

# Developing AKM-like English Reading Literacy for EFL Students

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## Abstract

This study was conducted to develop AKM-like English reading literacy for EFL students and to reveal the different reading strategies. The researchers went through preliminary and formative stages using a development study design. The study generated valid, practical, and potentially AKM-like English reading literacy effects for EFL students. The product satisfies the criteria of validity, practicability, and effectiveness. The students were motivated, engaged, and challenged as the potential effect of the assessment. Most students had high critical reading skills in accessing, retrieving, interpreting, integrating, evaluating, and reflecting on the AKM-like English reading literacy test. The study also revealed that the students used a schemata theory in developing their critical reading ability. To improve students' critical reading literacy and introduce different reading comprehension techniques, EFL teachers should use appropriate types of texts to select students' contextualized world topics.

**Keywords:** reading literacy, AKM, material development, Schemata theory

## 1. Introduction

On Tuesday, December 3, 2019, the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) report was issued. Based on the 2015 PISA survey results, Indonesia's 2018 PISA rating was lower than the previous year's PISA results. According to a recent OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) International Student Assessment (PISA) study, Indonesian students ranked among the lowest in science, reading, and mathematics among their peers from 79 countries and economies. However, Indonesia's PISA Reading Score remains poor, as evidenced by a score of 387 in 2015, which fell by 26 points to 371 in 2018. Compared to the international reading average of 487, Indonesia has not even cracked the 400 mark. At least Level 2 reading skills were present in 30% of students (OECD average: 77%) (Tohir, 2019). Students are evaluated in terms of the moderate-length textual material to outline the main idea, locate information using simple but often complex parameters, and can also concentrate on the intent and type of texts when specifically directed to do so. Students may comprehend lengthy texts, deal with abstract or counterintuitive ideas, and differentiate between fact and opinion based on implicit symptoms in the subject material or supply of the material at some times (OECD, 2017).

Various programs, such as the 2015 Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 23 requiring students to read for 15 minutes before starting a lesson, have been introduced to increase reading comprehension. Various educational institutions, from elementary to tertiary, have already begun the process based on the law and have introduced a 15-minute reading program before each class. However, this initiative has yet to boost Indonesian students' PISA scores. The government then issued Regulation No. 43 of 2019 through the Ministry of Education and Culture, which is aligned with the Minister of Education and Culture's National Evaluation. This is the National Assessment Decree, often referred to as the *Asesmen Kompetensi Minimum* (AKM) in Indonesian or the Minimum Competency Assessment, which maps out the education system's inputs, processes, and outcomes rather than grading students individually. To accelerate the development of literacy and numeracy based on the PISA assessment framework, the portrait of service and success of each school from the results of the AKM will become a mirror to focus on. The 5th, 8th, and 11th-grade students were tested in their numeracy, literacy, and character survey after they were randomly sampled (Pusdiklat, 2020).

As the AKM has highlighted, one of the attempts to be made by an English teacher to deal with reading comprehension issues is to include reading content rooted in critical thought. Furthermore, the AKM is a new assessment program in Indonesian education, integrating what students need to practice AKM-like English reading literacy. The lack of AKM-like English reading literacy is the main reason for developing the material. Therefore, the problem formulation in this study is based on the following explanations: (1) how accurate, realistic, and successful the AKM-like English reading literacy is; (2) to what degree the type of reading strategies has aided students in improving critical thinking in the AKM-like English reading literacy. As a result, this study intends to examine the kinds of reading methods that can assist students in developing their AKM-like English reading literacy and critical thinking skills. The findings will establish an accurate, realistic, and successful AKM-like English reading literacy.

Reading literacy in the framework of the AKM is a vital factor in positively developing competency and knowledge by researching essential components that have a particular impact on EFL students in increasing minimal reading proficiency in English as a foreign language.

Rather than grading students individually, the goal is to map out the education system's inputs, processes, and outputs. EFL students can utilize reading literacy to interpret explicit and implied meanings in written texts for a variety of purposes and circumstances. In this situation, the growth and enhancement of reading skills in the present study can contribute to the current body of knowledge, which includes the fundamental aspects below.

