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Vocational Students' Perceptions of Integrated Critical Reading Strategies in Business English Texts

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ABSTRACT

Background: Vocational EFL students often understand explicit information in workplace texts but struggle to infer implicit meanings, evaluate arguments, and distinguish facts from opinions. Limited evidence explains how complementary critical reading strategies function together in vocational Business English and how students perceive them.

Purpose: This study investigated how Indonesian vocational Business English students perceived and applied Stop-Paraphrase-Questioning (SPQ), Annotation, and Journaling, and their benefits and challenges in reading workplace business texts.

Method: An explanatory sequential mixed-methods design involved 30 second-semester vocational students. Questionnaire data were analyzed using frequencies and percentages; observations and reading tasks showed strategy use; interviews were thematically analyzed to explain quantitative patterns, with findings integrated during interpretation.

Results: Journaling was selected most often (23 of 65 responses; 35%), followed by SPQ and Annotation (21 each; 32%). Students associated the strategies with broader perspectives (40%), idea analysis (27%), and key information identification (21%); reflective self-evaluation was least identified (12%). The main challenge was interpreting implicit information (16 of 30 students; 53%), followed by limited background knowledge (23%) and vocabulary (13%). Students reported stronger focus on main ideas and willingness to analyze texts, but argument evaluation, fact–opinion distinction, and text-based opinions remained limited.

Conclusion: Students perceived the strategies as supporting focused engagement with workplace Business English texts, particularly comprehension monitoring and key information identification. The findings indicate perceived instructional value, not causal improvement or increased motivation. Its originality lies in examining SPQ, Annotation, and Journaling as complementary stages of comprehension monitoring, textual analysis, and metacognitive reflection. Explicit modeling and scaffolding remain necessary to strengthen inferential reasoning and evaluative judgment.

KEYWORDS

Business English, Critical Reading, EFL Students, Reading Strategies, Vocational Higher Education.

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INTRODUCTION

Vocational EFL students must interpret workplace information accurately for professional communication,

yet many remain dependent on literal comprehension and have difficulty inferring implied meanings, recognizing writers' purposes, and evaluating information. This gap is especially consequential in Business English, where reading supports workplace literacy and work-readiness. Students are expected to process professional emails, company profiles, brief reports, advertisements, business instructions, and corporate memos. Such texts require them to identify key information, interpret implied meaning, understand communicative purpose, and make decisions based on textual evidence. Business English reading therefore involves more than understanding sentences; it requires context-sensitive interpretation and evaluation. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Indonesia, many students still find it difficult to read English texts critically. They often focus only on literal meaning and explicit information. When the answer is directly stated in the text, students may be able to respond correctly. However, when they are asked to infer meaning, evaluate arguments, identify the writer's intention, or connect information with real-life situations, they often experience difficulties.

This problem is relevant to the findings of Ramadhianti and Somba (2023), who explain that EFL students often face challenges in developing deeper reading comprehension because they are not fully trained to analyze and evaluate texts. In vocational education, this condition becomes more important because students need practical reading skills that can support their future professional communication. The same issue was also found in the researcher's classroom context. Based on informal interviews and classroom observations conducted in March 2025 with second-semester Business English students at Akademi Komunitas Negeri Putra Sang Fajar Blitar, several problems were identified. Some students showed low confidence in reading English texts. Some students had difficulty understanding business-related vocabulary. Others felt overwhelmed when they had to read longer texts. In reading activities, several students tended to wait for their friends' answers or copy answers without fully engaging with the text. Some students also still showed passive learning habits formed during online learning, such as being reluctant to read aloud, rarely asking questions, and hesitating to express opinions. These classroom findings show that there is a clear gap between the reading ability students currently have and the reading competence they need in workplace-oriented Business English contexts.

To respond to this problem, critical reading strategies can be used as a pedagogical approach to help students read more actively and deeply. Critical reading is not only the ability to understand information in a text, but also the ability to question, interpret, and evaluate it. Through critical reading, students are encouraged to distinguish facts from opinions, identify the author's purpose, recognize implied meaning, evaluate information, and relate the text to real-world contexts. This process is closely connected to Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), especially analyzing, evaluating, and creating, as described by Krathwohl (2002). In Business English learning, critical reading is important because students need to understand texts not only for classroom assignments, but also for future professional tasks. Previous studies have shown that critical reading strategies can support students' reading comprehension. Bağ and Gürsoy (2021) found that critical reading strategies can improve students' focus, motivation, and participation in reading activities. Rodrigues et al. (2024) also showed that the use of critical reading strategies can help EFL students become more confident in understanding complex texts.

In addition, studies on students' perceptions of reading have shown that students' views toward reading activities influence their motivation and engagement. Suryani and Siminto (2023), Aida and Widiyati (2020), Lindawati (2021), and Bui and Macalister (2021) discussed students' perceptions of reading activities and their influence on reading comprehension. Arifin et al. (2025)

also highlighted that students' reading difficulties are often related to limited vocabulary, reading anxiety, and low motivation. These studies indicate that reading strategies should not only be examined from the result of students' scores, but also from how students experience and perceive the strategies. In the field of critical reading, several strategies have been used to encourage deeper comprehension. This study focuses on three integrated critical reading strategies: Stop–Paraphrase–Questioning, Annotation/Marking the Text, and Journaling. These strategies were selected because they are practical, simple, and suitable for vocational students. Stop-Paraphrase-Questioning helps students pause during reading, restate the main idea in their own words, and ask questions about the text. Annotation/Marking the Text helps students identify keywords, important ideas, and supporting information. Journaling helps students reflect on their understanding after reading and express their thoughts in written form. These three strategies are expected to help students become more active, reflective, and critical readers business instructions, and corporate memos. These texts often require students to identify key information, interpret implied meaning, understand the writer's purpose, and make simple decisions based on the information in the text. Therefore, reading in Business English is closely related to workplace literacy and work-readiness.

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Indonesia, many students still find it difficult to read English texts critically. They often focus only on literal meaning and explicit information. When the answer is directly stated in the text, students may be able to respond correctly. However, when they are asked to infer meaning, evaluate arguments, identify the writer's intention, or connect information with real-life situations, they often experience difficulties. This problem is relevant to the findings of Ramadhianti and Somba (2023), who explain that EFL students often face challenges in developing deeper reading comprehension because they are not fully trained to analyze and evaluate texts. In vocational education, this condition becomes more important because students need practical reading skills that can support their future professional communication.

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Previous studies have shown that critical reading strategies can support students' reading comprehension. Bağ and Gürsoy (2021) found that critical reading strategies can improve students' focus, motivation, and participation in reading activities. Rodrigues et al. (2024) also showed that the use of critical reading strategies can help EFL students become more confident in understanding complex texts. In addition, studies on students' perceptions of reading have shown that students' views toward reading activities influence their motivation and engagement. Suryani and Siminto (2023), Aida and Widiyati (2020), Lindawati (2021), and Bui and Macalister (2021) discussed students' perceptions of reading activities and their influence on reading comprehension. Arifin et al. (2025) also highlighted that students' reading difficulties are often related to limited vocabulary, reading anxiety, and low motivation. These studies indicate that reading strategies should not only be examined from the result of students' scores, but also from how students experience and perceive the strategies.

In the field of critical reading, several strategies have been used to encourage deeper comprehension. This study focuses on three integrated critical reading strategies: Stop-Paraphrase-Questioning, Annotation/Marking the Text, and Journaling. These strategies were selected because they are practical, simple, and suitable for vocational students. Stop-Paraphrase-Questioning helps students pause during reading, restate the main idea in their own words, and ask questions about the text. Annotation/Marking the Text helps students identify keywords, important ideas, and supporting information. Journaling helps students reflect on their understanding after reading and express their thoughts in written form. These three strategies are expected to help students become more active, reflective, and critical readers.

