highlighted the effectiveness of the think-aloud strategy in various educational contexts, such as improving reading comprehension skills among EFL learners, enhancing students' reading comprehension ability and increasing metacognitive awareness in the classroom (Thu & Vien, 2022; Tolhah & Sugirin, 2021). Additionally, the think-aloud strategy has been found to help struggling readers improve fluency and comprehension (Migyanka et al., 2005), activate self-regulation strategies when encountering difficulties (Sönmez & Sulak, 2018), and promote social interaction among students (Sönmez & Sulak, 2018). When the think-aloud strategy is employed during reading comprehension activities, it helps students to organize their thoughts while promoting collaborative learning. The think-aloud strategy is different from other reading strategies as it involves overt actions, where students clearly express aloud their mental processes while engaging in reading comprehension activities (Singhal, 2001). Moreover from an ESL teacher's perspective, the think-aloud strategy can give twofold benefits as it can improve students' reading comprehension skills as well as enhance their speaking skills at the same time.

## **Methodology**

### ***Sample***

Ten undergraduate students were involved in this research. These undergraduates were selected based on several criteria that included language proficiency and willingness to participate. As the research required training, participants were required to commit to a certain amount of time to the research as well as receive training in using the thinking aloud strategy. All the ten participants had a MUET Band 3. Thus they were deemed to be proficient in the English language.

### ***Instruments***

There were two instruments employed in the study. One of the instruments in this study were two reading texts that were read by all the participants. The selection of the texts was based on the pre-existing courses available in the university and thus would be at the participants level of English proficiency. For this study, the participants read two texts based on ‘stereotyping’ and ‘Korean culture’. They used the think-aloud strategy while reading the two texts and they were audio recorded.

The other instrument was the the semi-structured interview. The semi structured interview aimed to elicit participants' perspectives on the effects of the think-aloud strategies in their critical reading skills. The interview had ten questions that were developed by the researchers. The interview questions were piloted and enhanced after the pilot study.

### ***Procedure***

The design and development of the methodology for this study was guided by the ADDIE model and involved four phases that included analysis, design, development and

implementation. For phase one, the think-aloud strategy was used with participants while they were engaged during reading activities. The think-aloud is a method in which the participants speak aloud any words in their mind as they complete the task. Before the actual data collection, the participants were given training in using the think-aloud strategy for several lessons. After three sessions of trainings, the data collection was carried out, followed by the semi structured interviews with the participants. For the data collection, each participant read two texts and employed the think-aloud strategies.

The think-aloud phase and the semi structured interviews were audio recorded. The semi structured interviews were transcribed and analysed for recurring themes. These lessons were developed specifically for the research and to help students develop their critical reading skills. Participants used the think-aloud strategy while reading the two texts and they were audio recorded. They did the tasks individually. In phase two, the respondents that participated in the think-aloud phase were interviewed individually after they had completed both their reading tasks. The semi structured interviews were conducted to elicit participants' perspectives on the effects of the think-aloud strategies in their critical reading skills.

### **Findings and Discussion**

The purpose of this paper is to report on the participants' perspectives on the use of think-aloud in enhancing their critical reading. The data was gathered from the semi structured interviews with ten participants who first completed reading phase using the think-aloud strategy. The interviews probed participants experiences and feelings using the think-aloud strategy and how it influenced their reading skills. From the interviews, five themes were derived which are improving reading skills, enhancing English competency, developing critical reading skills, improving reading attitude and having a broader perspectives as the outcome of reading. The analysis and examples of each theme is discussed below.

#### ***Positive Views Of The Strategy***

From the interviews, it can be seen that nearly all the participants viewed the project positively. This was an important recurring theme found in the data, i.e. 'positive views of the think aloud strategy'. One participant, Ng (pseudonym) stated that this technique introduced him to a new reading process whereby he read and spoke out aloud while reading slowly in order to understand the reading materials. He said, "I gave a positive view to this project because it gave me a new technique in doing the reading process. This is because the techniques used encourage the reader to read and speak out at a moderate rate so that the reader can remember and understand the passage or reading material". Ng views the strategy as having a positive effect on his on own reading ability and comprehension skills. Another participant, Nabilah explained that the thinking aloud enabled her to think more, "Think aloud session makes me want to think more faster than before and make me think about an impossible thing".

Similarly, Izzati acknowledged that she learned not only how to read using the think aloud strategy, but she also could read the article faster and easier because she could understand it better. She compared the new technique with her current reading strategy, "Finally, I know (using think aloud strategy) how to read and understand the article more easily compared to my own strategy in reading which takes a longer time and I need to read it again and again to make myself understand". According to Izzati, previously, she used to read and reread the article to understand the gist, and it took a longer time to read. Now, she realized that when her reading became easier, she could read it faster. As a result, her reading became more



interesting. Izzati further explains that “For sure it helps me improve in reading. Make me understand the article easily. As a result, after this kind of strategy been taught by madam, I know that it is easy to understand the article and reading is not a bored thing but it is an interesting thing”.

