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*Research Article*

# Socioculturally Appropriate Language-Learning Strategies and Self-Reported Critical Reading Skills Among English-Major Teacher Education Students

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## Abstract

Socioculturally appropriate language-learning strategies and critical reading skills are essential competencies that support students' effective language use and comprehension. Despite their importance, limited empirical studies have explored these variables across diverse geographical contexts. The primary purpose of the study determined the relationship between socioculturally appropriate language-learning strategies and the critical reading skills of college students, and tested whether these skills differ by year level. This study was carried out using a non-experimental quantitative research design, employing the descriptive-correlational and descriptive-comparative methods. This study was conducted in a private higher education institution in Davao City. Stratified random sampling was used to select the research sample of 208 respondents. Survey questionnaires with Cronbach's Alpha of 0.937 for the socioculturally appropriate language-learning strategies and 0.971 for critical reading skills were used to collect data. Findings revealed that the levels of socioculturally appropriate language-learning strategies (M=3.33) and critical reading skills (M=3.31) are rated very high. Further, there was a significant difference when both variables are analyzed by year level (F-value=6.456; F-value=8.921). Moreover, a significant relationship existed between the variables under investigation (r-value=.581; p-value=.001). Higher self-reported use of socioculturally appropriate language-learning strategies was moderately associated with higher self-reported critical reading skills. Because the study was cross-sectional and relied on self-report measures, the findings did not establish that the strategies caused improvements in critical reading.

**Keywords:** language-learning strategies; critical reading; English-major students; teacher education; year level; Philippines

## 1. Introduction

In today's ever-evolving world, employing language-learning strategies and improving critical reading skills empower students not only to learn words but also to comprehend and communicate with purpose. According to Aziz et al. (2024), critical reading is an essential skill, especially for university students, because it helps learners evaluate the credibility of texts, understand multiple perspectives, and make informed decisions (Niculescu & Dragomir, 2023; Apriyanti et al., 2024). Nonetheless, critical reading remains an emerging concern in higher education.

Globally, Anuar and Sidhu's (2017) study found that students at a university in Malaysia demonstrated moderate readiness and challenges in applying higher-order thinking, while students at Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University showed an unwillingness to generate new ideas, indicating a passive role in processing information (Hromova et al., 2022). In Shanghai, China, Ding (2025) found that technology can improve critical reading but may also present challenges such as limited emotional feedback, overreliance on technology, and the reinforcement of traditional teaching practices. Furthermore, teachers in South Africa had insufficient training in reading instruction methods and inadequate language knowledge (Mokobe et al., 2025), while poor reading outcomes in the Philippines were associated with limited resources and socioeconomic disparities (Idulog et al., 2023). These findings suggest that critical reading is influenced by students' abilities as well as instructional, technological, and socioeconomic contexts.

Moreover, research has shown that language-learning strategies facilitate language acquisition and improve learning outcomes (Rahman, 2020; Berg et al., 2021; Liu, 2023; Paladin & Eustaquio, 2025). However, strategy use varies across learning contexts. Moroccan EFL students frequently rely on metacognitive, memory, compensation, and social strategies (Nadif, 2025), consistent with findings from other EFL contexts, where these strategies were likewise identified as commonly used approaches for managing language-learning, addressing communication difficulties, and supporting interaction (Chuin & Kaur, 2015; Alrashidi, 2022; Peter & Hashim, 2023), whereas Indonesian non-English majors use cognitive strategies more often (Wahyudin et al., 2021). These differences indicate that language-learning strategies may be influenced by learners' cultural, social, and educational contexts.

In this study, socioculturally appropriate language-learning strategies refer to the use of language-learning strategies that are responsive to learners' sociocultural and educational contexts, distinguishing them from general language-learning strategies. Nevertheless, negative emotions and burnout may hinder students' ability to utilize strategies effectively (Wang et al., 2024).

Furthermore, Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (CDST) and Transactional Theory provide complementary explanations for the relationship between language-learning strategies and critical reading skills. CDST views language-learning as a dynamic and evolving process in which cognitive, affective, social, and environmental factors interact over time (Larsen-Freeman, 2019; Verspoor, 2017). This perspective supports examining socioculturally appropriate language-learning strategies because learners' strategy use may emerge from their interaction with and adaptation to their learning environments. Transactional Theory, proposed by Rosenblatt (1978), views reading as an active transaction between the reader and the text, in which meaning is constructed through the reader's experiences, purposes, and responses to the text. This perspective aligns with critical reading processes that require learners to interpret, evaluate, and consider multiple perspectives. Thus, CDST explains the dynamic and contextual nature of language-learning strategies, while Transactional Theory explains the active construction of meaning during reading. Together, these theories provide a basis for examining how students' strategic approaches to language-learning may relate to their engagement with and evaluation of texts. Year level is treated as a grouping variable in the present study because students' academic experiences and learning demands may change as they progress through college; therefore, the study examines differences in mean scores across year levels rather than whether year level moderates the relationship between the variables.

Despite existing studies on language learning strategies and critical reading skills, the literature remains fragmented. Studies have examined language learning strategies across different contexts, critical reading challenges, and linguistic factors related to critical reading, such as vocabulary size and text coverage (Ait Hammou et al., 2025), but the relationship between socioculturally appropriate language learning strategies and critical reading skills remains insufficiently examined. Moreover, there is a need to determine whether these constructs differ across year levels within a higher-education context. Therefore, the present study addresses this relational and contextual gap by examining the relationship between socioculturally appropriate language learning strategies and critical reading skills among college students in Davao City and differences across year levels.

### *1.2. Research Objectives*

The primary purpose of the study was to determine the significant relationship between socioculturally appropriate language-learning strategies and the critical reading skills of college students. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following objectives:

1. to describe the level of socioculturally appropriate language-learning strategies observed by college students in terms of:
   a. problem-solving strategies;
   b. socio-affective strategies;
   c. metacognitive strategies;
   d. production strategies;

e. face-to-face communication strategies;
f. technology use strategies;
g. multimedia use strategies; and
h. grammar and reading strategies.

2. to ascertain the level of critical reading skills among college students in terms of:
   a. knowledge skills;
   b. comprehension skills;
   c. application skills;
   d. analysis skills;
   e. synthesis skills; and
   f. evaluation skills.