Table 1. Descriptions and Functions of the Critical Reading Strategies

Strategy	Primary Function	Impact on Students
Stop-Paraphrase-Questioning (SPQ)	Pause reading, paraphrase the main idea, and generate questions	Enhances focus on core concepts and facilitates critical evaluation of the text
Annotation/Marking the Text	Highlight keywords, important ideas, or factual information	Supports analysis of text structure and information flow
Journaling	Write reflections and understanding after reading	Improves metacognitive awareness and strengthens information retention

The three strategies in Table 1 support different stages of critical reading. Stop-Paraphrase-Questioning helps students monitor their understanding while reading. Annotation/Marking the Text helps students organize important information in the text. Journaling helps students reflect on what they have read and develop their own responses. When these strategies are applied together, students are not only asked to answer reading questions, but also to interact with the text. This is important in Business English because business texts often require students to understand both explicit and implicit messages.

Although previous studies consistently acknowledge that critical reading strategies improve EFL students' reading performance (Bağ & Gürsoy, 2021; Rodrigues et al., 2024), important gaps remain in the literature. First, existing findings are still inconclusive regarding the primary outcomes of critical reading instruction. While some studies report improvements mainly in reading comprehension, others emphasize increased motivation, engagement, or reading confidence.

Consequently, it remains unclear how different dimensions of critical reading develop simultaneously during classroom implementation.

Second, most previous studies have primarily measured learning outcomes through reading comprehension tests or experimental comparisons. Such approaches provide limited understanding of how students actually experience critical reading strategies, what challenges they encounter, and why particular strategies are perceived as more beneficial than others. Students' perceptions are essential because they influence strategy adoption, learning engagement, and the sustainability of instructional practices.

Third, previous research has generally investigated critical reading strategies independently, such as annotation, questioning, or reflective writing, rather than examining how multiple strategies function together as an integrated pedagogical approach. As a result, little is known about whether combining these strategies can simultaneously promote comprehension, metacognitive reflection, and evaluative judgment.

Finally, empirical evidence remains scarce in English for Specific Purposes (ESP), particularly in vocational Business English contexts where students are required to interpret workplace-related texts involving authentic professional communication. Business texts demand inferential reasoning, contextual interpretation, and evaluative judgment that differ substantially from those required when reading general academic texts. Therefore, the applicability of existing findings to vocational Business English classrooms remains uncertain.

The research gap is therefore not simply the limited number of critical reading studies; it is the lack of an explanatory account of how complementary strategies work together, how vocational students experience them, and which critical reading skills remain difficult when workplace-related business texts are used. Addressing this gap, the present study investigates students' perceptions, benefits, and challenges in applying Stop-Paraphrase-Questioning, Annotation/Marking the Text, and Journaling. It contributes by explaining how comprehension monitoring, textual analysis, and metacognitive reflection interact within an ESP vocational learning environment.

Table 2. Summary of Research Gaps Identified in Previous Studies

Aspect	Previous Research	Current Research Needs
Participants	English major students	Vocational students remain under-explored
Types of texts	Academic/general texts	Business texts have not yet been the main focus
Research focus	Reading comprehension outcomes	Students' perceptions of the strategies
Strategies	Examined individually	Three strategies implemented in an integrated manner

As shown in Table 2, this study has a specific position among previous studies. It does not only discuss critical reading in a general EFL context but also places critical reading within vocational Business English learning. This focus is important because vocational students need reading instruction that is relevant to workplace communication. They need to understand business texts, identify important information, interpret implied meaning, and evaluate ideas in a practical context. Therefore, this study contributes to English for Specific Purposes (ESP), especially Business English teaching in vocational higher education.

The novelty of this study lies in treating SPQ, Annotation/Marking the Text, and Journaling as complementary stages rather than isolated techniques. SPQ supports comprehension monitoring

during reading, Annotation organizes and analyzes textual information, and Journaling supports post-reading reflection. Examining these functions together in workplace-oriented Business English texts provides context-specific evidence from Indonesian vocational higher education and clarifies which inferential and evaluative skills still require scaffolding.

Accordingly, this study investigates how second-semester vocational Business English students in Indonesia perceive and apply the three integrated strategies when reading workplace-related texts, as well as the benefits and challenges they report. The analysis focuses on comprehension monitoring, identification and connection of key information, inferential interpretation, argument evaluation, fact–opinion distinction, and reflective judgment.

Based on the background, previous studies, and research gap above, this study aims to:

1. Identify which critical reading strategies students perceive as the most helpful in understanding business texts.
2. Describe how students apply Stop-Paraphrase-Questioning, Annotation/Marking the Text, and Journaling in reading activities; and
3. Explore the perceived benefits and challenges of using these strategies in Business English reading.

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design (Creswell, 2009) with 30 second-semester Business English students at an Indonesian vocational higher education institution. Questionnaire findings were analyzed descriptively and then explained through semi-structured interviews, while classroom observations and reading tasks provided supporting evidence of strategy use. The qualitative data were analyzed thematically, and both strands were integrated during interpretation.

Practically, this research is expected to provide recommendations for ESP lecturers in designing Business English reading instruction that is more active, reflective, and HOTS-oriented. The findings may help lecturers select reading strategies that support students' comprehension, motivation, and critical thinking. The study also contributes to the development of workplace-oriented English instruction by showing how critical reading strategies can help vocational students bridge the gap between classroom reading and professional communication needs.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The principal mixed-methods sequence was questionnaire followed by interview explanation. Classroom observations and reading tasks were conducted throughout the instructional implementation to document actual strategy use and triangulate students' self-reports.

Research Procedure

The research procedure followed a sequential process of data collection, described as follows:

Classroom Observation

Observations were conducted during the reading sessions to examine students' engagement in applying the three strategies: Stop-Paraphrase-Questioning (SPQ), Annotation/Marking the Text, and Journaling. A checklist and field notes were used to document students' participation, responses, and learning behaviors while reading business texts.

Reading Tasks

Students were assigned several short business texts and instructed to apply all three critical reading strategies in each meeting. The results of these tasks served as supporting data to identify how the strategies were implemented in comprehending the texts.

Perception Questionnaire

A four-point Likert-scale questionnaire was administered, consisting of indicators related to the perceived ease, benefits, and challenges of using the critical reading strategies. This instrument aimed to collect quantitative data regarding students' perceptions of the strategies provided.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with several randomly selected students to clarify their questionnaire responses and to gain deeper insights into their experiences with the strategies. All interviews were recorded and later transcribed for analysis.

Research Instruments

The instruments used in this study include:

Table 3. Research Instrument

Instrument	Data Collected	Form of Analysis
Observation sheet	Learning activities and classroom participation	Qualitative descriptive analysis
Reading tasks	How students apply the strategies to business texts	Descriptive analysis
Perception questionnaire	Students' perceptions, benefits, and challenges of the strategies	Descriptive statistics
Interviews	Explanations and reasons underlying students' perceptions	Thematic analysis

These instruments were employed as triangulated data sources to ensure validity in the interpretation of the research findings.

Data Analysis Techniques

Quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics (percentages and mean scores) to identify students' perceptual trends toward the critical reading strategies. Qualitative data from observations, reading tasks, and interviews were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach, which involved coding the data to identify key themes related to the implementation of the strategies, as well as the benefits and challenges experienced by the students. The quantitative and qualitative findings were then interpreted integratively to provide a comprehensive explanation of students' overall perceptions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Students' Viewpoint on Deploying Dominant Popular Critical Reading Strategies

The questionnaire data identified Journaling as the slightly most frequently selected strategy for understanding workplace-oriented business texts, with 23 of 65 multiple responses (35%). SPQ and Annotation/Marking the Text were each selected 21 times (32%), indicating that all three strategies were perceived as useful rather than one strategy being overwhelmingly dominant.

