

The Effectiveness of a Program Based on Thinking Activities in Developing Extensive Reading Skills Among Arabic Language Learners Who Speak Other Languages

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to build a program based on thinking activities to develop the extended reading skills of learners of Arabic speaking other languages. For the purpose of the research, a list of the appropriate extended reading skills for fourth-level students, a program based on thinking activities, and a test of extended reading skills were prepared. The research experiment was applied to (30) fourth-level students who are learners of Arabic speaking other languages at the Institute of Arabic Linguistics at King Saud University. The results of the research showed that there were statistically significant differences between the average scores of students (members of the research group) in the pre and post measurements in the skills of each of the three levels of extended reading; And that was in favor of the dimensional measurement, and by revealing the level of significance, it was found that it is statistically significant at the level (05.0), as it became clear from the statistical treatment that the proposed program is characterized by a high degree of effectiveness in developing the expanded reading skills of the students of the research group, where the average gain percentage is (12,1) which is greater than the correct one. Accordingly, the research presented a variety of recommendations and research proposals.

Keywords: Thinking Activities, Extensive Reading, Arabic Language Learners, Second Language Acquisition, Critical Thinking, Reading Comprehension

INTRODUCTION

Reading is considered one of the fundamental keys to acquiring knowledge and sciences among human beings, as well as a means for exchanging experiences, opinions, ideas, cultures, and life encounters. Conscious nations are those that care to read their past and extract lessons and insights from it, in order to build their present and envision their future in a way that ensures their strength and dignity among other nations.

In the field of teaching the Arabic language, reading holds a prominent position among the four language skills. It enhances the reader's abilities in appreciation, creativity, and criticism, as well as in analysis, interpretation, and inference. It also fosters positive dynamic interaction and helps individuals communicate and understand others within their living environments. Due to its importance, reading has been made a foundational element in educational activities. It has attracted the attention of educators around the world, both in developed and developing countries. However, Ahmed (2021, p. 2) pointed out that reading becomes futile if comprehension is absent:

“Comprehension must be engaged in the reading process so that learners can understand the meanings of words, relate them to one another, grasp the meanings of sentences, recognize relationships among them, organize them logically, and apply them in new situations.”

The process of comprehension involves multiple levels, beginning with the literal or surface level, then expanding in depth to include the interpretive or inferential level, and further deepening to encompass the critical, appreciative, and creative levels. Thus, comprehension helps achieve reader autonomy, enabling individuals to obtain, organize, and logically arrange information in a way that ensures its application across various aspects of life. This is attainable when the reader masters the skill of extensive reading, as clarified by Ibrahim (2016, p. 16).

This is supported by Warring (2000, 5) and Al-Wuhaidi (2019, 72), who indicated that extensive reading plays a significant role in helping learners reach higher levels of comprehension, such as critical and appreciative understanding. This is because it relies on reading long texts outside the classroom under the guidance and supervision of the teacher, after which the main ideas of these texts are discussed within the classroom. Extensive reading also enables learners to become more autonomous by allowing them to choose Arabic books that align with their personal interests. Grabe (2009, p. 65) adds that extensive reading plays a major role in improving learners' language skills. Many previous studies have focused on developing extensive reading skills among foreign language learners. For example, Meng (2009) aimed to enhance reading ability through extensive reading, while Han (2010) aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of extensive reading activities in connection with writing tasks in teaching English as a foreign language.

The development of extensive reading skills for learners of Arabic as a second language Speaker is even more important than for learners of other foreign languages. This is because one of the strongest motivations for that group to learn Arabic is religious, as pointed out by Taima (1986, 282), followed by educational and cultural motives, and then personal and social motives, while professional and economic motivations are the weakest for this group. Therefore, enhancing extensive reading skills for non-native Arabic speakers is, first and foremost, a religious duty, as it enables them to properly understand the vocabulary and meanings of the language, as well as to comprehend Islamic teachings in an accurate and uncorrupted manner.

Abdul Bari (2020, 111) noted that extensive reading plays a major role in teaching Arabic to non-native speakers, as it helps increase learners' linguistic repertoire and enriches their cognitive structures with new concepts and vocabulary, thereby enhancing their ability to apply these in various contexts in their own language use. Several previous studies have recommended focusing on the use of modern strategies and activities to develop reading skills among Arabic learners who speak other languages, such as the studies by Al-Hudaybi (2013), Jalal (2017), Morsi (2018), and Ahmed (2021).

Among the most important of these modern strategies and activities are those based on various thinking patterns that stimulate the learner's mind and engage them in diverse mental processes to accomplish assigned tasks. In the field of reading instruction, numerous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of thinking-based strategies and activities in improving learners' reading skills. For example, the study by Ibrahim, Mahmoud, and Said (2014) showed the effectiveness of a program based on divergent thinking strategies in developing creative reading comprehension skills and certain productive habits of mind among first-year secondary students. Similarly, Al-Samman (2016) demonstrated the effectiveness of a model based on collective participatory thinking in developing reciprocal and extensive reading skills among secondary school students.

In the field of teaching Arabic to non-native speakers, Al-Hudaybi (2012) proved the effectiveness of divergent thinking strategies in developing rhetorical concepts and attitudes toward rhetoric in learners of Arabic as a foreign language. Additionally, Al-Harbi (2015) showed the effectiveness of divergent thinking strategies in developing reading comprehension skills in this learner group. Therefore, the researcher proposes the use of a program based on thinking activities to develop extensive reading skills among non-native speakers of Arabic.

Problem Statement

The awareness of the research problem emerged from several sources, as outlined below:

Personal Interviews

The researcher conducted open personal interviews with fifteen teachers working at the Institute of Arabic Linguistics at King Saud University. The focus of the interviews was to assess the level of fourth-level students in extensive reading skills and identify the reasons behind their performance. The teachers unanimously agreed that the students at this level show a noticeable weakness in extensive reading skills. They are unable to supplement the content of the reading text with diverse ideas from various sources, nor can they complete missing information within the texts. Moreover, in most cases, their responses to directed questions rely solely on the prescribed textbook, without reference to any additional materials. These findings align with those reported in the studies of Abdul Bari (2020, p. 111) and Ahmed (2021).