3. to test the significant difference in the socioculturally appropriate language-learning strategies and critical reading skills of college students when analyzed by year level; and

4. to determine the significant relationship between socioculturally appropriate language-learning strategies and critical reading skills among college students.

### *1.3. Hypotheses*

The following hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in socioculturally appropriate language-learning strategies and critical reading skills among college students when analyzed by year level.

2. There is no significant relationship between socioculturally appropriate language-learning strategies and critical reading skills.

### *1.4. Theoretical Background*

According to CDST, language-learning is not a simple process because of the dynamic interplay of various factors over time. This shows that using language-learning strategies is linked to learners' improvement in reading skills. This theory emphasizes the variability, flexibility, and changing nature of language development, supporting the idea that students' strategic actions influence their progress in critical reading in different and sometimes unexpected ways (Larsen-Freeman, 2019). Simultaneously, Rosenblatt's transactional theory suggests that reading is a joint process between the reader and the text, in which meaning is created through active involvement and interpretation (Rosenblatt, 1978; Li & Zheng, 2024). Together, these theories provide a strong foundation for examining how students use socioculturally appropriate language-learning strategies, which influence their ability to think critically and derive deeper meaning from texts. Moreover, in this study, complex dynamic systems theory will be used to examine language-learning as a dynamic, adaptable process in which multiple interconnected factors, such as students' strategies and contextual

influences, interact and evolve. This approach allows the researcher to explore how students' strategic behaviors develop, shift, and affect their critical reading performance in a non-linear and context-dependent way. This means the researcher examined how strategy use develops, stabilizes, or changes as students face reading requirements throughout their academic journey.

On the other hand, the transactional theory will be used to understand critical reading as an interactive process in which meaning is co-constructed by the reader and the text. Therefore, the reader's prior knowledge, experiences, and engagement play a significant role. This theory aided the researcher in exploring how students across different year levels draw on different knowledge bases or disciplinary perspectives when reading academic and non-academic texts and understand differences in critical reading skills by recognizing that each reader brings a unique academic experience and distinct thought processes that influence how they interpret, question, and assess textual information.

### *1.5. Conceptual Framework*

Figure 1 illustrates the interplay among the independent and dependent variables, including the moderator variable. The independent variable is socioculturally-appropriate language learning strategies, referring to actions that students choose to help them learn a language (Griffiths, 2018). On the other hand, the dependent variable is critical reading skills, referring to the connection of the reading material to personal values, attitudes, and standards (Din, 2020). The moderating variable refers to the college year level of college students at a private college in Davao City.

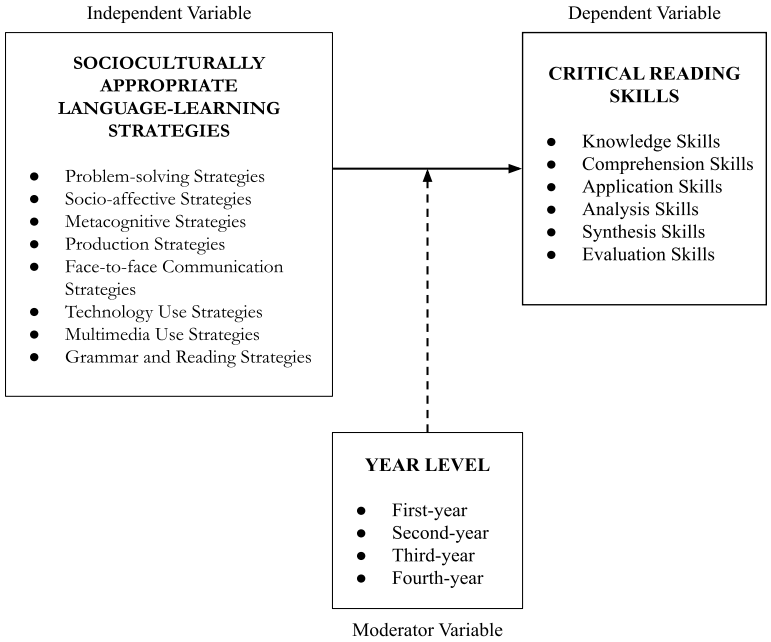



**Figure 1.** Conceptual Paradigm

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## 2. Materials and Methods

### *2.1. Research Design*

This research utilized a non-experimental quantitative research design, conducting a structured investigation that gathers and evaluates numerical data to comprehend relationships, patterns, and trends among variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A descriptive correlational method was used in this study to examine the relationships between socioculturally appropriate language-learning strategies and critical reading skills. A descriptive correlational method is a research study in which the researcher aims to describe a relationship between variables. (Devi et al., 2023). This design was relevant to this research because it aimed to determine whether socioculturally appropriate language-learning strategies are significantly correlated with critical reading skills. Meanwhile, the descriptive-comparative method was used to determine whether there were significant differences in socioculturally appropriate language-learning strategies and critical reading skills when analyzed according to students' year level. Using this approach, the study provided empirical evidence on how these factors interact among college students from different year levels.

### *2.2. Respondents and Sampling Procedure*

The respondents in this study were college students from an institution in Davao City. Using the Raosoft sample size calculator, a sample size of two hundred eight college English major students. As suggested by Memon et al. (2020), a carefully selected small sample, 150 and above, is more meaningful than an unthinkingly selected large sample, 300 and above. Further, this study employed stratified random sampling, a statistical method in which a population is divided into distinct subgroups, called strata, according to specific characteristics, and a random sample is then drawn from each subgroup (Makwana et al., 2023). This approach divided the college students into four strata based on year level, which served as the grouping variable: first-year, second-year, third-year, and fourth-year, with fifty-two students allocated to each stratum. Respondents were then randomly selected, per section, from each group to ensure balanced representation across the sample. The study targeted college students who were officially enrolled during the academic year 2025-2026. Students who chose not to participate, and who transferred during the semester, are not included in the study. These exclusions aimed to reduce variables that could affect the reliability of the results, as clear inclusion and exclusion criteria improve the study's accuracy.