Table 4. Students' Viewpoints on the Most Dominant Critical Reading Strategies

Strategy	Frequency	Formula	Percentage
Journaling	23	23/65 × 100	35.38% → 35%
Stop–Paraphrase–Questioning	21	21/65 × 100	32.30% → 32%
Annotation/Marking the Text	21	21/65 × 100	32.30% → 32%
TOTAL	65	100%	100%

Note: Participants were allowed to select more than one strategy; therefore, the total number of responses (n = 65) exceeds the total number of participants (N = 30).

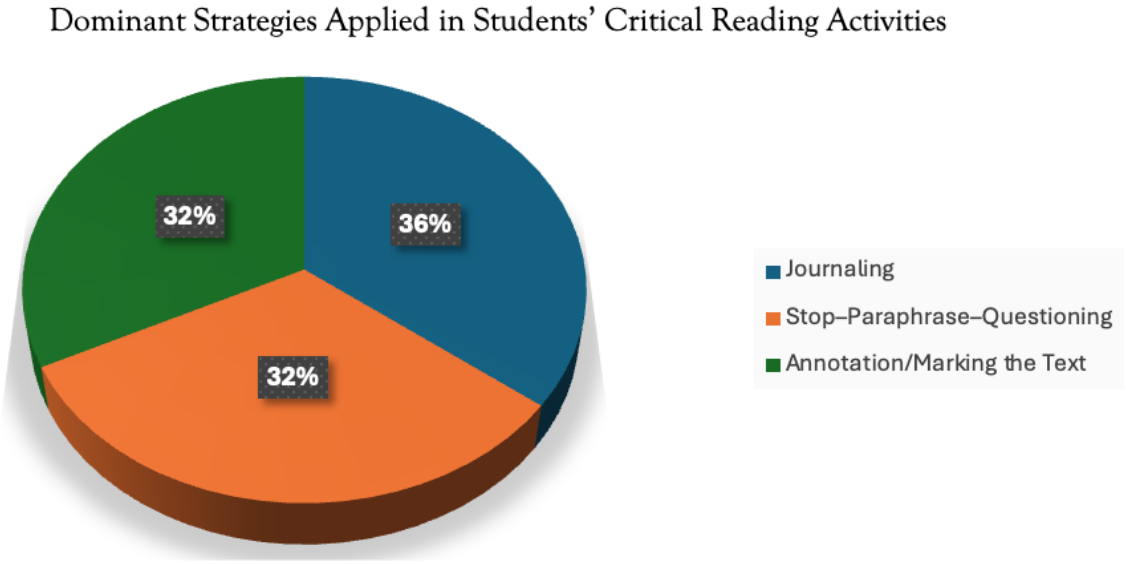


Figure 1. Dominant Strategies Applied in Students' Critical Reading Activities

Because students could select more than one helpful strategy, the 30 participants produced 65 responses. Journaling accounted for 23 responses (35.38%), while SPQ and Annotation each accounted for 21 responses (32.31%). The three-percentage-point difference should be interpreted cautiously. It indicates a slight preference for Journaling, not a substantial dominance. The slight preference for Journaling suggests that many students valued an opportunity to reorganize information, record uncertainties, and monitor their understanding after reading. SPQ and Annotation remained almost equally prominent, indicating that pausing to paraphrase and question, as well as marking keywords and supporting evidence, were also central to students' reading processes. The pattern suggests that students used the three strategies for complementary purposes: Journaling for metacognitive reflection, SPQ for comprehension monitoring and question generation, and Annotation for locating and organizing textual evidence. However, the responses do not demonstrate improvement by themselves; they document students' perceived usefulness and reported strategy preferences.

Students' Portrait of Deploying Critical Reading Strategies in Critical Reading Comprehension

Student experience portraits indicate that the implementation of critical reading strategies has a noticeable impact on the quality of their reading process:

Table 5. Students' Viewpoints on the Use of Critical Reading Strategies

Development Aspect	Percentage
Gaining broader perspectives through the strategies	40%
Enhancing critical thinking skills	27%
Ability to identify key parts of the text	21%
Encouraging reflective reading	12%

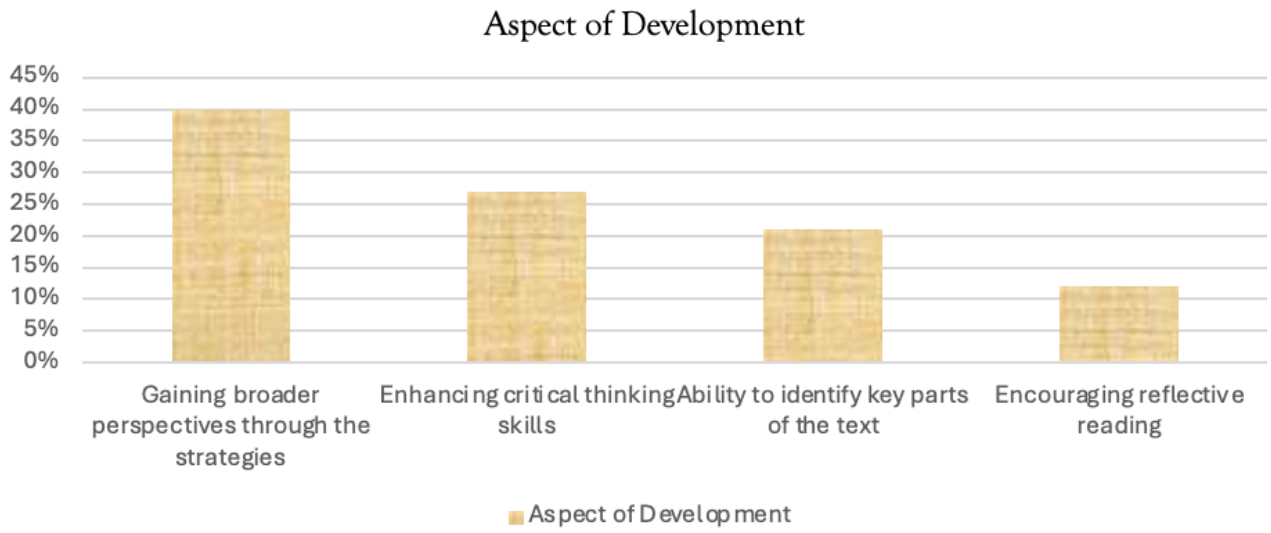


Figure 2. Students' Viewpoint of Deploying Critical Reading Strategies

Students most frequently identified connecting text information with broader perspectives as the principal development (40%). Analysis of relationships and implications was reported by 27%, while 21% identified improved recognition of key ideas and supporting information. These results specify the critical-reading skills represented by the broader phrase higher-order thinking: connecting ideas, analyzing implications, and selecting relevant evidence. Monitoring and evaluating one's own understanding was least frequently selected as the principal development (12%). This does not mean that the remaining students were unable to reflect; rather, reflective self-evaluation was less salient than perspective broadening and textual analysis. The pattern indicates a need for more explicit prompts that require students to justify interpretations, review their reasoning, and revise initial judgments.

The Challenges and Benefits of Critical Reading Strategies to Upgrade EFL Learners

Challenges of Critical Reading Strategies to Upgrade EFL Learners in CRC

Students identified several challenges in applying the strategies, particularly related to understanding implicit information.