Survey Results

The researcher also conducted a pilot study by designing a test in extensive reading skills targeting fourth-level learners of Arabic as a second language enrolled at the Institute of Arabic Linguistics, King Saud University. The sample consisted of nine students. The test included six extensive reading skills, assessed through twelve questions each question carrying one point resulting in a total possible score of twelve points. These skills were selected based on the studies of Ibrahim (2016), Al-Samman (2016), and Abdul Bari (2020). The results of the pilot study were as follows:

Table 1: Survey Study Results

S. No	Skill	Correct Answers %
1	Interpret concepts and terms related to the text.	44,4 %
2	Distinguish between factual information and personal opinion in reading texts."	44,4 %
3	Expressing an opinion on the ideas presented in the text.	33,3 %
4	Identifying the types of rhetorical styles in the text and their purposes."	33,3 %
5	The ability to recognize rhetorical embellishments such as alliteration, assonance, antithesis, and other stylistic features in the text	22,2 %
6	The ability to analyze the suggestive or implied meanings of the vocabulary and syntactic structures used in the text	11,1 %

It is clear from the Table 1 that students scored low on all test questions, with the percentage of correct answers falling below 50%. These percentages indicate a significant deficiency in their extensive reading skills.

Identifying the Research Problem

The research problem lies in the weakness of extensive reading skills among fourth-level students who are non-native speakers learning Arabic. This deficiency has made them unable to enrich the reading texts with multiple ideas from various sources or to complete missing information within the texts. Furthermore, most of their answers rely solely on the prescribed textbook, without drawing on other references. As a result, the researcher decided to employ a program based on thinking activities to develop their extensive reading skills.

Research Questions

The research sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the appropriate extensive reading skills for learners of Arabic as a foreign language?
2. What are the foundations for designing a program based on thinking activities to develop extensive reading skills among learners of Arabic as a foreign language?
3. What are the components of a program based on thinking activities to enhance extensive reading skills among learners of Arabic as a foreign language?
4. What is the effectiveness of a program based on thinking activities in developing extensive reading skills

Research Objective

The current research aimed to develop extensive reading skills among learners of Arabic as a foreign language by using a program based on thinking activities.

Research Hypothesis

The current research sought to test the following hypothesis: There are statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level between the mean scores of Arabic language learners participants in the research group—in the pre-test and post-test of extensive reading skills, in favor of the post-test.

Significance of the Research

This research may be beneficial in the following ways:

1. Providing curriculum designers of Arabic for non-native speakers with guidance to help them develop programs aimed at enhancing extensive reading skills at other learning levels.
2. Providing a theoretical background on a program based on thinking activities for teachers of Arabic as a foreign language, and its impact on the extensive reading skills of fourth-level students, as well as for various research centers concerned with teaching Arabic to non-native speakers.
3. Utilizing the findings of the current research to develop reading curricula at centers for teaching Arabic to non-native speakers.

4. Presenting a list of extensive reading skills appropriate for fourth-level students learning Arabic as a foreign language.

Research Delimitations

The current research was limited to the following:

1. **Human Delimitation:** The research experiment was conducted on a sample of 30 fourth-level students learning Arabic as a foreign language at the Institute of Arabic Linguistics, King Saud University. It is worth noting that this sample differs from that of the exploratory study.
2. **Spatial Delimitation:** The study was conducted with fourth-level students from the Institute of Arabic Linguistics at King Saud University.
3. **Temporal Delimitation:** The research experiment was carried out during the second semester of the academic year 2021/2022.
4. **Topical Delimitation:** The current research was limited to three levels of extensive reading:
 - Enriching the text
 - Critiquing the text
 - Appreciating the text

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE RESEARCH

A Program Based on Thinking Activities

Definition of Thinking

Qatami (2013, 23) defined it as: "Cognitive mental processes used in responding to new information, following complex treatments that involve imagination, reasoning, judgment, and problem-solving." Atiyyah (2015, 37) defined it as: "A mental activity that occurs in the brain—intangible and invisible—but inferred through observable behavior that an individual displays in the form of speech, writing, signs, symbols, gestures, actions, or emotions expressed behaviorally." Razouqi and Latif (2018, 11) defined it as: "The highest form of human mental activity. It is also a process through which the mind reorganizes experiences in a new way, such as solving a particular problem or perceiving a new relationship between two or more elements. As such, it belongs to the highest levels of cognitive organization, namely the level of perceiving relationships."

From the above, the following can be concluded:

1. Thinking is a process—or a set of complex mental processes.
2. Thinking is a process that stems from an individual's prior experiences.
3. Among the most important functions of thinking are comprehension, problem-solving, and decision-making.
4. Thinking is a process that manifests itself through observable behavior.

Tools of Thinking

Al-Tayyib (2006, p. 31) indicated that there are a set of symbols used by individuals in the thinking process, which can be clarified as follows:

1. **Mental Images:** The individual mentally represents images of objects based on personal experience. This representation involves mental imagery drawn from all sensory modalities—visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile, and kinesthetic.
2. **Concepts:** The concepts that a child first learns are concrete concepts, related to tangible and perceptible objects. These concepts are typically self-centered and focused on satisfying the child's needs and desires.
3. **Language:** When a child begins to learn language, they acquire words that symbolize concepts. At this stage, the child is able to think symbolically using words that represent these concepts. Language thus aids in learning new concepts, which in turn expands the child's vocabulary and conceptual repertoire—enhancing their ability to think and solve problems.

Levels of Thinking

According to Al-Ayasrah (2011, 104), the thinking process consists of two levels:

1. **Basic Thinking:** This refers to uncomplicated mental or cognitive activities that involve engaging with the lower three levels of Bloom's cognitive taxonomy: *knowledge (recall)*, *comprehension*, and *application*. It also includes a limited number of simple cognitive skills such as *observation*, *comparison*, and *classification*.

2. **Complex Thinking:** It requires a set of advanced mental processes, and its types include: *critical thinking, reflective thinking, creative thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, and metacognitive thinking*.