### *2.3. Research Instruments*

Two sets of adapted survey questionnaires were used to collect data from the study's respondents. The first instrument, with 46 items, designed by Berg et al. (2021), assessed socioculturally appropriate language-learning strategies. Meanwhile the second, with 43 items, adapted from Anuar and Sidhu (2017),

measured perceived critical reading skills. To ensure the validity and reliability of these research instruments, the study adhered to thorough procedures, from face validity assessment to reliability testing. According to Nha (2021), validity refers to the extent to which a study measures what it is intended to measure, ensuring that the conclusions are reliable and applicable. As part of this process, a panel of specialists in questionnaire design, including two doctoral degree holders and one master's degree holder, reviewed and revised the survey questionnaire to ensure its clarity, relevance, and suitability for the intended respondents. Huck (2015) noted that a scale shows strong internal consistency when its items are clearly organized to measure the same concept. In this study, a four-point Likert scale was employed due to its common application and effectiveness.

The instruments were pilot tested to 30 students to determine their reliability, with the first questionnaire obtaining a Cronbach's alpha of 0.937, while the second questionnaire obtained a Cronbach's alpha of 0.971, indicating excellent internal consistency and reliability.

First Questionnaire

**Reliability Analysis**

Scale Reliability Statistics

| | Cronbach's α |
|---|---|
| **scale** | 0.937 |

Second Questionnaire

**Reliability Analysis**

Scale Reliability Statistics

| | Cronbach's α |
|---|---|
| **scale** | 0.971 |

### *2.4. Data Collection and Analysis*

The data collection process for this study took a careful, thorough approach to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the information gathered.

The researcher collected the data through a 3-day face-to-face survey, at a private college in Davao City, allowing for direct interaction with the respondents and reducing potential misunderstandings of questionnaire items. This method ensured precise responses and improved the reliability of the data.

Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from the respondents, and the purpose, voluntary nature, and confidentiality of the study were explained. To minimize authority pressure, respondents were allowed to participate voluntarily and complete the questionnaires independently. The

survey required sufficient time for completion, after which the responses were collected, screened for completeness, and encoded for analysis. Incomplete questionnaires were excluded, while the completed data were securely stored and accessed only by the researcher.

After collecting the data, statistical analyses were conducted using the Mean and Standard Deviation to analyze the respondents' scores. The mean was used to determine the central tendency of the responses, while the standard deviation was used to measure the variation within the dataset. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was employed to determine whether significant differences existed in the socioculturally appropriate language-learning strategies and critical reading skills of college students across year levels. Finally, Pearson's correlation coefficient (Pearson's r) was used to examine the relationship between the variables. A 0.05 level of significance was used as the basis for determining the statistical significance of the results. This structured approach made sure that the results were precise, credible, and meaningful, contributing to a clear understanding of the study's objectives.

### *2.4. Ethical Considerations*

The data collection process for this study took a careful and thorough approach to ensure the accuracy and dependability of the information gathered. Prior to data collection, the study was reviewed and administrative permission was also obtained from the participating institution. All respondents gave written informed consent to participate and were given the option of doing so. All participants were told that they could refuse to answer any question and they could refuse to continue the study at any time without any penalty. No personal data or names were gathered and responses were kept confidential. Data were stored for 6 months after collection and then securely destroyed and deleted. Only aggregate data has been reported to avoid identifying individual respondents and/or participating academic units. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly observed and data privacy was maintained in accordance with the Philippines Data Privacy Act of 2012, Republic Act No. 10173. Furthermore, the researcher upheld honesty, integrity, and objectivity in the collection, analysis, and reporting of data, and all sources were properly acknowledged through appropriate citation and referencing practices.

## 3. Results

### *3.1. Level of Socioculturally appropriate Language-Learning Strategies*

Table 1 presents the college students' level of socioculturally appropriate language-learning strategies, gaining an overall mean rating of 3.33 or very high. This means that the socioculturally appropriate language-learning strategies employed by college students were always manifested. Additionally, the overall computed standard deviation was equivalent to 0.341, which indicated that the individual responses to the statements of this variable were clustered around the mean.

The indicators with a very high mean rating were: problem-solving strategies with a category mean of 3.55; metacognitive strategies with a category mean of 3.33; face-to-face communication strategies with a category mean of 3.52; technology use strategies with a category mean of 3.52; multimedia use strategies with a category mean of 3.62; and grammar and reading strategies with a category mean of 3.28. On the other hand, indicators with a high mean rating were as follows: Socio-affective strategies which had a category mean of 3.05; and production strategies with a category mean of 3.23.

**Table 1.** Level of the Socioculturally appropriate Language-Learning Strategies of College Students

| Indicator | Category Mean | Standard Deviation | Descriptive Equivalent |
|---|---|---|---|
| Problem-solving Strategies | 3.55 | 0.385 | Very High |
| Socio-affective Strategies | 3.05 | 0.688 | High |
| Metacognitive Strategies | 3.33 | 0.509 | Very High |
| Production Strategies | 3.23 | 0.500 | High |
| Face-to-face Communication Strategies | 3.52 | 0.434 | Very High |
| Technology Use Strategies | 3.52 | 0.499 | Very High |
| Multimedia Use Strategies | 3.62 | 0.417 | Very High |
| Grammar and Reading Strategies | 3.28 | 0.636 | Very High |
| **Total** | **3.33** | **0.341** | **Very High** |

Following a detailed path of the results, the rest of the indicators of socioculturally appropriate language-learning strategies with their highest and lowest mean ratings were classified:

Among problem-solving strategies, *paying attention when someone is speaking English* received the highest mean rating of 3.72 or *very high*, while *asking for help from English speakers* received the lowest mean rating of 3.35 or *very high.*

Among socio-affective strategies, *practicing English with other students* received the highest mean rating of 3.21 or *high*, while *writing down feelings in a language learning diary* received the lowest mean rating of 2.82 or *high*.

Among metacognitive strategies, *reflecting on progress in learning English* received the highest mean rating of 3.46 or *very high*, *while planning a schedule to have enough time to study English* received the lowest mean rating of 3.05 or high.

Among production strategies, *finding opportunities to use new vocabulary or phrases in spoken dialogue to improve English skills* received the highest mean rating of 3.43 or *very high*, while *using word cards to learn English words to improve English skills* received the lowest mean rating of 2.94 or *high*.

Under face-to-face communication strategies, *observing other people's body language, facial expressions, tones, etc., to better understand spoken English* obtained the highest mean rating of 3.69, or *very high*, while *asking people to use easier words when unable to understand spoken English* had the lowest mean rating of 3.39, or very high.