Table 6. Challenges of CSR in Enhancing EFL Learners' Critical Reading Comprehension

Type of Challenge	Number of Respondents	%
Interpreting implicit textual information	16	53%
Limited background knowledge	7	23%
Vocabulary limitations	4	13%
Evaluating the author's arguments	2	7%
Distinguishing opinions from facts	1	3%

Table 6 shows that interpreting implicit textual information was the most frequently reported dominant challenge (16 of 30 students; 53%). Limited background knowledge was reported by 7 students (23%), and vocabulary limitations by 4 students (13%). Together, these results indicate that inferential comprehension was constrained by both linguistic resources and insufficient familiarity with business contexts. More advanced evaluative skills were reported less frequently as the single dominant challenge: evaluating the author's arguments was selected by 2 students (7%), and distinguishing opinions from facts by 1 student (3%). These low frequencies should not be interpreted as mastery, because the qualitative interviews also showed difficulty with implied managerial tone, assumptions, and argument evaluation. Rather, students tended to identify vocabulary and inference problems as more immediately salient. Each participant selected one challenge as the most dominant; therefore, the 30 responses sum to 100%. The results indicate that interpreting implicit meaning was the central barrier, while the interview data further revealed that long sentences, formal tone, and the simultaneous use of all three strategies increased cognitive load.

Benefits of Critical Reading Strategies to Upgrade EFL Learners in CRC

Although some challenges still exist, students reported noticeable improvements in their self-confidence and motivation to read.

Table 7. Benefits of Deploying Critical Reading Strategies

Types of Benefits	Number of Respondents (n = 30)	Percentage (%)
Greater willingness to analyze and question ideas	9	30%
Stronger focus on main ideas	9	30%
Better connection of information across the text	7	23%
Improved analysis of meaning and implications	3	10%
Formation of text-based opinions	2	7%
Total Responses	30	100%

Table 7 shows that the two most frequently selected benefits were greater willingness to analyze and question ideas (9 students; 30%) and stronger focus on main ideas (9 students; 30%). Better connection of information across the text was selected by 7 students (23%). These findings indicate that students most clearly perceived motivational engagement and focused comprehension rather than advanced evaluative gains. Only 3 students (10%) selected improved analysis of meaning and implications as the principal benefit, and 2 students (7%) selected formation of text-based opinions. These smaller proportions are consistent with the reported difficulties in interpreting implicit information and evaluating arguments. The results therefore specify where critical reading remained underdeveloped: inferential interpretation, evidence-based judgment, and formulation of reasoned opinions.

Overall, students perceived the strategies as useful for sustaining attention and organizing information, but the data do not establish that the strategies caused increased motivation or measurable skill improvement. Stronger evidence of effectiveness would require pretest–posttest performance measures or a comparison group.

Students' Viewpoint on Deploying Dominant Popular Critical Reading Strategies

Journaling was only slightly more frequently selected than SPQ and Annotation, so the result is better interpreted as a modest preference rather than dominance. Students valued Journaling because it enabled them to reorganize information, monitor uncertainty, and connect new information with prior knowledge. These functions align with Garrison and Akyol (2014), who describe metacognitive reflection as awareness and regulation of one's cognitive processes. The finding also extends Rodrigues et al. (2024) by showing the perceived relevance of reflection for workplace-oriented Business English texts.

Students' Portrait of Deploying Critical Reading Strategies in Critical Reading Comprehension

Students most often associated the strategies with connecting information to broader perspectives (40%), analyzing relationships and implications (27%), and identifying key ideas and evidence (21%). Reflective self-evaluation was least frequently selected (12%). Thus, the specific skills reported were not a generalized increase in higher-order thinking but emerging abilities to relate ideas, analyze implications, locate relevant evidence, and monitor comprehension. Because these were perception data, they should be interpreted as self-reported development rather than directly measured performance gains.

Challenges and Benefits of Critical Reading Strategies to Upgrade EFL Learners

The findings reveal a tension between perceived benefits and continuing challenges. Students reported stronger attention to main ideas and greater willingness to question texts, yet many still struggled with implied meanings, business-context knowledge, and vocabulary. This pattern suggests that the strategies supported engagement with critical reading processes but did not eliminate the linguistic and contextual barriers required for sustained evaluative judgment.

Challenges of Critical Reading Strategies to Upgrade EFL Learners in CRC

Each student identified one dominant challenge. Difficulty interpreting implied meaning was most frequent (16/30; 53%), followed by limited background knowledge (7/30; 23%) and vocabulary limitations (4/30; 13%). Evaluating arguments (2/30; 7%) and distinguishing opinion from fact (1/30; 3%) were less frequently selected as the dominant challenge, although interview responses showed that students also struggled with implied managerial tone, assumptions, and formal policy language. The convergence of questionnaire and interview evidence therefore identifies inferential reasoning as the most immediate area for scaffolding.

Rather than confirming effectiveness, the findings clarify how the three strategies performed complementary cognitive functions. SPQ supported comprehension monitoring by requiring students to pause, paraphrase, and question textual information. Annotation supported analysis by directing attention to key ideas, evidence, relationships, and text structure. Journaling supported metacognitive reflection through post-reading synthesis and personal meaning-making. Together, the strategies formed a staged pathway from literal comprehension toward inference and evaluation, however, students' limited reflective and argumentative responses show that progression along this pathway was incomplete.

Benefits of Critical Reading Strategies to Upgrade EFL Learners in CRC

Students most frequently selected greater willingness to analyze and question ideas (30%) and stronger focus on main ideas (30%) as the principal benefits, followed by connecting information across the text (23%). Analysis of meaning and implications (10%) and formation of text-based opinions (7%) were less frequently identified. Thus, the strategies were perceived primarily as

supports for engagement and information organization, while evaluative and argumentative reading remained less developed. The findings address a gap in studies of EFL readers' perceptions, which have often focused on general reading difficulties, anxiety, or extensive reading rather than integrated critical reading in an ESP context (Suryani & Siminto, 2023; Bui & Macalister, 2021; Arifin et al., 2025). By combining perception data with observations, reading tasks, and interviews, this study shows how vocational students experience complementary strategies when processing workplace-oriented business texts.

Unlike Octavianti et al. (2023) and Akbar (2014), which emphasized reading perceptions, frequency, or broader language outcomes, the present study identifies the particular skills students associated with integrated critical reading: monitoring comprehension, identifying key information, connecting ideas, interpreting implications, and forming evidence-based judgments. Its novelty lies in examining SPQ, Annotation, and Journaling simultaneously in Indonesian vocational Business English and in showing that perceived motivational benefits coexist with persistent inferential and evaluative difficulties. Accordingly, workplace-oriented critical literacy requires more than introducing strategies. Lecturers need to model inferencing, make evaluation criteria explicit, pre-teach essential business concepts, and gradually reduce scaffolding so that students can justify interpretations and evaluate arguments independently.

The percentage of perceived benefits was also calculated from 30 responses, in which each student selected the most dominant benefit they experienced. The main benefits were increased motivation in applying Higher Order Thinking Skills (31%) and improved focus on identifying main ideas (29%), indicating the activation of higher-level cognitive processes. However, benefits related to meaning analysis (11%) and forming text-based opinions (5%) were still low, showing that students have not fully developed their argumentative reflection skills. This means that the strategies worked effectively as motivational triggers, but have not yet functioned optimally as enhancers of evaluative ability.

The findings of this study directly reinforce the existing research gap in previous studies on EFL readers' perceptions of reading comprehension (Suryani & Siminto, 2023; Bui & Macalister, 2021; Arifin et al., 2025), whose focus has remained on general difficulties or the impact of extensive reading, rather than on the implementation of integrated critical reading strategies in an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) context. Moreover, earlier studies adopting critical reading models were mostly conducted with English Education students using academic texts, leaving limited attention to workplace-specific critical literacy needs required by vocational learners.