Complex thinking has several key characteristics, including:

- It cannot be fully charted or directed without a thorough problem analysis.
- It often involves multiple or compound solutions.
- It includes making judgments or forming opinions.
- It requires significant cognitive effort.
- It constructs meaningful understanding of the situation.

Below are two types of complex thinking, the first of which is:

Reflective Thinking:

The Concept of Reflective Thinking: Dinkelmann (2000, p. 199) defined it as an educational practice grounded in deliberation and moral reflection on educational practice.

- Razouqi and Suhail (2018, p. 92) defined it as: A mental process that involves breaking down a problematic situation into components, examining all possible solutions, evaluating them, and verifying their validity before making a choice or arriving at the correct resolution.
- Abd and Jawad (2020, p. 395) described it as: An individual's act of planning the intended action, directing mental operations toward specific goals, and a unique approach to organizing ideas based on verification and deep contemplation of issues and outcomes to make decisions and solve problems.
- Heard et al. (2020, p. 2) defined it as: An active, continuous, and careful examination of any belief or supposed knowledge in light of the supporting grounds and the additional conclusions it tends toward.

Based on the above, the researcher defines reflective thinking operationally as: *The learner's cognitive ability to comprehend detailed ideas within a text, arrange them logically, analyze and evaluate them, and resolve embedded problems*.

The Importance of Reflective Thinking

Hassan (2021, pp. 919–920) summarized its importance as follows:

- It enables learners to connect their thoughts with prior experiences.
- It supports learners in engaging in sound, thoughtful reasoning.
- Developing a sense of responsibility and a creative, open-minded intellect among learners.
- Enabling learners to plan, monitor, and evaluate their approach to processes and procedures used in decision-making.
- Making learners aware of problems and helping them reach the most appropriate solutions.
- Assisting learners in connecting theory with practice and solving problems.

Based on the above, the importance of reflective thinking for learners of Arabic as a second language can be summarized as follows:

- Helping learners solve their own reading-related problems.
- Increasing learners' motivation to learn Arabic.
- Developing learners' appreciation and aesthetic sensitivity.
- Enhancing and expanding their creativity and authorship skills.
- Refining learners' experiences.
- Encouraging learners to use the language in a meaningful and collaborative way.

Domains of Reflective Thinking

Kember et al. (2000) classified reflective thinking into four main domains:

1. **Habitual Action:** This represents the lowest level of reflective thinking. It refers to previously learned behaviors or knowledge that the learner uses automatically and unconsciously in familiar situations. When faced with a problem in different contexts, the learner responds in a mechanical way.
2. **Understanding:** This involves grasping and comprehending concepts without reflecting on their implications or deeper meanings. Understanding is essential for deeper reflection. For example, a student may read a topic in a book and comprehend its contents without performing any deep analysis.
3. **Reflection:** This refers to students exploring their experiences with a topic and delving into the implications of the concept or situation to arrive at a new understanding. Through reflection, one can also

consider hypotheses related to the content, process, or solution to a problem, or investigate matters that are considered axioms and raise questions about them.

Critical Reflection

This represents the highest level of higher-order thinking. It involves deep contemplation about a particular situation, followed by constructing a new understanding and making a judgment regarding that situation. It is achieved when a student is capable of justifying their viewpoint, thoughts, emotions, and actions.

Characteristics of Reflective Thinking

Harhash (2021, p. 159) summarized the characteristics of reflective thinking in the following points:

- A deep understanding of the connections between experiences and ideas as one transitions from one experience to another.
- Disciplined thinking that begins with inquiry, and continuous exploration of one's own beliefs, values, and culture—as well as those of others.
- Ongoing interaction between the individual and others across various situations, which reinforces leadership traits, i.e., influencing others and achieving positive communication through experience exchange.

Reflective Thinking Skills

- Saleh (2014, p. 154) identified reflective thinking skills as follows:
- Describing the event or situation and identifying the causes of the problem.
- Analyzing and interpreting the data obtained from the problem.
- Making decisions and justifying the rationale behind those decisions.

Additionally, Al-Kindi et al. (2016, p. 82) and Al-Zayyat (2021, p. 3969) summarized reflective thinking skills into five key abilities:

1. **Visual Perception:** The ability to display different aspects of a problem and identify its components—either by understanding the nature of the topic or using diagrams/visuals to detect existing relationships visually.
2. **Detection of Fallacies:** The ability to identify gaps in the problem by spotting illogical or incorrect relationships, or by recognizing flawed steps in accomplishing educational tasks.
3. **Drawing Conclusions:** The ability to derive logical relationships based on the content of the problem and reach appropriate conclusions.
4. **Providing Logical Explanations:** The ability to offer logical interpretations for results or for the connections between premises and conclusions.
5. **Proposing Solutions:** The ability to generate several proposed solutions for the problem at hand.

From the Above, the Researcher Concludes: Reflective thinking skills can be defined as the learner's ability to comprehend all aspects of a problem within a given text, identify the relationships among its components, detect errors that hinder educational task completion, and arrive at appropriate solutions based on logical interpretations and conclusions.

Critical Thinking

Definition of Critical Thinking

- Lafi (2006, p. 47) defined it as: "A process of subjecting one's information to analysis, filtering, and scrutiny to assess its compatibility with other verified knowledge, through distinguishing between valid and faulty ideas."
- Hove (2011) defined it as: "A mental process aimed at analyzing or evaluating information, particularly propositions or claims."
- Hassan (2014, p. 34) defined it as: "A mental process that relies on applying logical inference rules to make sound judgments and appropriate decisions based on provided evidence and arguments."
- Al-Asfar (2019, 204) defined it as: "The ability to analyze facts and ideas, organize them, determine opinions, draw comparisons, reach conclusions, evaluate them, and solve problems."
- Nasur (2021, 140) defined it as: "A purposeful and self-regulated judgment concerned with evidence, contexts, perceptions, methods, and criteria."

From the above definitions, it is clear that critical thinking is a cognitive process aimed at:

- Distinguishing between facts and opinions.

- Providing an accurate representation of information.
- Treating the subject with appropriate depth and expression—without exaggeration or deficiency.
- Fully grasping all dimensions of a problem.
- Structuring thoughts logically to ensure clarity of meaning.