First, reading proficiency, with a focus on minimum competencies, can assist EFL students in comprehending literature from varied cultural backgrounds. Students can speak in a cultural environment that reflects the content and context of the literature in the texts by using an array of perspectives. Improving EFL students' reading literacy abilities can help them comprehend the cultures, allowing them to appreciate, differentiate, and compare the values of other cultures.

Second, EFL students can raise their minimum reading proficiency in English as a foreign language by developing their reading literacy skills. They can use critical thinking to study texts that require them to synthesize, infer, criticize, and evaluate issues. When dealing with viewpoints, assumptions, biases, and arguments that are intimately tied to efforts to improve language learning, EFL students can benefit greatly from having a solid grasp of reading texts as a significant resource for cultivating a critical mindset.

Third, the ability to understand grammar, vocabulary, listening, writing, and speaking is a skill that EFL students can acquire through reading literacy. These skills, when incorporated in an integrative flow, show how vital reading literacy is in the context that combines literary genres and reading comprehension. Another crucial idea is the use of writing styles to drive EFL students to concurrently improve their communication and linguistic skills.

Reading literacy promotes the development of English language ability. Understanding how reading methods are needed by EFL students to maximize their degree of English proficiency, which combines cognitive and metacognitive features to underline that students' varied talents will affect their proficiency in communicating or using English, is vital. Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) are at the vanguard of inspiring students to practice reading literacy with serious intentions, engagement, drive, and tenacity. These contributions are crucial in bolstering the current study's viewpoint and fostering interest in and comprehension of reading literacy in line with its intended application for EFL students.

2. Literature Reviews

Reading

Reading should not happen in a vacuum, according to recent reading comprehension hypotheses (Rouet & Britt, 2011). In fact, most reading habits are motivated by specific goals and expectations in people's daily lives (White et al., 2010). Reading as a cognitive skill necessitates a set of fundamental reading processes capable readers employ to accomplish their goals when dealing with texts. Goal setting and purpose achievement affect readers' decisions to interact with texts, collect texts and text passages, disengage from a specific text, re-engage with a particular text, and compare and incorporate information from different texts. An individual must be able to perform a variety of processes to achieve reading literacy as defined in this context. As a result, the successful execution of these procedures necessitates the reader's cognitive capacity, strategies, and inspiration to aid the processes.

Furthermore, the AKM defines reading literacy as the ability to comprehend, apply, evaluate, focus on, and communicate with texts to achieve one's objectives, develop one's understanding and knowledge, and participate in society (Pusdiklat, 2020). In the AKM reading literacy test, the reading tasks and questions are structured and illustrated in the following diagram:

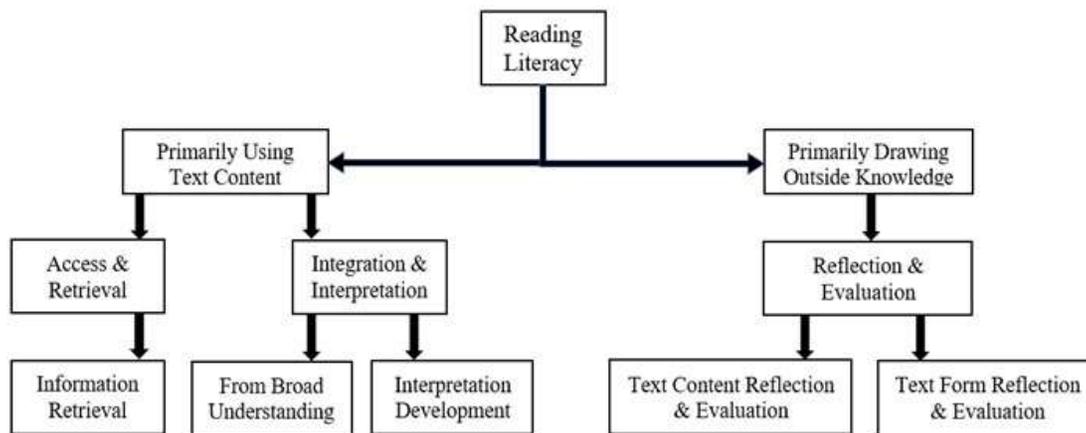


Figure 1. Types of questions in the AKM reading literacy assessment (Pusdiklat, 2020)

AKM Literacy

As specified in the AKM, literacy activities relate to several task features used in constructing all reading literacy tasks (Pusdiklat, 2020). The characteristics of these tasks are situations (personal, social, cultural, and scientific situation) in the form of fictional text or literary texts and non-fictional texts. The term "situation" is mainly used to describe how the readers use the text. Usage contexts most often fit particular

text genres and the author's intentions. The situation, therefore, refers to both the context of the text usage and the supposed audience and intent. However, in some cases, various texts are used when a history student works with a first-hand account of an incident (e.g., a personal diary or a court testimony) and a scholarly article written long after the event (Wineburg, 1991).