Unlike Octavianti et al., (2023) and Akbar (2014) who highlighted readers' perceptions and reading frequency as predictors of learning success, the present study demonstrates that positive perceptions of critical reading strategies are associated with improved HOTS and better identification of key business text information. Therefore, the novelty of this study lies in: (1) its under-represented sample vocational Business English students whose literacy needs differ significantly from academic English majors; (2) the simultaneous application of three critical reading strategies-Stop–Paraphrase-Questioning (SPQ), Annotation, and Journaling as a pedagogical intervention; and (3) an analysis that not only captures comprehension outcomes, but also reveals the interaction between perceptions, benefits, and challenges within the critical reading process.

Thus, this study offers new empirical evidence that the development of critical literacy for vocational students requires pedagogical approaches that are more directed toward inferential reasoning and evaluative judgment, ensuring that reading instruction genuinely bridges students' communication competence with the demands of professional workplaces.

CONCLUSION

This study examined vocational students' perceptions of three integrated critical reading strategies Stop-Paraphrase-Questioning, Annotation/Marking the Text, and Journaling in Business English reading activities. Students generally perceived the strategies positively and most often associated them with broader perspectives, analysis of ideas, identification of key information, stronger focus, and willingness to question texts. These findings are consistent with research emphasizing the role of strategic reading in engagement and deeper processing (Suryani & Siminto, 2023; Bui & Macalister, 2021). Nevertheless, the present data are perception-based and do not demonstrate that the strategies caused increased motivation or measurable improvement.

The results also identify specific areas that remained difficult: interpreting implicit meaning, using background knowledge, evaluating arguments, distinguishing facts from opinions, and forming text-based judgments. Workplace-oriented texts intensified these challenges because they required business vocabulary, contextual knowledge, and interpretation of formal or implied managerial meanings. Explicit modeling, vocabulary support, guided inferencing, and structured evaluation prompts are therefore needed before students can apply the strategies independently. The study is limited by its small single-institution sample, short implementation period, reliance on self-reported perceptions, and absence of pretest–posttest or comparison-group evidence. Future research should test the integrated framework with larger samples and direct measures of reading performance.

The contribution of this study lies in conceptualizing SPQ, Annotation, and Journaling as complementary stages of critical reading: comprehension monitoring, textual analysis, and metacognitive reflection. Within Indonesian vocational Business English, this framework offers a context-specific basis for designing workplace-text instruction while also showing that inferential reasoning and evaluative judgment require sustained scaffolding. The conclusion should therefore be understood as evidence of perceived instructional value, not proof of causal effectiveness.

To this point, this study has presented how the integration of three critical reading strategies-Stop-Paraphrase-Questioning, Annotation/Marking the Text, and Journaling enhanced students' engagement and stimulated higher-order thinking in Business English reading activities. The major findings reveal that students demonstrated positive perceptions toward these strategies, especially in terms of motivating them to focus on essential ideas and expanding their perspectives while processing business-related information. These achievements support previous studies that emphasize the importance of reading strategy instruction in facilitating deeper comprehension and increasing learning motivation in EFL contexts (Suryani & Siminto, 2023; Bui & Macalister, 2021). However, despite these promising results, students' analytical skills particularly in evaluating argumentation, distinguishing facts from opinion, and interpreting implicit meaning remain limited. This condition aligns with claims in prior research indicating that the development of critical literacy requires both sustained cognitive effort and explicit instruction, especially when learners are still transitioning from literal to inferential comprehension skills.

The interpretation of these results suggests that while students are ready to adopt strategy-based learning, their cognitive readiness to operate at a fully critical level is still evolving. The use of business-oriented texts, which demand contextual knowledge and analytical reasoning, contributed to the challenges encountered by the students. Thus, a more intensive scaffolding process is necessary to strengthen inferential reasoning and evaluative judgment—two essential competencies for workplace-oriented communication in vocational education. The limitations of this study lie in its relatively small sample and short duration of classroom intervention, which may

not fully capture longitudinal development of critical reading performance. Future studies may extend the training period, apply the strategies in diverse disciplinary texts, and examine the direct effect on measurable reading outcomes such as comprehension scores or argumentative writing. Further research may also include teachers' perspectives or classroom discourse analysis to better understand how instructional mediation shapes students' critical reading processes.

In conclusion, this study provides empirical evidence that a simultaneous application of three critical reading strategies can serve as a meaningful foundation for nurturing critical comprehension among vocational EFL learners. Strengthening pedagogical attention on reflective judgement and argument evaluation is recommended to ensure that reading instruction in Business English not only supports comprehension but also equips learners with analytical literacy required in professional workplace communication.

DECLARATION OF AI AND AI ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

During revision, the author used ChatGPT to organize reviewer comments, check reported statistical calculations, improve academic English, update reference formatting, and align the manuscript with the journal template. The author reviewed all revisions and remains responsible for the accuracy of the data, analysis, citations, ethical statements, and final manuscript.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.

Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; In-vestigation.

Author 3: Data curation; Investigation.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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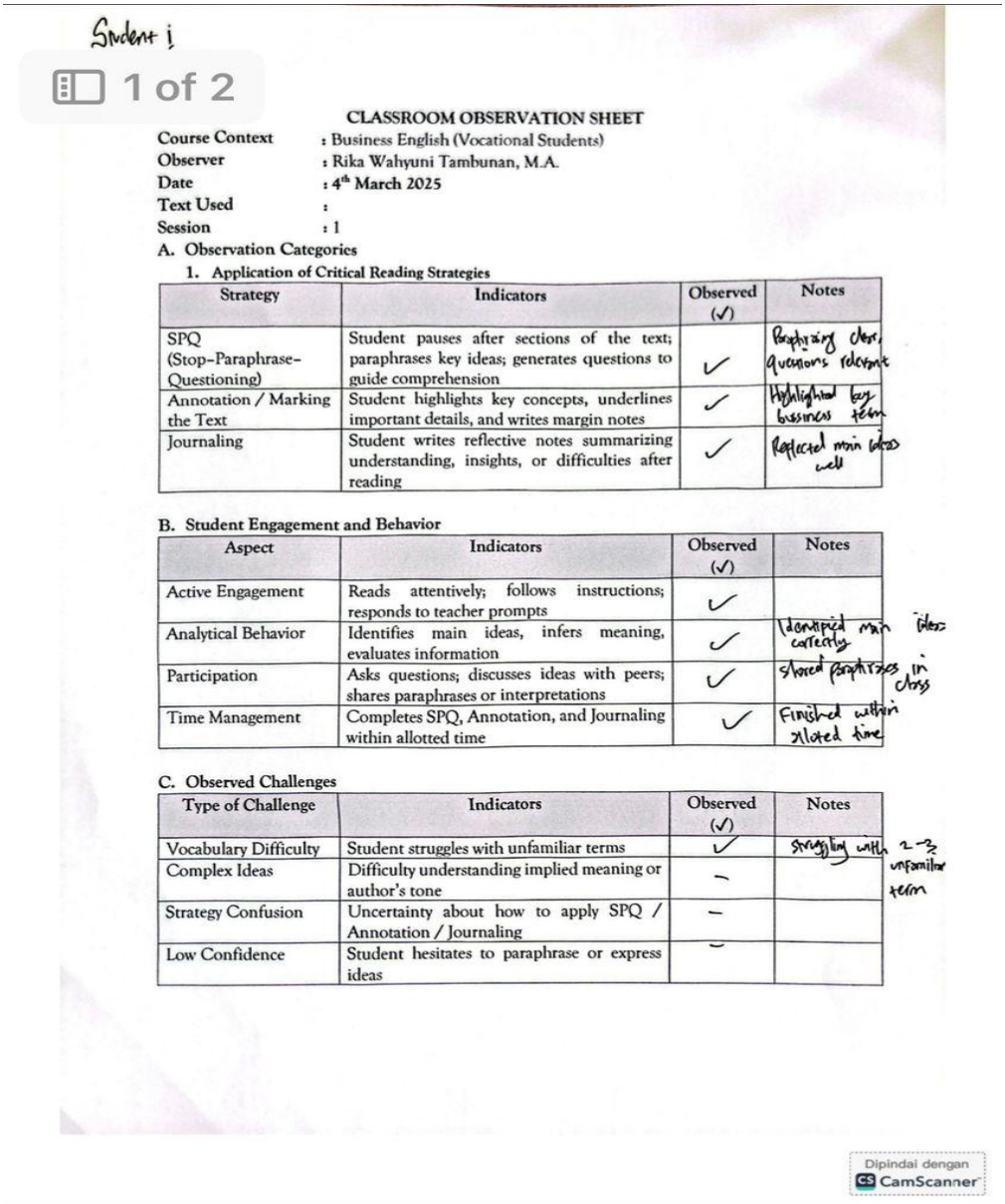
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Appendix 1. Classroom Observation Sheet