Under technology use strategies, both *using computer or smartphone grammar apps in order to improve English grammar skills* and *going online to find answers to learn and/or confirm English grammar* obtained the highest mean rating of 3.56, or *very high*, while checking the paper or online dictionaries to learn English words had the lowest mean rating of 3.40, or *very high*.

Under multimedia use strategies, *watching English TV shows or online videos, such as movies, dramas, news, reports, etc., in order to improve English skills* obtained the highest mean rating of 3.64, or *very high*, while *applying English learned from English TV programs, movies, dramas, online videos, or English broadcasts* had the lowest mean rating of 3.60, or *very high*.

Under grammar and *reading strategies, reading paper or online articles, magazines, reports, etc., in order to increase the opportunities of reading English*, obtained the highest mean rating of 3.31 or *very high*, while *reading grammar books or articles in order to improve English grammar skills* had the lowest mean rating of 3.25 or *high*.

These results indicate that the college students' socioculturally appropriate language-learning strategies were consistently evident. This means that college students use various socioculturally appropriate language-learning strategies that are effective for language-learning.

### *3.2. Level of Critical Reading Skills*

Table 2 presents the college students' level of critical reading skills, with an overall mean rating of 3.31, described as very high. This indicates that the critical reading skills of college students were likewise always manifested. Additionally, the overall computed standard deviation was 0.490, indicating that the individual responses to the statements measuring this variable were clustered around the mean.

Critical reading skills consisted of six (6) indicators, each with different category means and corresponding descriptive equivalents. The indicators with very high mean ratings were knowledge skills and comprehension skills, with a category mean of 3.31; analysis skills and synthesis skills, with a category mean of 3.37; and evaluation skills, with a category mean of 3.29. On the other hand,

application skills was the only indicator with a high mean rating, with a category mean of 3.21.

**Table 2.** Level of the Critical Reading Skills of College Students

| Indicator | Category Mean | Standard Deviation | Descriptive Equivalent |
|---|---|---|---|
| Knowledge Skills | 3.31 | 0.501 | Very High |
| Comprehension Skills | 3.31 | 0.462 | Very High |
| Application Skills | 3.21 | 0.520 | High |
| Analysis Skills | 3.37 | 0.505 | Very High |
| Synthesis Skills | 3.37 | 0.537 | Very High |
| Evaluation Skills | 3.29 | 0.423 | Very High |
| **Total** | **3.31** | **0.423** | **Very High** |

Under the critical reading skills are six (6) indicators, with each having different category means, with almost all having the same corresponding descriptive equivalent: The indicators with a *very high* mean rating were: knowledge skills and comprehension skills with a category mean of 3.31; analysis skills and synthesis skills with a category mean of 3.37; and evaluation skills with a category mean of 3.29. On the other hand, the only indicator with a *high* mean rating was application skills, with a category mean of 3.21.

The rest of the indicators of critical reading skills, with their highest and lowest mean ratings, were classified: Under knowledge skills, *identifying main ideas in a text* obtained the highest mean rating of 3.35, or *very high*, while *identifying specific terms in a text* had the lowest mean rating of 3.26, or *very high.*

Under comprehension skills, *reading and trying to understand the title of a text* obtained the highest mean rating of 3.59, or *very high*, while *understanding linear and non-linear texts* had the lowest mean rating of 3.08, or *high*.

Under application skills, *applying personal experiences to the reading process* obtained the highest mean rating of 3.34, or *very high*, while *predicting outcomes of an article* had the lowest mean rating of 2.97, or *high*.

Under analysis skills, *distinguishing facts from opinions* obtained the highest mean rating of 3.49 or *very high*, while *separating an idea into its component parts* had the lowest mean rating of 3.24, or *high*.

Under synthesis skills, *summarizing information after reading a text* received the highest mean rating of 3.42 or *very high*. In contrast, both *relating*

*ideas and concepts between paragraphs* and *following the development of a point in a text* received the lowest mean rating of 3.34 *very high*.

Under evaluation skills, *evaluating the relevance of an idea in a text* obtained the highest mean rating of 3.36, or *very high*, while *discerning the organization of a passage* had the lowest mean rating of 3.18, or *high*.

These results indicate that the college students' critical reading skills were consistently evident. This further demonstrates that as students actively engage in various reading tasks, they simultaneously improve their critical reading skills.

### *3.3. Significant Difference in Socioculturally appropriate Language-Learning Strategies and Critical Reading Skills of College Students When Analyzed by Year Level*

Table 3 showed the significant difference in socioculturally appropriate language-learning strategies and critical reading skills of college students when analyzed by year level. The mean square of the socioculturally appropriate language-learning strategies between groups was 0.699, while within groups was 0.108. Furthermore, it could also be observed from the data that the calculated F-value of the socioculturally appropriate language-learning strategies was 6.456 and a p-value of <.001. This was very much lower than the .05 level of significance set in this study. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

On the other hand, the mean square of the critical reading skills between groups was 1.44, while within groups was 0.161. Furthermore, it could also be observed from the data that the calculated F-value of the critical reading skills was 8.921 and a p-value of <.001. This was likewise very much lower than the .05 level of significance set in this study. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

**Table 3.** Significant Difference in the Level of Socioculturally appropriate Language-Learning Strategies and Critical Reading Skills When Analyzed by Year Level

| Variable | Group | Mean Square | F-value | p-value | Decision on $H_o$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Socioculturally appropriate Language-Learning Strategies* | Between Groups | 0.699 | 6.456 | <.001 | Rejected |
| | Within Groups | 0.108 | | | |
| *Critical Reading Skills* | Between Groups | 1.44 | 8.921 | <.001 | Rejected |
| | Within Groups | 0.161 | | | |