Standards of Critical Thinking

Sahwan (2019, 475) outlined a set of essential standards that critical thinking must meet:

1. **Clarity:** Ensuring the message or thought is accurately understood by others.
2. **Accuracy:** Statements used must be highly reliable, supported by evidence and sound justification.
3. **Precision:** Involves giving the subject of thought its due attention, effort, and expression, with a high degree of specificity and detail.
4. **Relevance:** Connecting the various elements or data points of a problem to each other logically.
5. **Depth:** Refers to deep, thorough thinking, involving analysis, interpretation, and prediction.
6. **Breadth:** Addressing all aspects of the problem comprehensively.
7. **Logic:** Arranging and connecting ideas in a coherent manner that leads to clear, well-defined meanings.

Critical Thinking Skills

Abu Shaaban (2010, p. 91) summarized critical thinking skills as follows:

- Independence from others' thinking.
- Determining the credibility of information sources.
- Grasping the various dimensions of a topic.
- Applying logical rules.
- Distinguishing between procedures, justifications, and information.
- Filtering vague arguments and evidence from the clear ones.
- Avoiding common fallacies in reasoning.
- Ensuring precision in language and terminology.
- Developing accurate and deep observation.
- Seeking multiple alternatives for a single situation.
- Acting with flexibility and assertiveness.
- Alsobh (2013, p. 78) identified the following critical thinking skills:
 - Distinguishing between verifiable facts and evaluative claims or assertions.
 - Differentiating between relevant and irrelevant information, claims, and reasons.
 - Determining the accuracy of a statement or narrative.
 - Assessing the credibility of information sources.
 - Identifying vague arguments, claims, or assumptions.
 - Recognizing implicit, unstated assumptions.
 - Detecting bias.
 - Identifying logical fallacies.
 - Recognizing inconsistencies in reasoning or conclusions.
 - Assessing the strength of evidence or claims.
 - Making informed decisions and establishing a solid foundation for taking scientific action.
 - Predicting the outcomes or consequences of decisions or solutions.

The Importance of Critical Thinking

Critical thinking has become an indispensable cornerstone of any modern educational process and a non-negotiable pedagogical objective, given its crucial role in developing learners' cognitive capacities. As highlighted by Abdul Aal, Al-Shami, and Al-Kandari (2018, p. 78), the significance of critical thinking can be illustrated as follows:

- Enabling students to monitor, organize, and regulate their thinking processes.
- Deepening students' understanding of knowledge content by transforming passive learning into an active intellectual process, resulting in greater mastery and integration of ideas.
- Promoting intellectual independence, freeing students from imitation and conformity, and fostering objectivity in decision-making.

- Cultivating mental openness and the ability to accept diverse ideas, along with respecting different opinions and beliefs.

Empowering learners with cognitive tools that allow them to make informed choices about their beliefs and opinions, supported by a clear understanding of their reasoning. This includes mastering how to formulate purposeful questions, conduct sound reasoning, and select appropriate methods of intellectual inquiry.

The Importance of Critical Thinking for Non-Native Learners of Arabic

- Guides learners to approach reading-related challenges in a rational and analytical way.
- Enhances their ability to evaluate themselves and others objectively.
- Develops their observation and assessment skills essential for language acquisition.
- Supports learners in mastering the language through the development of advanced expressive and analytical abilities.
- Improves their ability to classify events and ideas in a logically structured and linguistically coherent manner.
- Displays fairness during debates.
- Builds learners' self-confidence and their ability to rely on themselves in the most challenging situations.
- Expands the learner's decision-making framework.
- Helps learners develop flexibility in interacting with others.
- Enriches learners' experiences and broadens their thinking.
- Enhances learners' skills in prediction, inference, and discovery.

Components of Critical Thinking

Kareem (2022, 261) identified the components of critical thinking as follows:

- **Interpretation:** This refers to the degree of understanding regarding the argument that will be the focus of critical thinking, prior to engaging in its evaluation.
- **Evaluation:** This represents the logical process of accepting or rejecting the reasons presented on a particular issue, based on factual analysis. It consists of three steps: evaluating the quality of conclusions, examining the quality of evidence, and judging the overall credibility of the arguments.
- **Metacognition:** This component reflects the individual's awareness and analytical thinking, including the intelligent anticipation of the underlying motives behind behaviors related to the topic under study.

Extensive Reading Skills

Definition of Extensive Reading

Al-Sammam (2016, 261) defined extensive reading as "the ability to read texts and topics selected by learners according to their levels, interests, and preferences with the goal of understanding, evaluating, appreciating, and enjoying them."

Al-Azzawi (2017, 105) described it as "a form of reading that involves long texts read by students outside the classroom under the teacher's guidance, followed by in-class discussion of the key ideas, which deepens comprehension. Extensive reading, in this way, supports learners in becoming independent readers who select Arabic books aligned with their interests."

Meanwhile, Al-Zuwaini and Abdul-Kadhim (2019, 214) defined it as "reading that centers on simplified topics and short stories relevant to students' interests, with the primary objective being general text comprehension."

Talbah (2021, 438) explained it as "learners reading self-selected texts under teacher supervision, aiming to achieve general reading comprehension, broader reading exposure, appreciation, critique, and creative engagement with the texts."

From the Above, It Is Clear That Extensive Reading:

- Gives learners the freedom to choose the topics they want to read.
- Has comprehension as its primary goal.
- Considers learners' interests and preferences.
- Considers individual differences among learners.
- Relies on longer texts.
- Develops learners' skills in critique, appreciation, and creativity.

Characteristics of Extensive Reading

Al-Shamrani (2018, p. 298) summarized the characteristics of extensive reading in the following points:

- Students read a lot—as much as possible—and reading is frequent.
- A wide range of texts and topics is available for selection.
- Texts are not only enjoyable but also engaging and captivating, encouraging learners to interact with them.
- Students choose what they read and are not restricted to specific books or texts.
- The purposes of reading focus on enjoyment, gaining information, and overall comprehension.
- Reading is its own reward.
- There are no tests, exercises, questions, or dictionaries involved.
- Reading materials are suited to the learners' language proficiency levels, and students choose texts that are appropriate to their linguistic capabilities.
- Reading is individual and silent, and it is generally fast-paced rather than slow (e.g., students do not pause at every unfamiliar word).
- The teacher clearly explains the goals and procedures of reading, then supervises and guides students.
- The teacher acts as a role model—a reader—participating alongside the students.