Purpose:

To observe students' engagement and application of the three critical reading strategies: Stop–Paraphrase–Questioning (SPQ), Annotation/Marking the Text, and Journaling.



Student 1

1 of 2

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION SHEET

Course Context : Business English (Vocational Students)
Observer : Rika Wahyuni Tambunan, M.A.
Date : 4th March 2025
Text Used :
Session : 1

A. Observation Categories

1. Application of Critical Reading Strategies

Strategy	Indicators	Observed (✓)	Notes
SPQ (Stop–Paraphrase–Questioning)	Student pauses after sections of the text; paraphrases key ideas; generates questions to guide comprehension	✓	Paraphrasing clear, questions relevant
Annotation / Marking the Text	Student highlights key concepts, underlines important details, and writes margin notes	✓	Highlighted key business term
Journaling	Student writes reflective notes summarizing understanding, insights, or difficulties after reading	✓	Reflected main ideas well

B. Student Engagement and Behavior

Aspect	Indicators	Observed (✓)	Notes
Active Engagement	Reads attentively; follows instructions; responds to teacher prompts	✓	
Analytical Behavior	Identifies main ideas, infers meaning, evaluates information	✓	Identified main ideas correctly
Participation	Asks questions; discusses ideas with peers; shares paraphrases or interpretations	✓	Shared paraphrases in class
Time Management	Completes SPQ, Annotation, and Journaling within allotted time	✓	Finished within allotted time

C. Observed Challenges

Type of Challenge	Indicators	Observed (✓)	Notes
Vocabulary Difficulty	Student struggles with unfamiliar terms	✓	Struggling with 2–3 unfamiliar term
Complex Ideas	Difficulty understanding implied meaning or author's tone	–	
Strategy Confusion	Uncertainty about how to apply SPQ / Annotation / Journaling	–	
Low Confidence	Student hesitates to paraphrase or express ideas	–	

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D. Overall Observation Summary

1. General Notes: Strong application of all strategies

2. Evidence of Strategy Effectiveness: SPQ increased focus and comprehension

3. Recommendations for the Next Session: Provide vocabulary support.

Appendix 2. Sample Reading Tasks

Purpose:

To assess how students apply the three critical reading strategies to business-related texts.

Reading Text 1 - Executive Memo (Strategic Planning Memo)

Title: *Strategic Adjustment for Q4 Market Realignment*

Text:

To: Senior Department Managers
From: Chief Operating Officer
Subject: Market Realignment Measures for Q4

Following the declining performance in our domestic sales segment and the unforeseen rise in operational expenses across our production sites, the Executive Committee has approved a phased realignment strategy for Quarter 4. Recent analytics indicate that consumer behavior is shifting toward subscription-based service models, while our current product line remains predominantly transaction-driven.

To address this gap, each division is required to assess its operational priorities and propose initiatives that support recurring-revenue streams. These may include restructuring customer service workflows, developing maintenance packages, or partnering with external vendors for value-added services.

Departments must submit a preliminary proposal by October 30. Proposals should include projected budget adjustments, potential risks, and measurable performance indicators. The objective is to ensure organizational sustainability while mitigating volatility in traditional sales cycles.

Managers are advised to communicate upcoming adjustments transparently to their teams to minimize uncertainty and maintain workforce morale during the transition period.

Reading Text 2 - Analytical Business Report Excerpt

Title: *Evaluation of Digital Transformation Outcomes in the Logistics Division*

Text:

The implementation of the digital logistics dashboard, introduced six months ago, has generated mixed outcomes. On one hand, the centralized tracking system has reduced reporting delays by 27% and improved cross-departmental visibility. Supervisors now have real-time access to shipment statuses, vehicle availability, and route analytics, which has contributed to more efficient dispatch decisions.

However, qualitative feedback from field staff reveals persistent operational barriers. Several drivers reported interruptions in GPS connectivity in rural regions, resulting in incomplete data logs. Moreover, although the system automated many manual tasks, it simultaneously introduced a dependency on digital tools that some employees were not adequately trained to handle. The resulting workflow inconsistencies have occasionally led to delivery backlogs.

The data suggest that the technological upgrade alone is insufficient. Without targeted capacity-building programs and continuous system optimization, the division risks widening the performance gap between digitally proficient staff and those struggling to adapt. A hybrid support model integrating training, system refinement, and human oversight is recommended to ensure sustainable performance improvements.

Reading Text 3 - Workplace Policy Document (Human Capital & Compliance)

Title: *Revised Workplace Communication and Compliance Protocol, 2024*

Text:

Effective February 2024, all units within the organization are required to adopt the updated Workplace Communication and Compliance Protocol. This revision responds to recent audit findings that indicated inconsistencies in data reporting, non-standardized documentation formats, and a communication gap between supervisory and operational teams.

The revised protocol emphasizes three key components. First, all personnel must utilize the standardized digital reporting template generated through the Compliance Portal. This ensures uniformity in documentation and reduces the risk of data discrepancies. Second, department heads are mandated to conduct quarterly briefings to reinforce procedural updates and provide clarification on regulatory expectations. Third, the protocol introduces a mandatory reflection log for all employees, requiring them to document challenges encountered during task execution and propose feasible solutions.

The purpose of the reflection log is twofold: to promote metacognitive awareness among staff and to provide management with insight into recurring operational constraints. Failure to comply with the revised protocol may affect performance evaluations, as adherence is now categorized under "Professional Competency and Compliance Behavior."

Appendix 3. Perception Questionnaire (4-Point Likert Scale)

Purpose:

To measure students' perceptions of the ease, benefits, and challenges of using critical reading strategies.

Perception Questionnaire (4-Point Likert Scale)

Purpose:

To measure students' perceptions of the ease, benefits, and challenges of using critical reading strategies.

Section A - Perceived Ease of Use

Construct : Ease of applying critical reading strategies

Description : Measures how comfortable students feel when using SPQ, Annotation, and Journaling.

Item Code	Questionnaire Item	Indicator Measured	1	2	3	4
A1	SPQ strategy is easy for me to follow.	Ease of using SPQ (Stop-Paraphrase-Questioning)	☐	☐	☐	☑
A2	Annotating the text helps me process information more comfortably.	Ease of Annotation	☐	☐	☐	☑
A3	Journaling feels natural and simple to complete.	Ease of reflective writing	☐	☐	☐	☑

Section B - Perceived Benefits

Construct : Cognitive and metacognitive benefits

Description : Evaluates how each strategy supports comprehension, analysis, and reflection.