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**Table 3.** (continued)

| Multiple Comparisons | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variable | Year Level | | Standard Error | p-value | Decision on H0 |
| *Socioculturally-appropriate Language Learning Strategies* | 1st Year | 2nd Year | 0.061 | 0.380 | Not Significant |
| | | 3rd Year | 0.059 | 0.786 | Not Significant |
| | | 4th Year | 0.061 | 0.002 | Significant |
| | 2nd Year | 1st Year | 0.061 | 0.380 | Not Significant |
| | | 3rd Year | 0.071 | 0.137 | Not Significant |
| | | 4th Year | 0.072 | 0.301 | Not Significant |
| | 3rd Year | 1st Year | 0.059 | 0.786 | Not Significant |
| | | 2nd Year | 0.071 | 0.137 | Not Significant |
| | | 4th Year | 0.071 | <.001 | Significant |
| | 4th Year | 1st Year | 0.061 | 0.002 | Significant |
| | | 2nd Year | 0.072 | 0.301 | Not Significant |
| | | 3rd Year | 0.071 | <.001 | Significant |
| *Critical Reading Skills* | 1st Year | 2nd Year | 0.074 | 0.481 | Not Significant |
| | | 3rd Year | 0.072 | 0.316 | Not Significant |
| | | 4th Year | 0.075 | <.001 | Significant |
| | 2nd Year | 1st Year | 0.074 | 0.481 | Not Significant |
| | | 3rd Year | 0.086 | 0.040 | Significant |
| | | 4th Year | 0.089 | 0.126 | Not Significant |
| | 3rd Year | 1st Year | 0.072 | 0.316 | Not Significant |
| | | 2nd Year | 0.086 | 0.040 | Significant |
| | | 4th Year | 0.080 | <.001 | Significant |
| | 4th Year | 1st Year | 0.075 | <.001 | Significant |
| | | 2nd Year | 0.089 | 0.126 | Not Significant |
| | | 3rd Year | 0.087 | <.001 | Significant |

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### *3.4. Correlation Between Variables*

Table 4 summarized the correlation among the variables under investigation in this study. The association between socioculturally appropriate language-learning strategies and critical reading skills was defined by an overall calculated r-value of .581 or moderate positive association, and a p-value of <.001 which was less than the significance level of 0.05. This implies that there is an association between the variables in consideration with some degree of statistical significance; hence, rejecting the null hypothesis. This clearly demonstrates that socioculturally appropriate language-learning strategies and critical reading skills are interrelated variables. The results underscore the importance of these factors in the context of shaping and solidifying their importance in other studies as well as practices.

**Table 4.** Correlation Between Variables

| Socioculturally appropriate Language-Learning Strategies | Critical Reading Skills | | | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Knowledge Skills | Comprehension Skills | Application Skills | Analysis Skills | Synthesis Skills | Evaluation Skills | |
| Problem-solving strategies | .343***<br><.001 | .443***<br><.001 | .329***<br><.001 | .411***<br><.001 | .359***<br><.001 | .411***<br><.001 | .447***<br><.001 |
| Socio-affective strategies | .280***<br><.001 | .318***<br><.001 | .279***<br><.001 | .237***<br><.001 | .244***<br><.001 | .281***<br><.001 | .309***<br><.001 |
| Metacognitive strategies | .325***<br><.001 | .401***<br><.001 | .331***<br><.001 | .329***<br><.001 | .306***<br><.001 | .374***<br><.001 | .409***<br><.001 |
| Production strategies | .347***<br><.001 | .438***<br><.001 | .395***<br><.001 | .351***<br><.001 | .324***<br><.001 | .423***<br><.001 | .457***<br><.001 |
| Face-to-face Communication strategies | .341***<br><.001 | .356***<br><.001 | .301***<br><.001 | .337***<br><.001 | .237***<br><.001 | .306***<br><.001 | .370***<br><.001 |
| Technology Use strategies | .263***<br><.001 | .327***<br><.001 | .284***<br><.001 | .332***<br><.001 | .281***<br><.001 | .365***<br><.001 | .366***<br><.001 |
| Multimedia Use strategies | .354***<br><.001 | .394***<br><.001 | .272***<br><.001 | .358***<br><.001 | .297***<br><.001 | .350***<br><.001 | .394***<br><.001 |
| Grammar and Reading strategies | .312***<br><.001 | .556***<br><.001 | .495***<br><.001 | .392***<br><.001 | .405***<br><.001 | .554***<br><.001 | .560***<br><.001 |
| Total | .451***<br><.001 | .563***<br><.001 | .475***<br><.001 | .481***<br><.001 | .425***<br><.001 | .535***<br><.001 | .581***<br><.001 |

## 4. Discussion

### *4.1. Level of Socioculturally appropriate Language-Learning Strategies of College Students*

The findings showed an overall mean rating of 3.33, with a descriptive equivalent of very high, for socioculturally appropriate language-learning strategies. This indicates that respondents reported frequent use of these strategies. The finding is consistent with Berg et al. (2025), who emphasized the role of language-learning strategies in supporting second language acquisition. Similarly, Hashim (2018) found that students use language-learning strategies as part of their learning processes, while Osle (2025) highlighted their importance in language learning.

Eight indicators were examined: problem-solving, socio-affective, metacognitive, production, face-to-face communication, technology use, multimedia use, and grammar and reading strategies. Problem-solving, metacognitive, face-to-face communication, technology use, multimedia use, and grammar and reading strategies obtained very high mean ratings, whereas socio-affective and production strategies obtained high mean ratings.

Among the indicators, multimedia use strategies obtained the highest mean rating (M = 3.62, SD = 0.417), with a descriptive equivalent of very high. This suggests that respondents frequently reported using multimedia resources in their language learning, including watching English programs, listening to English materials, and applying language encountered through media. Teng (2025) and Segar and Asmawi (2023) similarly emphasized the role of multimedia resources in language learning, particularly in supporting vocabulary acquisition and learner engagement. However, Ghafar et al. (2023) noted that excessive reliance on technology may present challenges when learners lack appropriate guidance. Thus, the present finding indicates frequent reported use of multimedia strategies but does not establish that these strategies are necessarily effective.

In contrast, socio-affective strategies obtained the lowest mean rating (M = 3.05, SD = 0.688), although the level remained high. This suggests that respondents reported less frequent use of strategies involving emotional regulation and social interaction than the other strategy categories. Quinto and Cacanindin (2024) noted that socio-affective strategies involve emotional and social engagement, while Tjernberg and Sourander (2025) emphasized the role of teacher guidance and interaction in supporting such strategies. These findings may help explain the relatively lower reported use of socio-affective strategies in the present study.

Overall, the findings indicate that respondents reported a very high level of socioculturally appropriate language-learning strategy use, with multimedia strategies receiving the highest reported use and socio-affective strategies receiving the lowest. These findings describe respondents' reported strategy use and should not be interpreted as evidence that the strategies are effective or

causally responsible for language development.