In summary, the participants in this study realized that reading is an active process and that think aloud strategy helped them to verbalise what they were thinking about while reading, thus helping them comprehend the texts better. The think aloud strategy helped them increase their reading rates as well as comprehension levels. The participants also expressed that since they could better understand the texts, their interests in the texts also increased. This could eventually foster better reading habits and attitudes and develop lifelong readers.

### ***Improvement in Reading Skills and Confidence***

Another theme that emerged from the interviews was ‘improvement in reading skills’. Almost all participants reported that they learned new words, grammar, and that they felt ‘smarter’ after participating in the think-aloud activity while reading. Participant Liyana for example, mentioned that she discovered many new words and their meanings when she analyzed her own reading. Therefore, her reading became better and she felt more confident and smarter. Liyana explains in her interview, “The most interesting discoveries I have made is by reading it while analyzing. It makes my reading more efficient and fasten my progress. I had grown a lot during past few days reading using this method. Having discover new terms, words and synonyms made me smarter somehow”. This is also echoed by Hazem who stated that he learned to respond to words and phrases in the text that he read. He also reported that he checked the meaning of the new vocabulary in the text, “...because I have learnt how to respond to every single word and every phrase. At the same time, I have to understand properly about the meanings and some of the words that I don’t understand, same goes to vocabulary and many more”. Another participant, Nawal highlighted that she also realised that she could evaluate the text when she used the think aloud strategy and thus helped her comprehension skills as well. Nawal states that “..besides learning new vocabulary and finding meanings of new words and phrases, I also learned to make comments on the new information I read. I could provide positive and negative evaluation of what I read. This project gives me the positive effects also. It helps me in adding some vocabulary, finding unknown meanings, and commenting on positive or negative things in an information”.

Evaluating and interacting with texts is an important process for readers. When readers are actively engaged with interacting with texts, they begin to see their role in interpreting the information and in making sense of the reading. Nawal and Nabilah associated their new ability in reading and understanding the meaning with better performance in English. Nawal stated that through this project, her English performance improved. Nawal stated that “For me this project is really good because it also helps students a lot in their English learning . Last but not least, I think through this project, my English learning is getting better”. Like Nawal, Nabilah was also proud of her English achievement after learning about and using the think aloud strategy. She mentioned that she became more confident to speak in English because she improved her grammar. Nabilah stated that “The most positive things that I am very proud of myself when I’m more confident to talk in English and also improve my grammar”.

The interview data shows that incorporating the think-aloud strategy in the reading activity helped the participants to improve their reading skills as well as improve their confidence in learning English. In a way they seemed to be more confident as they can express themselves during the reading process and interpret the meaning from their own perspectives. And thus they felt more confident to speak in English. In the context of this study, when students are given the opportunity to respond to the text, they are capable of exploring their thoughts, ideas, and feelings about what they have read. The think-aloud strategies guided the participants by their own thoughts, experience and questions, instead of being dependent on their teachers. The focus is on the importance of creating learners' own meaning in order to see that reading is an active process as well as a meaning making event (Anzul, 1997).

### ***Positive Reading Attitude***

The third theme that emerged from the interview data was that the participants seemed to associate 'positive reading attitude'. The participants seemed to become more interested and invested in their reading and they managed to finish reading the articles patiently. Jia mentioned that the project helped her develop an interest in reading and encouraged her to finish reading the text. Jia states, "This is a project worth participating in. This project will make students who don't like reading change their mind and realize the advantage and develop an interest in reading. I also think that this is a positive teaching material that can be used to encourage the students. It may feel a little boring at first, but after that, I can find that this reading strategy allows me to read the entire article patiently". Another participant, Nurul explained that reading became more interesting as she had to search for new information and confirmed the information that she has read. Nurul goes on to say that "I will try to find another information and do my own research to get and confirm the information. Thinking aloud makes reading becomes more fun and exciting activity".

The role of thinking aloud in developing interest and encourage sustained reading and focus is shown by Shuhada who stated that she learned not to make assumptions early on, but to continue reading till the end. She reiterated, "It also gave me a positive impact for me as I need to keep track in reading and do not simply make an assumption until finished reading whole text. Many students normally complain that reading in English is boring and stressful for them. Izzati and Jia mentioned that they could easily get bored because they could not understand the text and some of the difficult words. At times, they claimed that they felt sleepy. Jia mentioned that she was resistant to reading English text because her English was not good, and she did not do well in the reading test because she could not understand many words. Jia states that "This project helped me in the reading strategy. Before this, I am very resistant to reading. This is because my English is not good, I am unable to understand many words and sentences. When I am doing the reading test, I also received a bad grade. But, after this project, I found that reading is actually not a boring thing". The same thoughts are echoed by Izzati who states that "Surely it gives us positive point. It could help us (especially me) in understand the story or article easily since I always find a hard way to understand and easily get bored when it's come to reading method. The think that come up in my mind is it help me in reading mode which not easily make me feel sleepy or bored".