Item Code	Questionnaire Item	Indicator Measured	1	2	3	4
B1	SPQ helps me focus on the main ideas of the text.	Ability to identify main ideas	☐	☐	☑	☐
B2	Annotation improves my understanding of text organization.	Text structure awareness	☐	☐	☑	☐
B3	Journaling helps me reflect on what I read more deeply.	Metacognitive reflection	☐	☐	☑	☐
B4	These strategies help me distinguish important information from irrelevant details.	Filtering key vs. non-key information	☐	☐	☑	☐
B5	The strategies improve my ability to identify the author's purpose or tone.	Evaluative comprehension	☑	☐	☐	☐

Section C - Perceived Challenges

Construct : Difficulties experienced while using the strategies

Description : Identifies obstacles that may hinder comprehension or strategy use.

Item Code	Questionnaire Item	Indicator Measured	1	2	3	4
C1	I sometimes struggle to paraphrase ideas accurately.	Difficulty paraphrasing	☐	☑	☐	☐
C2	Annotating distracts me from reading smoothly.	Annotation difficulty	☐	☐	☐	☑
C3	Journaling takes longer than expected to complete.	Time burden of journaling	☐	☐	☑	☐
C4	I feel overwhelmed when applying all three strategies at once.	Cognitive overload	☐	☑	☐	☐

Section D - Overall Perception

Construct : General beliefs about the usefulness of the strategies

Description : Measures whether students perceive the strategies as valuable and sustainable for future reading.

Item Code	Questionnaire Item	Indicator Measured	1	2	3	4
D1	The three strategies help me become a better reader.	Improvement in overall reading ability	☐	☐	☐	☑
D2	I would like to continue using these strategies in future reading activities.	Sustainability / future intention	☐	☐	☐	☑

Appendix 4. Interview Guide (Semi-Structured)

Purpose:

To obtain qualitative insights into students' experiences, benefits, and challenges while using the three strategies.

Student	SPQ Experience (Q1)	Annotation Experience (Q2)	Journaling Experience (Q3)	Effects & Critical Thinking (Q4-Q5)	Challenges & Cognitive Load (Q6–Q7)	Preference & Recommendation (Q8-Q9)	Suggestions (Q10)
1	SPQ slowed down reading of the Executive Memo and clarified the idea of subscription-based models.	Highlighting deadlines and proposal parts helped follow memo structure but slowed reading.	Helped reflect on the need for realignment and notice unclear parts.	Strategies clarified key terms (e.g., 'value-added services') and implications of shifting to a subscription model.	Paraphrasing long sentences was hard; journaling was time-consuming; using all strategies felt overwhelming.	Preferred SPQ; would recommend the strategies because they guided reading.	More vocabulary support before reading.
2	Helped understand the logistics report, especially the '27% reduction' data.	Helped separate positive outcomes from barriers (GPS interruptions).	Deepened understanding of training issues.	Made main ideas and problem–solution structure clearer; realized tech alone is not enough.	Difficult technical words ('workflow inconsistencies'); using three strategies sometimes too much.	Preferred Annotation; would recommend because it organizes information.	Shorter journaling tasks.
3	Helped break down the Compliance Protocol, especially the reflection log section.	Highlighting three protocol components clarified expectations.	Helped process why reflection logs are important.	Made policy text less overwhelming and highlighted assumptions behind standardized templates.	Vocabulary like 'regulatory expectations' was difficult; use of three strategies felt tiring but manageable.	Preferred SPQ for dense policy text; would recommend to avoid confusion.	Examples of good paraphrasing.
4	Pausing each paragraph clarified the memo's realignment strategy.	Helped mark budget, risks, and KPIs.	Useful for reflecting on how companies adapt to market changes.	Structured thinking and raised awareness of urgent, directive tone.	Implied meanings were difficult; doing all strategies felt heavy.	Preferred SPQ; would recommend.	More prior explanation of business terms.
5	Helped interpret data vs qualitative feedback in logistics report.	Helped identify barriers such as training gaps.	Highlighted importance of human oversight.	Made patterns in the report clearer and supported evaluation of training needs.	Paraphrasing long analytical sentences was challenging, especially with dense text.	Preferred Annotation; would recommend.	Model examples of annotation.
6	Helped handle the procedure-	Clarified mandatory vs optional	Encouraged reflection on employee	Improved comprehension of	Business vocabulary was	Preferred SPQ; would recommend.	Short practice texts first.

	heavy compliance document.	parts.	challenges.	protocol flow and implications for performance evaluation.	difficult; using all three strategies felt overwhelming.		
7	Kept focus on memo's main point: market realignment.	Clarified required proposal components.	Helped internalize purpose of strategic changes.	Better understanding of managerial expectations, risks, and consequences.	Difficulty understanding 'value-added services'; sometimes overloaded.	Preferred Annotation; would recommend.	More time allocated for SPQ.
8	Helped distinguish findings and barriers in logistics report.	Clearly classified issues (GPS, skills, workflow).	Supported evaluation of digital readiness.	Improved interpretation of performance gaps and underlying issues beyond numbers.	Paraphrasing technical terms was hard; somewhat overwhelming.	Preferred SPQ; would recommend.	Vocabulary list before reading.
9	Helped manage length of compliance text.	Helped track sequence of requirements.	Raised awareness of misunderstandings.	Improved clarity on documentation procedures and role of compliance in evaluation.	Low confidence when paraphrasing; using all three strategies felt too much.	Preferred Journaling; would recommend.	Simplify instructions.
10	Helped interpret operational and strategic terms in memo.	Helped identify deadlines and priorities.	Deepened understanding of morale and communication issues.	Improved comprehension of strategic direction, risks, and opportunities.	Complex vocabulary; sometimes overwhelmed.	Preferred SPQ; would recommend.	Examples of SPQ steps.
11	Clarified emphasis on controlling operational costs in memo.	Highlighting budget items and KPIs showed prioritized targets.	Helped think about strategy shifts under market pressure.	Better identification of main ideas and financial reasoning; considered consequences of poor budgeting.	Terms like 'operational volatility' difficult; three strategies felt heavy.	Preferred SPQ; would recommend.	Glossary of financial terms.
12	Helped manage long paragraphs in Compliance Protocol.	Clarified sequence of documentation procedures.	Made reasons behind each compliance step clearer.	Clearer understanding of reporting responsibilities and reasons for compliance.	Annotation slowed pace; strategies sometimes overwhelming but useful.	Preferred Annotation; would recommend.	Shorter policy texts for practice.
13	Helped understand	Highlighted major delay	Increased awareness of	Linked data trends to	Technical vocabulary	Preferred Annotation;	More guided SPQ