### *4.2. Level of Critical Reading Skills of College Students*

The findings showed an overall mean rating of 3.31, with a descriptive equivalent of very high, for self-reported critical reading skills. This indicates that respondents reported a high level of confidence in their ability to perform critical reading activities. The finding is consistent with Suzanne (2016), who described critical reading as an approach that supports deeper engagement with texts. However, because the present study used a self-report questionnaire, the results reflect respondents' perceptions of their critical reading abilities rather than objectively measured critical reading performance.

Six indicators were examined: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Knowledge, comprehension, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation obtained very high mean ratings, while application obtained a high mean rating.

Analysis and synthesis obtained the highest category mean ratings at 3.37. These results indicate that respondents reported a high level of confidence in activities related to analyzing and synthesizing information, such as distinguishing facts from opinions, identifying relationships among ideas, and summarizing information. Phoosomphong et al. (2025) emphasized the role of structured strategies in supporting analytical skills, while Setiawati and Syam (2025) discussed the contribution of active and project-based learning to synthesis skills. However, the present results should be interpreted as self-reported perceptions rather than direct evidence of objectively demonstrated higher-order thinking performance.

Application skills obtained the lowest category mean rating at 3.21, although this remained within the high descriptive level. This suggests that respondents reported comparatively lower confidence in applying knowledge to different or unfamiliar contexts. Saka et al. (2023) noted that contextual differences may create challenges in applying theoretical knowledge to real-life situations, while Constantinou (2024) emphasized the importance of contextualized approaches in supporting knowledge application.

Overall, the findings indicate that respondents reported a very high level of critical reading skills, particularly in the areas of analysis and synthesis. However, these results should be understood as self-reported perceptions and not as objective evidence of critical reading performance. The comparatively lower rating for application may provide a basis for instructional activities that give students additional opportunities to apply reading concepts in varied contexts.

### *4.3. Significant Difference in Socioculturally appropriate Language-Learning Strategies and Critical Reading Skills of College Students When Analyzed by Year Level*

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed statistically significant differences in the reported levels of socioculturally appropriate language-learning strategies across year levels. The between-group mean square was 0.699, while the within-group mean square was 0.108, resulting in an F-value of 6.456 and a p-value of < .001. Since the p-value was below the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. This indicates that the reported use of socioculturally appropriate language-learning strategies differed significantly among the year-level groups.

Comparisons further showed significant differences between selected year-level groups, including first-year and fourth-year students, third-year and fourth-year students, and first-year and third-year students. These differences are consistent with Saez-Zevallos and Montalvo-Apolín (2025), who reported variations in learners' strategic behavior across academic groups. Li et al. (2024) likewise described differences in the strategic behavior of learners at different levels of academic experience. However, because the present study used a cross-sectional design, these differences should not be interpreted as evidence that academic progression caused changes in language-learning strategy use. Other characteristics of the year-level groups may also account for the observed differences.

For self-reported critical reading skills, the ANOVA also indicated a statistically significant difference across year levels. The between-group mean square was 1.44, while the within-group mean square was 0.161, resulting in an F-value of 8.921 and a p-value of < .001. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating that the reported levels of critical reading skills differed significantly among the year-level groups.

Comparisons indicated significant differences between selected year-level groups, including fourth-year and first-year students, third-year and second-year students, and fourth-year and third-year students. Incera (2025) reported differences in critical reading performance across groups with varying levels of academic exposure. However, these findings do not establish that students' critical reading skills improve as they advance through year levels. Dunggo-an et al. (2025), for example, reported that reading strategies and comprehension may not always be significantly related, indicating that differences in reading-related outcomes may depend on factors beyond academic year level.

The observed differences may nevertheless provide a basis for considering instructional support appropriate to students' reported needs at different year levels. For example, instructors may provide more guided reading and vocabulary activities when appropriate, while offering more independent analysis and evaluation tasks to students who are ready for them. Such recommendations are pedagogical considerations rather than conclusions that

year level causes differences in language-learning strategies or critical reading skills.

Overall, the findings indicate that significant differences existed among year-level groups in both socioculturally appropriate language-learning strategies and self-reported critical reading skills. However, these differences should be interpreted as differences between groups rather than evidence of developmental progression, improvement, or causal effects of academic experience.

### *4.4. Correlation Between Variables*

The Pearson correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant positive association between socioculturally appropriate language-learning strategies and self-reported critical reading skills. The computed Pearson correlation coefficient was $r = .581$, with a p-value of $< .001$. Based on the correlation interpretation used in this study, the coefficient indicates a moderate positive association. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that higher reported use of socioculturally appropriate language-learning strategies was associated with higher reported critical reading skills.

The finding is consistent with Hidayati et al. (2020) and Ocak and Karsli (2022), who reported significant relationships between language-learning strategies and reading-related outcomes. These findings suggest that strategic language-learning behaviors and students' engagement with reading may be related. However, the present study cannot determine whether the use of language-learning strategies causes higher critical reading skills because the study employed a cross-sectional, non-experimental design.

The finding also differs from Dunggo-an et al. (2025), who reported no significant relationship between reading strategies and comprehension. This difference may be related to variations in participants, research contexts, instruments, or the specific reading-related constructs examined. Thus, the relationship observed in the present study should be interpreted within the context of the participating college students and the measures used.

The observed positive association can also be interpreted through the theoretical frameworks of the study. From the perspective of Larsen-Freeman's Complex Dynamic Systems Theory, language learning involves interacting and changing components that may vary according to learners and their contexts. The positive association observed in the present study is consistent with the view that different aspects of language learning may be interconnected rather than functioning independently. However, the cross-sectional design does not allow the study to determine how these components change over time.

Similarly, Rosenblatt's Transactional Theory provides a basis for understanding the relationship between language-learning strategies and self-reported critical reading skills. Reader’s construct meaning through their transactions with texts, and language-learning strategies may be relevant to how students’ approach and engage with reading materials. The present correlation is

therefore consistent with the theoretical view that learners' engagement with language and texts involves an interaction between the reader and the reading experience. Nevertheless, the findings demonstrate an association rather than a causal or developmental relationship.

Based on the significant association observed, instructors may consider incorporating activities that allow students to use language-learning strategies while engaging with texts, such as group discussions, think-aloud activities, text analysis, debates, and multimedia-based reading tasks. These recommendations are intended as instructional considerations and are not presented as evidence that such activities would directly improve critical reading skills. Future studies may use longitudinal or experimental designs and objective critical-reading assessments to further examine the relationship between language-learning strategies and critical reading performance.