Skills of Extensive Reading

Al-Samman (2016, p. 262) identified several essential skills for extensive reading, including:

Skills of Expanding the Read Text: This involves interpreting key concepts and terms related to the text.

- Adds ideas related to the text that are not explicitly stated.

Completes missing information within the text.

Introduces additional issues that support the topic of the text.

Skills of Critiquing the Read Text:

- Distinguishes between reality and fiction in the text.
- Differentiates between fact and personal opinion.
- Expresses personal viewpoints regarding the ideas presented.
- Makes judgments about the values inferred from the text.

Skills of Appreciating the Read Text

- Identifies the connotative meanings of words and expressions.
- Recognizes types of literary imagery used and their aesthetic qualities.
- Identifies the rhetorical styles in the text and their intended purposes.
- Detects the types of rhetorical embellishments (badi') and their effects.
- Skills of Writing a Report on the Read Text
- Writes a report that includes an introduction, body, and conclusion.
- Composes an introduction that outlines the report's purpose and main ideas.
- Develops the body of the report with textual elements and the writer's opinion, supported by evidence.
- Concludes the report with a summary of its key components.

Objectives of Teaching Reading to Non-Native Speakers of Arabic

Al-Naqqah (1985, pp. 188–189) outlined the objectives of teaching reading to learners of Arabic as a foreign language as follows:

- Enabling learners to connect written symbols with their corresponding sounds in Arabic.
- Helping learners read aloud accurately and fluently.
- Aiding comprehension of detailed and specific ideas within a text.
- Encouraging fluent reading without relying on dictionaries or bilingual word lists.
- Allowing learners to infer general meanings directly from the printed page while recognizing how meaning shifts with changes in syntax.
- Recognizes punctuation marks and understands the function of each.
- Connects paragraphs and sentences in a coherent and logical manner.
- Reads with comprehension and fluency without being hindered by grammar or morphology.

As for Ahmad (2021, pp. 40–42), he categorized the objectives of teaching reading to non-native speakers of Arabic according to the linguistic proficiency targeted at each level. The classification is represented in Table 1.

Table 1. Classification of levels

Beginner Level (Level 1 and Level 2)	
Recognize the alphabet.	Use numbers within linguistic structures.
Pronounce the letters correctly.	Match sentences with the images that represent them.
Match words with illustration	Form words from individual letters.
Break down words into syllables.	Provide a general idea of the reading text.
Identify the meanings and opposites of some words in the reading text.	Use Arabic words in different contexts.
Recognize Arabic words and their semantic meanings.	Distinguish between similarly shaped letters.
Infer word meanings from linguistic context.	Recognize the singular and plural forms of words.
Intermediate Level (1st, 2nd)	
Organize main and sub-ideas in a text.	Determine the writer's direction.
Infer the general meaning of a text.	Explain some changes that occur in a word due to its structure.
Classify words based on synonyms and antonyms.	Understand more than one synonym for a single word.
Understanding the meanings of negation, prohibition, interrogation, and vocatives.	Citing information contained in the reading text.
Extracting the main ideas from each paragraph in the reading text.	Distinguishing between fact and opinion in the reading text.
Mentioning new words with the same pattern.	Drawing conclusions from the reading text.
Observing grammatical rules while reading.	Drawing conclusions from the values contained in the reading
Expressing an opinion about the reading text.	
Distinguishing between facts and opinions in the reading text.	
Identifying the evidence and proofs used by the writer to express their opinion.	
Advanced Level (1st, 2nd)	
Form an opinion about the ideas presented in the text.	Understand the author's purpose in writing the text.
Express an opinion on controversial issues presented.	Enrich the text with new ideas.
Classify and organize facts.	Uncover the meanings of some new words in the dictionary.
Level 3	
Summarize the text you have read.	Arrange the sub-ideas according to their mention in the text being read
Judging the linguistic formulation of some paragraphs or sentences in the text.	Distinguishing the rhetorical devices present in the text being read.
Refuting arguments and evidence in the text. Reaching the meanings implied in the text.	Suggest a new title for the text being read.
Reaching the meanings contained in the text being read	Supporting the text with evidence and witnesses that are not mentioned in it.
Distinguish between musical rhythm in poetry and prose.	Distinguishing between fact and opinion in a written text.
Analyze the text you read into parts, identifying the relationships between them.	Detecting the meaning of words and expressions in the text being read.
Compare the information in the text you are reading with each other.	Inferring lessons and morals from the text you read.

Predicting the end of a text based on its premises.	Detecting the reason for the repetition of words in the text being read.
Identify the prevailing values in the text being read.	Identify the contradiction in the text being read.
Distinguish between what is relevant and what is irrelevant.	Know the subtle differences between word derivatives.
Considering the vowel signs when reading.	Enriching the text, you read with new ideas
Distinguishing the manifestations of novelty in the text being read.	Judging the credibility of the source from which the information was transmitted.
Judging the structure of the text being read.	Contextual analysis to understand new terms.
Generating new ideas from the text you read.	Organizing and linking new information in the text being read.
Realizing the degree of consistency between experience and formulation in the text.	Ask a set of questions related to the text you have read.
Comparison between the text and the reading and another work by the same author.	A detailed explanation and interpretation of some of the ideas in the text.
Suggesting alternative endings to the text being read.	Distinguish between traditional and innovative ideas in a reading text.
Judging the strength of the arguments and evidence in the text.	

Methodology

The research materials for this study included a list of extensive reading skills specifically designed for fourth-level students. Additionally, a student's book and a teacher's guide were developed, both based on the thinking activities program. These materials aimed to support the development of extensive reading skills. The primary research tool used in the study was an extensive reading skills test, tailored for fourth-level students, which helped assess the effectiveness of the program.

Additionally, the research followed a combination of approaches. The descriptive-analytical method was utilized for developing the theoretical framework and preparing the research tools and materials. Additionally, a quasi-experimental method was adopted, specifically a one-group pretest-posttest design. This approach allowed the researcher to observe changes in the students' skills before and after the intervention, providing valuable insights into the program's effectiveness.