Kotsopoulos (2010) stated that using the think-aloud strategy can enhance students' cognitive processes as it involves problem-solving activities and skills. In this study, Jia's data shows that she actively employed all the critical reading skills while actively interacting with the text by underlining and questioning her cognitive processes and discussing her metacognitive

processes. Jia's use of the think-aloud strategy allowed us to see how Jia organized her thoughts and questioned herself as she engaged with each line of the text she read. As Jia moved along the text she employed the various critical reading skills such as interpretation, analysis and self-regulation as well as expressed the metacognitive processes that she experienced. This echoes Singhal (2001) explanation that the think-aloud strategy is different from other reading strategies as it involves overt actions, where students clearly express aloud their mental processes while engaging in reading comprehension activities. Critical reading is an active process of discovery. Students will discover where the author stands on an issue; identify the strengths and weaknesses of the authors' argument and decide which sides outweighs the other. The end result is that they will have a better understanding of the issue. The students are also involved in active reading which means that reading something with a determination to understand and evaluate it for its relevance to their needs. The participants learned skills to complete reading texts, improved their comprehension skills as well as had a more positive attitude towards reading.

### ***Critical Reading Skills***

The fourth theme derived from the interviews was 'critical reading skills'. The participants mentioned that they developed critical reading skills from the think-aloud strategy. Critical reading is a more active way of reading. It is a deeper and more complex engagement with a text. Critical reading is a process of analyzing, interpreting and, sometimes, evaluating. When we read critically, we use our critical thinking skills to question both the text and our own reading of it. Ask questions, read actively, respond to own questions and record key concepts, are some of the elements of critical thinking. One participant, Habsah, mentions that when she read, she looked for clues or important points in the text in order to make sense of what she read and used the think aloud strategy. Habsah also claimed that she started to think outside of the box by doing some research about the text itself, to connect the sentences and key points. She states, "The important thing that I've learnt personally the skills of critical reading because it automatically boosts my mind to think about the clues or the important points from the text. What I have learnt about a result of using think aloud protocol to develop critical reading strategy is how I gained the understanding and how to use the smart skills to develop critical reading because I have to think out of the box from the sentences and points from my reading texts".

The think aloud strategy helps developing critical reading and thinking skills. Ng mentioned that he learned a lot while analyzing the text while employing the think aloud strategy. Ng associated discovering new terms, words, synonyms with making him more confident with his English skills. Ng reported that during the reading sessions, he also made notes of new words and synonyms. He also added that he took time to read, and that he read the text slowly as he had to think about it as well. This is a factor in a 'close reading'. By slowing down, more connections within the text could be made. Ng stated that "Well, the most interesting discovery I made was by reading it while analyzing. This makes me feel more efficient and it speeds up my progress when reading. I have increased a lot over the last few days reading using this method. Having discovered new terms, words and synonyms made me smarter. I learned it myself that if you want to be better at anything, you must follow the rules properly first. Don't just read it all at once and expect yourself to be smarter than other people. Everything takes time and needs to follow the right protocol in order to succeed. My values, opinions and beliefs change every time I read a different book". Like Ng, Nabilah also mentioned that she gained new knowledge after searching for words that were unknown to her. When she did some



research on the topic, she learned something new about the world. Nabilah also claimed that she became more diligent and involved in the research process. Besides, she also learned about stereotyping from the think aloud strategy training and the text on stereotyping. Nabilah stated, “It is such an amazing thing that I do during my semester break. It also improves my knowledge about something in the world that I do not know before this. I think I become more hardworking because if I do not know the meaning of one of the sentences or words, I will do some research about it. Stereotyping is one of the new topics for me. I never know about this before and I only know about it when I’m doing think aloud session”.

The participants in this study engaged in critical reading where they were actively and critically engaging with the content of what they read. They used library search, highlighted key ideas, wrote short comments, underlined and highlighted important points. These are all the elements of critical reading techniques. Critical reading means that a reader applies certain processes, models, questions and theories that result in enhanced clarity and comprehension. They are more involved, both in effort and understanding, in a critical reading rather than a mere ‘skimming’ of the text. Kim and Cha’s (2015) study also showed that the think-aloud strategy can be an effective instructional tool especially in reading skill instruction as it can stimulate students’ regulation of cognitive processes.