	trends in the logistics dashboard and performanc e decline.	causes (GPS, incomplete reporting).	how digital systems affect workflow.	real-world operational issues and digital adoption.	difficult; combining strategies tiring.	would recommend.	examples.
14	Helped separate directive statements from background information in memo.	Clarified proposal requirement s and expectation s.	Encouraged reflection on staff responses to rapid changes.	Organized understandi ng of memo logic, tone, and urgency.	Difficulties with implied managerial expectations ; heavy with long text.	Preferred SPQ; would recommend.	More teacher modeling of SPQ.
15	Clarified cause–effect explanation s in logistics report.	Helped categorize problems and solutions.	Encouraged reflection on impact of training gaps.	Strengthene d comprehen sion of analytic structure and root causes.	Paraphrasin g multi-clause sentences was challenging; long texts hard with 3 strategies.	Preferred Annotation; would recommend.	More examples of effective paraphrasing .
16	Helped understand step-by-step procedures in compliance protocol.	Differentiat ed required vs recommend ed documentat ion.	Clarified importance of reporting process.	Better grasp of procedural flow and implication s of incomplete reporting.	Formal tone was hard to interpret; sometimes overwhelmi ng.	Preferred SPQ; would recommend.	Use shorter compliance samples first.
17	Very helpful for managing dense explanation s in compliance text.	Clarified each step in documentat ion timeline.	Showed where procedures were misunderstoo d.	Improved retention of procedural details; clearer sense of each protocol's purpose.	Low paraphrasin g confidence; cognitive load quite heavy.	Preferred Journaling; would recommend.	Paraphrasing templates.
18	Helped understand rationale for logistics upgrade.	Identified barriers (skills, inconsistent workflows).	Emphasized importance of human factors.	Better interpretati on of performanc e gaps and system effectivene ss.	Vocabulary load high; combined strategies overwhelmi ng.	Preferred SPQ; would recommend.	More practice with Annotation.
19	Clarified strategic rationale behind memo's realignmen t.	Helped track budget priorities and risks.	Linked memo goals with staff performance implications.	Improved understandi ng of organizatio nal adaptation and shifting market demand.	Hard to interpret implied managerial tone; heavy with longer text.	Preferred SPQ; would recommend.	More pre-reading discussion.
20	Helped decode reporting timeline in	Made tracking mandatory requirement	Clarified misunderstan dings about documentatio	Helped see overall logic of processes	Using three strategies felt overwhelmi	Preferred Annotation; would recommend.	Shorter texts for reading.

	Compliance Protocol.	s easier.	n.	and link to performance assessment.	ng and too much at times.		
21	Clarified rationale for subscription-based model in memo.	Highlighted KPIs and proposal deadlines.	Helped reflect on strategic reasons behind operational changes.	Improved understanding of memo goals, expectations, and strategic risks/benefits.	Terms like 'recurring revenue' and 'operational realignment' difficult; heavy load.	Preferred SPQ; would recommend.	More pre-teaching of business vocabulary.
22	Helped interpret different logistics dashboard data points.	Categorized barriers as technological vs human.	Deepened understanding of workflow inconsistencies.	Clearer view of root causes and consequences; evaluated system weaknesses.	Technical abbreviations confusing; cognitive load moderate.	Preferred Annotation; would recommend.	Shorter texts for complex reports.
23	Made compliance instructions easier by breaking them into smaller segments.	Highlighted key documentation items.	Helped see why compliance logs are needed.	Better understanding of procedural flow and link to performance.	Paraphrasing formal policy language was hard; using 3 strategies difficult.	Preferred SPQ; would recommend.	Clearer examples of compliance steps.
24	Helped divide memo into main ideas and action items.	Clarified which sections required proposals.	Consolidated understanding of proposal requirements.	Improved clarity of expectations and urgency of changes.	Inferring implied meaning was difficult; load quite heavy.	Preferred SPQ; would recommend.	More guided SPQ examples.
25	Supported understanding of logistical delays in dashboard report.	Identified training gaps and GPS failures.	Helped interpret need for staff training.	Strengthened comprehension of analytic structure and impact of workflow inconsistencies.	Technical words like 'intermittent connectivity' difficult; load challenging.	Preferred Annotation; would recommend.	Vocabulary list before reading.
26	Kept focus on urgency of memo's restructuring plan.	Helped mark priority actions.	Increased awareness of director's tone and expectations.	Improved understanding of strategic purpose and risks of not adapting.	Complex expressions; sometimes overwhelming.	Preferred SPQ; would recommend.	Shorter journaling tasks.
27	Helped separate findings and	Made it easier to track causes of delays.	Helped connect data to managerial decisions.	Better information organization and	Difficulty understanding implications	Preferred Annotation; would recommend.	Visual guides for annotation.

	recommendations in logistics report.			evaluation of assumptions.	of performance data; demanding load.		
28	Made long compliance protocol more manageable.	Helped mark essential vs optional points.	Clarified misunderstood parts.	Supported comprehension of sequence and purpose; connection to evaluation.	Vocabulary and formal tone difficult; high load with long texts.	Preferred SPQ; would recommend.	Simplified instructions.
29	Clarified motivations for adopting digital logistics systems.	Helped identify skill gaps and tech issues.	Linked operational problems with staff training.	Improved interpretation of report findings and system effectiveness.	Paraphrasing technical explanations was overwhelming; load high.	Preferred Annotation; would recommend.	Shorter and simpler practice texts.
30	Helped follow memo's restructuring logic step-by-step.	Clarified proposal criteria and deadlines.	Helped better understand workflow issues.	Improved comprehension of operational restructuring and hidden implications of director's message.	Vocabulary and implied tone challenging; high load with three strategies.	Preferred SPQ; would recommend.	More SPQ examples before reading.

Appendix 5. Coding Scheme for Thematic Analysis

Coding Scheme for Thematic Analysis

No	Theme	Subtheme	Operational Definition	Indicators / Codes	Example Student Quotes
1	Improved Comprehension and Focus	1.1 Identifying Main Ideas	Students describe improved ability to recognize main points using SPQ or Annotation	"focus on key ideas", "find main points", "clarify paragraph meaning"	*"When I used SPQ, I could finally see what each paragraph was really talking about."*
		1.2 Understanding Text Structure	Students express awareness of how information is organized in business texts	"see structure", "connect ideas", "understand flow of argument"	*"Annotation helped me understand the sequence of explanation and recommendations."*
2	Development of Higher-Order Thinking	2.1 Critical Evaluation	Students evaluate author's stance, tone, purpose, or information reliability	"question author", "evaluate tone", "judge credibility"	*"SPQ made me question why the writer used that tone and what they wanted us to think."*
		2.2 Inferencing Skills	Students infer implied ideas beyond literal meaning	"read between the lines", "infer intention", "interpret implication"	*"Journaling helped me realize the report was suggesting a deeper issue not directly stated."*
3	Increased Metacognitive Awareness	3.1 Awareness of Thinking Process	Students identify their own comprehension strengths/weaknesses	"know what I don't understand", "monitor understanding", "realize gaps"	*"When I wrote journal reflections, I noticed which parts confused me."*
		3.2 Reflection on Strategy Use	Students articulate how each strategy helps them differently	"SPQ suits me", "Annotation fits my learning style", "Journaling helps reflection"	*"SPQ matches the way I like to think–step by step."*
4	Challenges and Cognitive Overload	4.1 Difficulty Paraphrasing	Students struggle to restate ideas in their own words	"hard to paraphrase", "don't know how to reword", "fear of changing meaning"	*"Paraphrasing is difficult because I'm afraid my version becomes inaccurate."*
		4.2 Multiple Strategy Burden	Students feel overwhelmed using SPQ + Annotation + Journaling together	"overwhelmed", "too many steps", "takes too much time"	*"When I used all three strategies at once, it felt like a lot to handle."*
5	Motivation and Confidence Changes	5.1 Increased Confidence	Students feel more capable of understanding business texts	"more confident", "less anxious", "can handle long texts"	*"I'm not scared of long business texts anymore because I know how to break them down."*
		5.2 Higher Motivation	Students enjoy reading more and stay engaged	"more motivated", "more active", "enjoy reading"	*"Annotation made reading more interactive, so I didn't get bored."*
6	Strategy Preference and Future Use	6.1 Preferred Strategy	Students choose the strategy they find most helpful	"SPQ helps most", "Annotation is easiest", "Journaling fits me"	*"SPQ is my favorite because it forces me to think deeper about each sentence."*
		6.2 Intention for Future Use	Students express willingness to use strategies in future reading	"want to continue", "useful for other classes", "want to practice more"	*"I will keep using these strategies in other courses because they make reading easier."*

Purpose:

To analyze interview data and identify major themes.