

Critical Reading Skills of Senior High School Learners Using a Five-Step Close Reading Strategy: A Qualitative Case Study

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Abstract

Developing critical reading skills among senior high school learners remains a challenge in the Philippine education system, particularly in promoting higher-order comprehension and analytical thinking. This study examined the critical reading skills of fifteen (15) Grade 12 STEM learners at the University of the East–Caloocan during the first semester of Academic Year 2025–2026 using a structured five-step close reading strategy. In order to determine how the students thought about close reading as a teaching strategy, the researcher evaluated their skills to read the passage, analyze the passage, develop a descriptive thesis statement, construct an argument about the passage, and develop an outline based on the thesis statement. Likewise, the study used semi-structured interviews and rubric-based performance evaluations in a descriptive qualitative case study with specific mixed-method parts to examine interpretive processes of the learners on the five steps of close reading. The results proved that while students did well in recognizing important concepts, diction, tone, and literary devices, they struggled with developing their theses and arguments. This indicates the need for better structured guidance. Likewise, despite initial challenges, participants reported that close reading improved their comprehension, confidence, and engagement with the literary works. The study concludes that the five steps of the close reading strategy effectively enhance critical reading skills when supported by appropriate modeling and guided practice. An action plan was also developed to address learning gaps and strengthen reading instruction and intervention programs, which emphasizes the role of systematic close reading in promoting analytical thinking and deeper textual engagement.

Keywords: critical reading skills; close reading; senior high school; literary analysis; qualitative case study; higher-order comprehension; analytical thinking.