Research Terminology

1. **Program Based on Thinking Activities:** Operationally defined as a set of instructional procedures and steps based on reflective and critical thinking skills, aimed at enabling fourth-level learners of Arabic as a foreign language to expand and deepen their understanding of reading texts.
2. **Extensive Reading Skills:** Operationally defined as a complex mental process aimed at increasing interaction between the reader and the text through evaluating opinions, enriching ideas, solving problems, and applying information in new contexts.

Research Procedures and Steps

To achieve the research objectives, answer its questions, and verify its hypotheses, the following steps were taken:

Answering the First Question

What are the appropriate extensive reading skills for learners of Arabic as a foreign language?
The following procedures were followed:

1. Reviewing the literature and previous studies that addressed extensive reading skills in general, and among learners of Arabic as a foreign language in particular.
2. Developing a list of extensive reading skills appropriate for learners of Arabic as a foreign language.
3. Presenting the list to expert reviewers.
4. Making adjustments based on reviewers' feedback and finalizing the list.

Answering the Second Question

What are the foundations for designing a program based on thinking activities to develop extensive reading skills among learners of Arabic as a foreign language?

The following procedures were followed:

- Reviewing literature and previous studies on types and skills of thinking in the context of teaching Arabic in general.
- Reviewing literature and studies on types and skills of thinking specifically in the context of teaching Arabic to non-native speakers.
- Creating a list of foundations upon which a program based on thinking activities should be built to develop extensive reading skills among learners of Arabic as a foreign language.
- Presenting the list to expert reviewers.
- Making modifications according to reviewers' feedback and finalizing the list.

Answering the Third Question

What are the components of a program based on thinking activities to develop extensive reading skills among learners of Arabic as a foreign language?

The following procedures were followed:

- Reviewing literature and previous studies that addressed various types and skills of thinking in teaching the Arabic language in general.
- Reviewing literature and previous studies that focused on thinking patterns and skills in teaching Arabic to non-native speakers.
- Preparing a list of the components of a thinking-activities-based program for developing extensive reading skills among learners of Arabic as a foreign language.
- Presenting the list to expert reviewers.
- Making adjustments based on reviewers' feedback and finalizing the list.

Answering the Fourth Question

What is the effectiveness of a program based on thinking activities in developing extensive reading skills among learners of Arabic as a foreign language?

The following steps were taken:

- Developing the initial version of the extensive reading skills test based on the previously prepared list.
- Presenting the test to expert reviewers.
- Making the necessary modifications based on reviewers' comments and preparing the final version of the test.
- Administering the test to a pilot sample of fourth-level students to measure time duration, validity, and reliability.
- Selecting the main research sample.
- Administering the pre-test.
- Teaching the thinking-activities-based program to the research sample.
- Administering the post-test to the fourth-level students to determine the effectiveness of the program in developing their extensive reading skills.

Experimental Research Procedures

To verify the effectiveness of the proposed program in developing extensive reading skills among Arabic language learners who are non-native speakers, the following was conducted:

First, a list of extensive reading skills appropriate for fourth-grade Arabic language learners who are non-native speakers was developed:

1. **Objective of the List:** This list aimed to identify the extensive reading skills to be developed among fourth-grade Arabic language learners who are non-native speakers.
2. **Sources for Constructing the List:** Various sources were relied upon to construct the list, including:
 - Books, research papers, and previous studies that focused on teaching Arabic to non-native speakers.
 - Books, research papers, and previous studies that addressed reading, its levels, and its skills—whether for native Arabic speakers or speakers of other languages.
 - The opinions of expert faculty members specializing in the field of teaching Arabic to speakers of other languages.

The Initial Version of the List

The preliminary version of the list was developed to include nineteen (19) skills, divided into three levels (see Appendix 1):

- *Text Expansion Level*, which includes seven (7) skills.
- *Text Critique Level*, which includes six (6) skills.
- *Text Appreciation Level*, which includes six (6) skills.

Validating the List

To ensure the validity of the list, two types of validity were employed:

1. **Content Validity:** This was established by reviewing the list's content and ensuring its alignment with the theoretical framework and previous studies.
2. **Face Validity:** This was achieved by presenting the list to expert reviewers specializing in curricula and methods of teaching Arabic to native speakers, as well as those specializing in teaching it to non-native speakers. The reviewers were asked to provide feedback on the following:
 - The appropriateness of each skill for fourth-level students.
 - The relevance of each sub-skill to its corresponding main skill.
 - The accuracy of the linguistic phrasing.
 - Suggestions for deletion, modification, or addition.

The Final Version of the List

After presenting the list to the expert reviewers, the necessary modifications were made in accordance with their feedback. The final version, as presented in Appendix 2, includes sixteen (16) skills, distributed as follows:

- *Text Expansion Level*, which includes six (6) skills.
- *Text Critique Level*, which includes five (5) skills.
- *Text Appreciation Level*, which includes five (5) skills.

Through this process, the first research question was answered: What are the appropriate extensive reading skills for learners of Arabic as a foreign language?

Developing an Extensive Reading Skills Test Appropriate for Level Four Learners of Arabic as a Foreign Language

1. **Defining the Purpose of the Test:** The purpose of this test is to assess the extensive reading skills of level four learners of Arabic as a foreign language.
2. **Identifying the Skills Measured by the Test:** The test evaluates sixteen specific extensive reading skills that were previously established.
3. **Formulating the Test Items:** The test items were carefully constructed to cover the targeted extensive reading skills. All items were designed in the form of multiple-choice questions; due to the objectivity they offer and their effectiveness in assessing comprehension skills more reliably than other types of questions. However, such questions also inherently limit the scope of results related to measuring extensive reading skills. The researcher ensured that the answer choices were, as much as possible, of equal length and composed in simple language that would be easily understood by the students.
4. **Preparing the Test Specification Table:** A test specification table was created based on the predetermined list of extensive reading skills. (See Appendix 3.)
5. **Drafting the Test Instructions:** A set of instructions was included at the beginning of the test, written in clear and simple language to ensure learners could easily understand them and to prevent any confusion or ambiguity during the answering process. These instructions also outlined the purpose of the test, its nature, and how to respond to the questions.
6. **Defining the Content of the Test:** The test included four reading passages, each accompanied by questions aligned with the previously defined list of extensive reading skills.
7. **Establishing the Validity of the Test:**
 - **Content Validity:** This was achieved by reviewing the content of the test to ensure its alignment with the theoretical framework and previous studies. It was then submitted to the supervising committee for approval.
 - **Face Validity:** The test was also presented to a panel of experts specializing in Arabic language curriculum and instruction, particularly in teaching Arabic to non-native speakers, as well as specialists in assessment and evaluation. They were asked to provide feedback on the following aspects:
 - The appropriateness of the test for its intended purpose.
 - The clarity and suitability of the questions for advanced-level students.
 - The linguistic accuracy of the test items.