Individual satisfaction concerning functional and intellectual needs makes up a personal situation. This category often includes leisure or recreational activities intended to preserve or establish personal relationships with others in various text genres, including personal letters, fiction, biography, and knowledge texts, such as a gardening guide, hobby, career, or personal narrative. A social and cultural situation relates to a larger community's behaviors and interests. Official documents and materials from public events are used in this category. Generally, the texts concern a larger society's social and cultural affairs. The students can take into account the various perspectives of global society that are important to their own society and culture. Public transportation, traditional arts, economic structure, public policy, exceptional food, dances, and social practices are among the topics covered in the documents.

Meanwhile, a scientific context is an essential system component that fosters relationships and the events and processes during system activity and use, which are likely to take precedence. This text is intended to strengthen students' ability to understand scientific knowledge, question recognition, access new knowledge, exploration of scientific phenomena, the conclusion of facts, comprehension of scientific character, and knowledge of the role of science in shaping the social, intellectual, cultural, and environmental nature and willingness to meet global scientific issues (OECD, 2016). Outer space, medicine, natural phenomena, physics, biology, and technical knowledge can be included in the texts. The distinction between fictional or literary texts and non-fictional texts is crucial (reading to obtain and use knowledge for academic experience and reading for information). Narrative texts about object properties in time are included in the fictional or literary text. In addition, narrative texts sometimes answer questions about where, when, and why story characters act the way they do. From a subjective point of view, narrative texts may take different forms, such as non-fictional texts/informative texts (Nurgiyantoro, 2015).

The AKM reading literacy system divides reading into three categories: access and retrieve, interpret and incorporate, and represent and evaluate. The category of accessing and retrieving refers to the processes by which readers go to the information space where the information they need is stored and retrieved. Interpreting or integrating information enables readers to combine snippets of data to create meaning. Finally, reflecting and assessing are higher-level critical thinking mechanisms in which readers compare information to their own understanding and experience outside the text and make decisions about its content and appropriateness.

However, Khodary and Abdallah (2014) argue that students still lack critical reading ability, explicitly recognizing the main ideas of passages that are not directly stated. They identify the author's intent and tone, guess the meaning of words in context, draw conclusions, make comparisons, form personally justified opinions, make inferences, and recognize the main ideas of passages that are not directly stated. The study conducted by Zin, Z. M. & Eng (2014) presents that the level of students' critical reading abilities as measured by their analytical and inference abilities is low, suggesting that they have not acquired the required higher-order thinking abilities. Besides, the lack of student reading activities, reading strategies, and teacher instruction could be responsible for low student reading skill outcomes, which may result in poor reading literacy (Abdelrahman, M. S. H. B. & Bsharah, 2014).

### **Reading Literacy**

The ability to construct a learning media environment with interactive media as one of its main components is of great appeal to students, despite the fact that they have inadequate reading skills. Hence, the teachers are expected to be innovative in creating learning materials with specific contemporary qualities, enabling students to activate their reading literacy, interests, and abilities (Novela et al., 2022). Teachers hold a critical role in assisting students in developing good reading habits that will contribute to their literacy threshold, especially when dealing with EFL reading circumstances. Therefore, teachers must model good reading habits to instill how students can enhance their reading literacy as well.

Teachers must constantly expand their students' daily reading time and begin collecting a variety of reading materials (Nai et al., 2022). The students' reading literacy aligns with the interconnected meanings in the information-rich reading passages. It is necessary to investigate the flow of information from language-related sources in picture books to provide students with valuable knowledge in EFL classes. In other words, the author can create a pattern whereas picture books follow a set order of reading. The decision on how thoroughly to examine the picture book is entirely up to the readers. They can either select linear or non-linear picture book texts as reading materials (Damayanti & Febrianti, 2020). Thus, reading literacy is closely associated with interactive tools that can be used to stimulate students' interest in reading as well as innovative ways of delivering the materials. Teachers play a crucial role in improving students' reading skills particularly those with low reading proficiency, allowing them to get insights into more knowledge and information.