## 5. Conclusion

The level of socioculturally appropriate language-learning strategies among college students was very high, indicating that these strategies were frequently used. Moreover, the level of critical reading skills of the participant was rated very high, indicating that these skills were continually being developed. The data also revealed a statistically significant difference in the levels of socioculturally appropriate language-learning strategies and critical reading skills across year levels. In general, socioculturally appropriate language-learning strategies and critical reading skills were positively correlated.

## 6. Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

Language instructors may integrate socioculturally appropriate language-learning strategies with critical reading activities in their classroom instruction. Contextualized activities such as role-plays, simulations, collaborative discussions, reflective activities, and text analysis may provide students with opportunities to apply language-learning strategies while engaging with texts. Since socio-affective and production strategies obtained comparatively lower ratings, instructors may also provide more opportunities for meaningful interaction, communication, and collaborative language practice. For critical reading, instructors may incorporate close reading, analysis of facts and opinions, evaluation of ideas, and application of information to varied contexts. Instruction may also be adjusted according to students' reported needs across year-level groups without assuming that year level itself causes differences in skills.

Teacher education programs may strengthen the integration of language-learning strategies and critical reading across relevant courses. Faculty members may collaborate in developing literacy activities that combine language use, sociocultural awareness, and critical engagement with texts. Programs may

also provide opportunities for pre-service teachers to practice strategy-based instruction, contextualized reading activities, and collaborative learning tasks. These initiatives may help future teachers develop instructional practices that support students' language learning and critical reading needs.

Institutional curriculum developers may consider incorporating structured language-learning and critical reading activities across appropriate courses and year levels. Curriculum planning may include contextualized vocabulary activities, multimedia-based learning, close reading, text analysis, and opportunities for applying information to real-life or unfamiliar contexts. Institutions may also support faculty development through workshops or training on language-learning strategies and critical reading instruction. Such initiatives should be based on students identified learning needs rather than treating year-level differences as evidence of developmental progression.

Future researchers may replicate the study with students from other institutions, programs, or educational contexts to determine whether similar patterns are observed. Since the present study used a cross-sectional, quantitative, and self-report design, future studies may employ longitudinal, qualitative, mixed-methods, or experimental designs to provide deeper evidence regarding language-learning strategies and critical reading. Researchers may also use objective critical-reading assessments alongside self-report questionnaires to distinguish perceived ability from demonstrated performance. Additional variables, such as age, sex, learning environment, motivation, and access to learning resources, may also be examined to provide a broader understanding of factors associated with students' language-learning strategies and critical reading skills.

## 7. Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to English majors from a single institution in Davao City, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other populations and educational contexts. Its cross-sectional design captures differences across year levels at one point in time and therefore cannot establish developmental changes or causal relationships. Reliance on self-reported data may introduce common-method bias and social-desirability effects, while the predominantly “very high” ratings may indicate a ceiling effect; moreover, the lack of objective assessment of critical reading means that the findings reflect perceived rather than demonstrated skills. Potential nonresponse or selection bias and unmeasured factors such as age, language proficiency, academic achievement, reading exposure, socioeconomic status, and prior language-learning experience may also influence the results. Thus, the findings should be interpreted within the specific population, institutional context, and variables examined.

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## Supplementary Details

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There are no supplementary materials associated with this manuscript.

**Author Contributions (CRediT Taxonomy)**
Ms. Aripal conducted the investigation, data collection, and methodology and authored the original draft of the manuscript. Mr. Imperial was involved in the conceptualization and supervision of the study, and he was responsible for critical review, revision, and editing of the manuscript. The final manuscript was read and approved by both authors.

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## 8. Appendix

Survey Questionnaire

**PART I: RESPONDENT PROFILE** (Direction: Please check (√) the box that corresponds to your current year level.).

YEAR LEVEL:

[ ] First Year
[ ] Second Year
[ ] Third Year
[ ] Fourth Year

**PART II: SOCIOCULTURALLY APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE-LEARNING STRATEGIES.** This section identifies the language-learning strategies used by English major students. (***Direction*:** Please check (√) the box to each statement using the following scales: 4–Always, 3–Often, 2–Seldom, or 1–Never).