- The clarity and appropriateness of the test instructions in relation to the test's objective.
- Correctness of the answer form.
- Deletion, modification, or addition.

After the test was presented to the referees, the necessary modifications were made in accordance with their comments, so that its final form appears in Appendix 4.

Test Pilot Application

The test, in its final form, was administered to a pilot sample of ten fourth-grade students, noting that this sample differed from the main research sample. The results were then tabulated to calculate the test time by calculating the average time taken by the first and last students to answer, as follows:

$$= 50 + 60 = 55 \text{ minutes.}$$

$$250+60=55 \text{ minutes.}$$

Establishing the Reliability of the Test: To verify the test's reliability, it was re-administered to the pilot sample after a time interval of fifteen days. The correlation coefficient between the students' total scores in the first and second administrations was calculated using Pearson's correlation formula. The result was a correlation coefficient of **0.88**, which is considered high and indicates that the test is reliable and suitable for implementation.

Designing the Thinking-Based Activities Program

Based on several important ideas, the program aims to assist level-four Arabic foreign language learners' extensive reading competence growth. It creates stimulating, motivational learning environments that encourage creativity, offer chances for student autonomy, and encourage open-ended thinking. The program stresses postponing judgment by promoting a little bit of thinking and contemplation prior to leaping to conclusions. The program ensures that texts are relevant and convenient and address whole specified skills by aligning texts connected to objectives. Building from basic to advanced activities, the program allows for learner progression and attainment not prohibiting progression but rather encouraging interaction through learning with others. The program stresses advanced analytical, evaluative, and synthesis abilities in the acquisition of problem-solving capacity. The program uses several forms of feedback and evaluation to address the unique demands of students and ensure thorough documentation of all performance. The program seeks to gradually develop and fine-tune reading comprehension abilities in ways that pose difficulty at rising levels of complexity.

Through this process, the second research question was addressed: "What are the foundations for designing a thinking-based program to develop extensive reading skills among learners of Arabic as a foreign language?"

Defining the Components of the Program:

- **Activities for Reflection and Observation Skills:** Aimed at helping learners identify aspects and components of a given problem.
- **Activities for Identifying Fallacies:** Intended to help learners detect gaps in reasoning and incorrect relationships within the problem.
- **Activities for Drawing Conclusions:** Designed to enable learners to arrive at logical, evidence-based conclusions.
- **Activities for Providing Plausible Interpretations:** Encouraging learners to assign logical meaning to results or relationships, often based on their prior knowledge.
- **Activities for Proposing Solutions:** Aimed at helping learners formulate logical steps to solve the presented problem.
- **Activities for Summarization Skills:** For example, learners may write a brief reflective essay summarizing their understanding of the problem and their proposed solutions, ensuring active participation from all learners.
- **Activities for Evaluation Skills:** Learners are tasked with writing about a similar problem they have encountered in the past and describing how they addressed it.

This procedure provided an answer to the third research question: "What are the components of a thinking-based program to develop extensive reading skills among learners of Arabic as a foreign language?"

Identifying the Instructional Strategies Used in the Program

The program uses various instructional strategies, including brainstorming for idea generation, dialogue and discussion for interactive communication, and free and guided reading to support independent and structured learning. It incorporates meditation to foster reflection and cooperative learning to enhance collaboration. These strategies aim to engage students, promote critical thinking, and improve overall comprehension.

Selecting the Research Group

The current study followed one of the quasi-experimental research designs, specifically the one-group pretest-posttest design. The total number of students in the research group was 30.

Administering the Pre-Test of Extensive Reading Skills

The extensive reading skills test was administered prior to the intervention to all members of the research group.

Teaching the Research Group

The researcher assigned one of the level-four instructors to implement the program in collaboration with the research team. The instructor was provided with the program content and a teacher's guide, and two orientation sessions were held to explain how to initiate, deliver, and evaluate the program, as well as to clarify any ambiguous points. The program was implemented over a period of nine weeks, with one session per week.

Administering the Post-Test of Extensive Reading Skills

Following the completion of the proposed training program, the post-test was administered to the research group. The data were then tabulated, statistically analyzed, and results recorded.

RESULTS

To answer the fourth research question, which stated: "What is the effectiveness of a thinking-based program in developing extensive reading skills among learners of Arabic as a foreign language?" and to verify the corresponding hypothesis: "There is a statistically significant difference at the 0.05 level between the mean scores of Arabic language learners members of the research group on the pre- and post-tests of extensive reading skills, in favor of the post-test."

A comparison was made between the pre-test and post-test results of the research group. The **T-value** was calculated to measure the difference between the students' mean scores in both applications using the specially developed test for assessing extensive reading skills. The table 2 presents the relevant data:

Table 2: Mean, Standard Deviation, and T-Test Value in the Pre- and Post-Application of the Professional Competency Observation Checklist for the Research Group

Note card	Student Number	Average score	Standard deviation	Value (t)	Level of significance
Pre	30	11,73	3,88	13,72	0,05
Post	30	25,57	3,73		

The previous table shows that the **mean score** of the students (members of the research group) in the **pre-test** of extensive reading skills was **(11.73)**, with a **standard deviation** of **(3.88)**, while their **mean score** in the **post-test** of the same skills, following their participation in the proposed training program, was **(25.57)**, with a **standard deviation of (2.73)**.