The chance of raising reading literacy threshold depends in part on critical literacy (Asanti & Syamdianita, 2017), a field that has received little attention in recent years while being of utmost importance. This kind of literacy confirmed theories of significant questions that demand in-depth responses supported by crucial resources. When it comes to automatic critical replies to texts, the exposure to critical questions plays a significant role in motivating students to advance regardless of the text complexity that arises (Setyaningsih, 2019). The contention that developing reading literacy requires constant exposure to questions leads to a variety of replies from EFL students, demonstrating their propensity to prioritize reading beyond writing or other types of language skills. Students who investigate topics in academia enable a number of approaches to learning while engaging with a variety of texts in their attempts to acquire appropriate understanding. They must advance their linguistic proficiency; thus, it is possibly worthwhile to encourage them to become more engaged and active by asking questions and getting involved in discussions with their classmates and teachers (Sukandi & Syafar, 2018).

If it is positioned in a limited sense, this likelihood of reading literacy concentrates on the word and sentence levels, suggesting the fundamental reading literacy level that revives the concept of genre intended to investigate activities combining reading and writing skills. The focus is anchored on ongoing initiatives to view literacy as a framework for continuity and long-term growth of literacy with regard to more complex genres (Buckingham & Litzler, 2019). As a result, all parties, including teachers, are essential in the subsequent efforts to provide students with materials while fostering their reading literacy, enabling the affirmation of getting informed, being knowledgeable, and fully imbued with inclusive literacy activities using technology-related tools, approaches, and methodologies. However, every aspect of literacy is completely placed in the framework of reading literacy assessment, which highlights cognitive, affective, and linguistic components (Li et al., 2023). Overall, achieving reading literacy is exceptionally challenging unless other vital elements actively demonstrate how crucial they are to students' competency levels.

In this sense, the measurement of students' reading literacy is heavily reliant on collaborative efforts centered on raising awareness of reading techniques, ICT tools, and reading literacy, all of which are claimed to be declining significantly across countries. Hence, teachers and local communities must take action to ensure the success of the literacy program and to significantly contribute to the literacy movement that nurtures the required levels of reading literacy (Luyten, 2022). The current phenomena is consistent with earlier studies that investigated how socioeconomic status, psychological expanding methodologies, teacher attributes, and instructional practices affect reading literacy achievement (Stiff et al., 2023).

### 3. Methodology

The study was conducted using a research design with the type of development studies. It concentrates on developing valid, practical, and effective AKM-like English reading literacy for eleventh-grade students and investigates the impact of reading strategies on AKM-like English reading literacy. The preliminary and formative assessment stages were also part of this development study. The initial stage examined the student analysis, curriculum analysis, and analysis of the content of the AKM; the formative evaluation stage includes self-evaluation, expert evaluations, one-to-one, small group, and field assessments (Tessmer, 1993). It was considered successful if the AKM-like development meets three criteria: validity, practicality, and effectiveness. It also has the potential to affect students' ability to read English. Using summary feedback, the expert assesses validity. The essay used is classified as a potential influence, as are the skills test results and the students' recommendations in the field test stage. After completing the AKM-like English reading comprehension, the students were interviewed to learn more about reading strategies.

The participants of this study were the eleventh-grade students of the Multi-Media Department of SMKN 1 Kebumen, Central Java, Indonesia, who were randomly selected. This research took place from November 4 to December 12, 2020. The documentation used to gather the information included the English Curriculum 2013 for vocational high schools. The AKM-like access to the development framework and the AKM-like English reading literacy; a walkthrough performed after the expert analysis to obtain feedback, comments, or suggestions about the content; and a questionnaire.