| Items | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **(PROBLEM-SOLVING STRATEGIES)** As an English major student, I… | | | | |
| 1. try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using English. | | | | |
| 2. encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake. | | | | |
| 3. ask the other person to slow down or say something again if I do not understand it in English. | | | | |
| 4. ask for help from English speakers. | | | | |
| 5. notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better. | | | | |
| 6. pay attention when someone is speaking English. | | | | |
| 7. try to find out how to be a better learner of English. | | | | |
| **(SOCIO-AFFECTIVE STRATEGIES)** As an English major student, I… | | | | |
| 8. write down my feelings in a language learning diary. | | | | |
| 9. talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning English. | | | | |
| 10. practice English with other students. | | | | |
| **(METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES)** As an English major student, I… | | | | |
| 11. plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study English. | | | | |
| 12. look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English. | | | | |
| 13. have clear goals for improving my English skills. | | | | |
| 14. think about my progress in learning English. | | | | |
| **(PRODUCTION STRATEGIES)** As an English major student, I… | | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15. speak English with classmates in order to improve my English skills. | | | | |
| 16. find opportunities to speak English with foreigners in order to improve my English skills. | | | | |
| 17. find opportunities to use oral practice repeatedly to learn and use English words in order to improve my English skills. | | | | |
| 18. use word cards to learn English words in order to improve my English skills. | | | | |
| 19. group new words, such as the part of the word, the root of the word, etc., to learn English words in order to improve my English skills. | | | | |
| 20. find opportunities to use new vocabulary or phrases in spoken dialogue in order to improve my English skills. | | | | |
| 21. use English to write letters, cards, emails, or send messages in order to increase the opportunities of writing in English. | | | | |
| 22. try to use English to write diary, personal notes, journals, etc. in order to increase the opportunities of writing in English. | | | | |
| 23. review or practice English writing in order to improve my English grammar skills. | | | | |
| 24. find opportunities to use handwriting exercises repeatedly to learn and use English words in order to improve my English skills. | | | | |
| 25. improve my English skills by participating in English activities, such as book clubs, summer camps, English camps, etc. | | | | |
| **(FACE-TO-FACE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES)**<br>As an English major student, I… | | | | |
| 26. observe other people's body language, facial expressions, tones, etc. in order to help me understand when they speak English. | | | | |
| 27. ask people to speak slowly or repeat themselves when I cannot understand other them when they speak English. | | | | |
| 28. ask people to use easier words to express themselves when I cannot understand them when they speak English. | | | | |
| 29. use the part of the text I can understand to guess what other people are saying when I cannot understand them when they speak English. | | | | |
| 30. try to use keywords to help me understand others when they speak English. | | | | |
| 31. use body language, facial expressions, tones, etc. in order to help others understand me when I speak English. | | | | |
| 32. speak slowly or repeat myself in order to help others understand me when I speak English. | | | | |
| 33. use simpler words to express myself in order to help other people to understand me when I speak English. | | | | |
| **(TECHNOLOGY USE STRATEGIES)**<br>As an English major student, I… | | | | |
| 34. use computer or smartphone grammar apps in order to improve my English grammar skills. | | | | |
| 35. go online to find answers to learn and/or confirm the English grammar. | | | | |
| 36. use computer or smartphone apps to learn English words in order to improve my English vocabulary skills. | | | | |
| 37. check the paper or online dictionaries to learn English words. | | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 38. use translating tools or dictionaries in order to improve my English communication and expression skills. | | | | |
| 39. use translation tools or dictionaries to learn and apply English grammar. | | | | |
| **(MULTIMEDIA USE STRATEGIES)**<br>As an English major student, I… | | | | |
| 40. listen to music or songs in order to improve my English skills. | | | | |
| 41. watch English TV shows or online videos, such as movies, dramas, news, reports, etc. in order to improve my English skills. | | | | |
| 42. try to imitate the speakers' ways or speaking or tones on English TV shows, movies, dramas, online movies or English broadcasts. | | | | |
| 43. apply English I learn from English TV programs, movies, dramas, online videos or English broadcasts. | | | | |
| **(GRAMMAR AND READING STRATEGIES)**<br>As an English major student, I… | | | | |
| 44. read grammar books or articles in order to improve my English grammar skills. | | | | |
| 45. learn and apply English grammar by reading English books or articles. | | | | |
| 46. read paper or online articles, magazines, reports, etc. in order to increase the opportunities of reading English. | | | | |

Reference: Berg, R., Lu, Y., & Huang, S. C. (2021). Developing a socioculturally-appropriate language learning strategies questionnaire for Taiwanese university students. *Taiwan Journal of TESOL, 18.1,* 63-98. https://doi.org/10.30397/TJTESOL.202104_18(1).0003

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**PART III: CRITICAL READING SKILLS.** This section examines the critical reading skills practiced by English major students. (***Direction:*** Please check (√) the box to each statement using the following scales: 4–Always, 3–Often, 2–Seldom, or 1–Never).

| Items | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **(KNOWLEDGE SKILLS)** As an English major student, I… | | | | |
| 1. can recall the information in a text. | | | | |
| 2. am able to identify specific terms in a text. | | | | |
| 3. can identify main ideas in a text. | | | | |
| 4. can identify supporting details in a text. | | | | |
| **(COMPREHENSION SKILLS)** As an English major student, I… | | | | |
| 5. read and try to understand the title of a text. | | | | |
| 6. can skim and scan quickly through long and complex texts, locating relevant details. | | | | |
| 7. can describe the main ideas in a text. | | | | |
| 8. can describe supporting details in a text. | | | | |
| 9. can derive the meaning of words, or sentences from the context. | | | | |
| 10. am able to understand linear and non-linear texts. | | | | |
| 11. am able to recognize a paraphrase. | | | | |
| 12. can extract specific information from a text. | | | | |
| 13. can understand the relationships within sentences. | | | | |
| 14. can understand the relationships between sentences. | | | | |
| **(APPLICATION SKILLS)** As an English major student, I… | | | | |
| 15. can predict the outcomes of an article. | | | | |
| 16. can apply existing knowledge to the reading process. | | | | |
| 17. can apply personal experiences to the reading process. | | | | |
| 18. can apply a concept to other situations. | | | | |
| 19. can interpret linear and non-linear texts (graph/tables/charts). | | | | |
| 20. can apply the idea in the text to other contexts. | | | | |
| **(ANALYSIS SKILLS)** As an English major student, I… | | | | |
| 21. can distinguish facts from opinions. | | | | |
| 22. can differentiate the relevant points from the irrelevant. | | | | |
| 23. can make inferences. | | | | |
| 24. can separate the idea into its component's parts. | | | | |
| 25. can identify cause and effect in a text. | | | | |
| 26. can analyze the suitability of references in a text. | | | | |
| 27. can identify comparison and contrast in a text. | | | | |
| **(SYNTHESIS SKILLS)** As an English major student, I… | | | | |
| 28. can relate the ideas and concepts within a paragraph. | | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 29. can relate the ideas and concepts between paragraphs. | | | | |
| 30. can follow the development of a point in a text. | | | | |
| 31. can summarize information after reading a text. | | | | |
| **(EVALUATION SKILLS)**<br>As an English major student, I… | | | | |
| 32. can appraise information in a text. | | | | |
| 33. can make judgments on the arguments or ideas when I read a text. | | | | |
| 34. can evaluate the strength of an idea in a text. | | | | |
| 35. can evaluate the weakness of an idea in a text. | | | | |
| 36. can evaluate the relevance of an idea in a text. | | | | |
| 37. can draw conclusions after reading a text. | | | | |
| 38. first evaluate answer choices before reading a text. | | | | |
| 39. can recognize and interpret writers' views in a text. | | | | |
| 40. can recognize and interpret writers' attitudes in a text. | | | | |
| 41. can recognize and interpret writers' intentions in a text. | | | | |
| 42. am able to discern the organization of a passage. | | | | |
| 43. can assess the sources of a text and determine the trustworthiness of the sources. | | | | |

Reference: Anuar, N. & Sidhu, G. K. (2017). Critical reading skills: a survey of postgraduate students' perspective on critical reading skills. *Pertanika Journals Social Sciences and Humanities, 25, 163-172.* https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350400104

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