### ***Broaden Perspectives- Apply to other areas***

The last theme that emerged in this study is that the think-aloud strategy broadens the participants’ perspectives which then could be applied to other fields. Participants reported that the skills that they learnt and gained during the study could be used in other areas of their lives. Their confidence increased and they seem to be more confident in expressing their thoughts and feelings. Nurul mentioned that she could express her thoughts and ideas about the text read. It also helped her to understand the situation better and she became more rational. She stated, “My first thought for this project overall is positive because it helps me speak about my thoughts and opinions. This project also makes me learn new things and make me understand the situation better. Thinking aloud also helps me to think more rationally”. Nawal mentioned that she was able to discuss, comment and argue about any topic when she used the think aloud strategy. She gained some new information or knowledge when she used the strategy while reading the texts. She reported that she had more confidence to take part in her family discussion. She reported, “The most interesting thing that I discovered by this project is I can discuss, comment, and debate some information in more detail. I also can interrupt in my family conversation about some news that they discuss. I have learnt a lots of thing after joining this project such as I do not need to refer to any information in internet because I already gained some information in this project”.

The other participants also mentioned that the thinking aloud and reading activities increased their knowledge about other issues and made them want to keep reading as it seemed interesting and not difficult. For instance, Izzati mentioned that she gained more knowledge on current issues while reading the two texts. Izzati stated that “We could do reading and thinking aloud during our me-time or free time, plus this also can make us get more knowledge either about current issues or anything else. However, it takes time to develop the reading skills and understanding”. Nurul hopes that she could change her reading attitude and become a better reader but realises it is time consuming. Nurul adds that “It really takes time for me to have better understanding when reading by using think aloud protocol but I believe that it can slowly

help me to finish my reading with an extraordinary value or moral and change my reading habit”.

The participants gained wider perspectives of the issues discussed. They mentioned that the think-aloud strategy that they had learned could be applied in other fields. Some of them also stated that they learned to question what they read and not to simply believe the information presented to them. They had to make judgements as to what is right or wrong. They could make their own argument about the texts they read. In other words, making judgment and interpretations of the ideas, arguments, and claims of others presented in the text, will make them more critical readers. Lestari asserts that critical reading helps readers ‘to understand the message of the text, and the arrangement of the text’ (2015, p. 521). Critical reading helps readers to not only understand the text better but also help them to remember what has been read and apply it in future. This ability is very useful for university students since they need to do a large amount of reading for their courses and apply what they have read in their assignments.

### Conclusion

Although the results show that the participants do develop their critical reading skills by using the think aloud strategy, they still need to develop their reading skills. As reported by McNeil (2011) ESL learners need to be aware of the cognitive as well as metacognitive processes to develop the critical reading ability. McNeil (2011) showed that highly proficient second L2 readers employ a higher range and rate of critical reading strategies than lower proficiency L2 readers in terms of the reading strategies that they utilized. It is essential for undergraduates to develop critical reading skills as they need to process a variety of academic reading to develop their knowledge and abilities thus securing themselves better employment in the future. The think aloud strategy could be one avenue to help them develop the essential skill of critical reading and thinking. It is essential for undergraduates to develop critical reading skills in order to be relevant to the current needs and requirements of the workplace. As indicated in the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2015-2025, employers often complain that ‘graduates lack critical thinking, communication skills and the language proficiency, especially in English which are essential for success in the 21st century (p.11).

The think-aloud strategy, combined with metacognitive strategies, has been demonstrated to significantly improve reading comprehension skills, particularly among ESL learners. The findings from this research also show that participants felt that their reading skills and self confidence in English also increased. Participants seemed to enjoy the experience of reading and thinking aloud. Thinking aloud seemed to make participants more aware of what they were reading and helped develop their critical reading skills. Research has emphasized the positive impact of the think-aloud strategy on enhancing reading comprehension in various educational settings (Burhansyah et al., 2022; McKeown & Gentilucci, 2007; Momdjian, 2024; Sari, 2023; Wang, 2015). By prompting students to articulate their thoughts while reading and cultivating metacognitive awareness, this approach not only supports comprehension but also enhances students' capacity to monitor their understanding of the text. This deliberate reflection on their cognitive processes helps learners cultivate a deeper grasp of the material and enhances their overall reading comprehension. The integration of metacognitive strategies and the think-aloud approach offers students a structured framework to tackle reading tasks, resulting in more effective comprehension and critical reading skills.

There are several limitations to this study. The limitations include small number of participants as well as only the use of two texts. It is hoped that future studies be conducted with a larger number of participants with varying levels of proficiency with a variety of texts. Given the enthusiasm showed by the participants in this study of the think aloud strategy and its effects on their critical reading skills as well as the benefits the participants felt, the think aloud strategy could offer help in enhancing reading skills of students and develop their thinking skills. It is hoped that future studies conduct a more rigorous study in this area to measure the effects of the thinking aloud strategy on reading skills with participants of varying levels of proficiency.

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