To determine the **statistical significance** of the difference between the group's mean scores in the **pre- and post-tests** of extensive reading skills, the **T-value** was calculated and found to be **(13.72)**.

Upon examining the significance level, it was revealed that this difference is statistically significant at the **(0.05) level**, indicating a marked improvement in the post-test performance of the research group students.

This confirms the effectiveness of the proposed training program in developing extensive reading skills among learners of Arabic as a foreign language. It also supports the validity of the hypothesis, which stated:

"There is a statistically significant difference at the (0.05) level between the mean scores of Arabic language learners—members of the research group—on the pre- and post-tests of extensive reading skills, in favor of the post-test."

As for the results concerning each level of extensive reading skills, they can be detailed in Table 3.

Table 3: Mean, Standard Deviation, and T-Test Value in the Pre- and Post-Applications for Each Level of Extensive Reading Skills among the Research Group Students

Levels of Extensive Reading	Number of Skills	Application	Number of Student	Average score	Standard deviation	Value (t)	Level of significance
Elaborative Reading	6	Pre	30	4,56	1,47	80	0,05
		Post	30	9,80	2,09		
Critical Reading	5	Pre	30	3,00	1,36	05	0,05
		Post	34	7,00	1,30		

Appreciative Reading	5	Pre	34	2,73	1,50	25	0,05
		Post	34	6,33	1,09	10,	

The previous table clearly indicates that there are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the students (members of the research group) in the pre- and post-assessments across the three levels of extensive reading skills. These differences were in favor of the post-assessment. Upon examining the level of significance, it was found to be statistically significant at the 0.05 level, which means that a noticeable improvement occurred in the performance of the research group. This confirms the positive impact of the proposed program in developing each level of extensive reading skills among the participants.

To determine the effectiveness of the program and measure the degree of improvement in extensive reading skills among learners of Arabic as a foreign language, the Modified Gain Ratio was calculated using Black's Formula, as follows:

$$Y-X \quad Y-X$$

$$\text{Adjusted gain ratio} = \frac{Y-X}{d-c} + \frac{c}{d}$$

Accordingly, the results were reached, as shown in the following table 4

Table 4: Significance of the adjusted gain ratio of the proposed program in the extensive reading skills of Arabic language learners who speak other languages (students in the research group)

Student of Research Group	Maximum score for the test	Pre -Average (c)	Post- Average (s)	Adjusted gained ratio	significance of the ratio
	32	11,73	25,57	1,12	Effective and educationally acceptable

It is evident from the preceding table that the proposed program is characterized by a high degree of efficiency and effectiveness in developing extensive reading skills among the students in the experimental group. The normalized gain score reached 1.12, which exceeds the value of one, indicating that the program is effective in enhancing extensive reading skills among learners of Arabic as a second or foreign language. This finding is consistent with the studies of Al-Harbi (2013), Al-Samman (2016), and Abdullah (2021).

This result can be attributed to the following factors:

- The diversity of instructional strategies employed within the program.
- The emphasis placed on the principles of freedom of expression and independent thinking for learners.
- The variety of assessment methods applied.
- The range of feedback techniques utilized.
- The abundance and variety of activities aimed at stimulating learners' cognitive engagement.
- The gradual introduction of extensive reading skills tailored to learners of Arabic as a second or foreign language.
- The inclusion of functional reading texts that are relevant and meaningful to learners of Arabic as a second or foreign language.

CONCLUSION

The study indicates that a thinking-activity based program can clearly and distinctly enhance the extensive reading abilities of non-native Arabic speakers. The results reveal that student reading skills can be vastly improved by a thinking-activity based approach for expanding, criticizing, appreciating, etc. reading texts through development of critical and reflective thinking skills with a focus on the role of the learner demonstrates an understanding of contemporary theories of learning and supports the active learning and workings of an autonomous learner. However, this study culminates descriptions of more effective thinking-based strategies to support language instruction based upon the outcome of this study and it adds further validity for the conversation of innovative pedagogical practices in second language acquisition (SLA) pedagogies. Hence, such research could potentially upon the enactment of teaching strategies educated curriculum makers and teachers refine not just their strategies and teaching styles but the whole language learning strategy experience that Arabic learners have, irrespective of proficiency and societal context.

LIMITATIONS

While the results of this study were encouraging, there are several limitations that must be taken into consideration in interpreting the results of the research. One significant limitation was the small sample size; the sample consisted of only 30 students from the same institution. This sample is too small a subpopulation to fully represent the variety of learners studying in other educational settings which limits the ability to generalize the findings beyond the context or institution at which the research was conducted. The research was conducted on fourth-level students, as a result the findings may be limited to only one level of learner/proficiency. In addition, the study utilized a one-group pretest-posttest design and therefore the findings do not account for confounding variables that may have impacted the findings. Future studies could draw more meaningful conclusions through sampling across multiple institutions and a larger sample at the same time dealing with broader varieties of learners to enhance the external validity of a study in this area.

RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

- In light of the aforementioned findings, the study recommends the following:
- Organizing seminars and training workshops for teachers of Arabic as a second or foreign language to train them in the integration of thinking activities into the educational process.
- Organizing seminars and training workshops for teachers of Arabic as a second or foreign language to familiarize them with the components and levels of extensive reading skills, and the appropriateness of each level in relation to the proficiency stages of Arabic language instruction for non-native speakers.
- Utilizing diverse assessment methods.
- Integrating extensive reading skills into the curricula of Arabic language programs for non-native speakers at all proficiency levels.
- Creating interactive learning environments based on collaboration and critical thinking by learners.
- Adopting the proposed program—based on thinking activities—as a training course for learners of Arabic as a second or foreign language.

SUGGESTED FUTURE RESEARCH

- The effectiveness of a program based on thinking activities in developing analytical reading skills among learners of Arabic as a second or foreign language.
- The effectiveness of a program based on thinking activities in developing functional reading skills among first-level learners of Arabic as a second or foreign language.
- The effectiveness of a program based on thinking activities in developing higher-order reading comprehension skills among learners of Arabic as a second or foreign language.

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Data Availability Statement

None

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