The findings of the test and the interview were used to revise materials for prototype 2 in the field test using observation, conducted to recognize the students' difficulties in doing one-to-one questions and small groups to grasp the practicality. In addition, the post-test interview was conducted to investigate the type of reading strategies used in AKM-like English reading literacy. The post-test interviews were held to examine the kind of reading strategies used in the AKM English reading. The post-test interview was retained to investigate the type of reading strategies used in AKM. Open coding aims to analyze data to find concepts or themes. Meanings are categorized along with their dimensions and axial coding to identify the themes or ideas in open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 2014). Before conducting a more in-depth qualitative analysis, the data collection process was signaled by selective coding, which combined the categories. It was developed using axial coding to display different reading strategies. They impact how well students use the AKM-like English reading strategy.

### 4. Results and Discussion

The study outlines two units of AKM-like English reading literacy that consist of fourteen questions and underpinned literary and informative text. Meanwhile, personal and scientific situations were fundamentally developed and embedded with access and retrieve, interpret and integrate, and reflect and evaluate as domain thinking.

#### *Preliminary Stage*

The researcher performed student analysis, curriculum analysis, and analysis of the development framework for AKM assessment. The student analysis aimed to identify who had low, medium, and high ability among second-graders at a vocational high school. Students from a variety of majors were randomly selected. The curriculum analysis shows the competence level, basic literary competence, and informative texts of the 2013 English Curriculum. The AKM assessment development framework analysis aimed to develop AKM-like English reading literacy.

#### *Formative Evaluation Stage*

##### *Self-Evaluation*

The researcher evaluated and reviewed the design results of the AKM-like English reading literacy called Prototype 1. Expert Reviews.

The researchers evaluated and reviewed Prototype 1 of the AKM-like English reading literacy. Expert viewpoints. The prototype one design

results were created at this stage through self-evaluation and expert testing to ensure that the content, navigation, build, and language validity were all right. Dr. Rr. Hasti Robiasih, M.Pd. of Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, served as a validator for prototype 1. The researchers also held a panel discussion with four English teachers from SMK Negeri 1 Kebumen, Central Java, Indonesia, where the research was performed, in addition to the expert review level. The revised Prototype 1 was under consideration by the validator and panel discussion results.

*One-to-One*

Prototype 1 was then shown to three eleventh-grade vocational high school students with high, medium, and low capability levels and an English teacher to determine the problems with Prototype 1. The phases, as mentioned earlier, were conducted in three stages: validation by an expert, panel discussion with some teachers, and a one-to-one setting. First, the validation step was done to obtain feedback from the expert on language accuracy, punctuation, instructions, the quality of the test items, and the difficulty level. The second step involved the teachers as the participants in the panel discussion. Their feedback was related to retrieving and accessing groups that should be in various forms, not only in multiple-choice states. Besides, they also suggested that the length of the selected text should be moderate. The follow-up of this feedback was the revision of the selected text and the varied retrieving and accessing levels in multiple complex choices and essays. The last step was a one-to-one stage. In this stage, three selected students and an English teacher did the test to find the problems of AKM-like English reading literacy. Prototype 1 was then updated based on panel discussions, expert review comments, and one-on-one meetings in parallel with the result of Prototype 2.

*Small-Group*

Prototype 2 was tested by involving six small-group students to reveal the practicality of AKM- like English reading literacy. Prototype 2 indicated that the AKM-like English reading literacy was practical or could be used by the students.

*Field Test*

Within the field test process, the outcome of the slight group-level revision was called Prototype 3. It was tested on students in the eleventh grade of vocational high school, comprising 20 students. The product was tested to meet the requirements of validity, practicality, and having a potential effect, as Van den Akker (1999) suggests. The students' answers to the informative and literary texts are depicted in Table 1.

Table 1. Students' Answers on the Informative Text and Literary Text

Informative text	
Retrieving and accessing multiple choice	Interpreting and integrating complex multiple choice
Evaluating and Reflecting on the Essay	
<p>5. In my opinion, it is because the injection of the covid 19 vaccine is carried out many times and may result in symptoms after injection of the vaccine as a reaction stage for the vaccine into the body.</p> <p>6. He can succeed by explaining that the impact the occur after vaccination is not as severe as when contracting covid 19 which can cause fever and death.</p> <p>7. Not misleading because it is true that vaccines are on the main things that can prevent transmission of covid 19</p>	
Literary text	
Retrieving and accessing multiple choice	Interpreting and integrating multiple complex choices
Evaluating and Reflecting on the Essay	

The students' outcome of the informative text is portrayed in Chart 1.

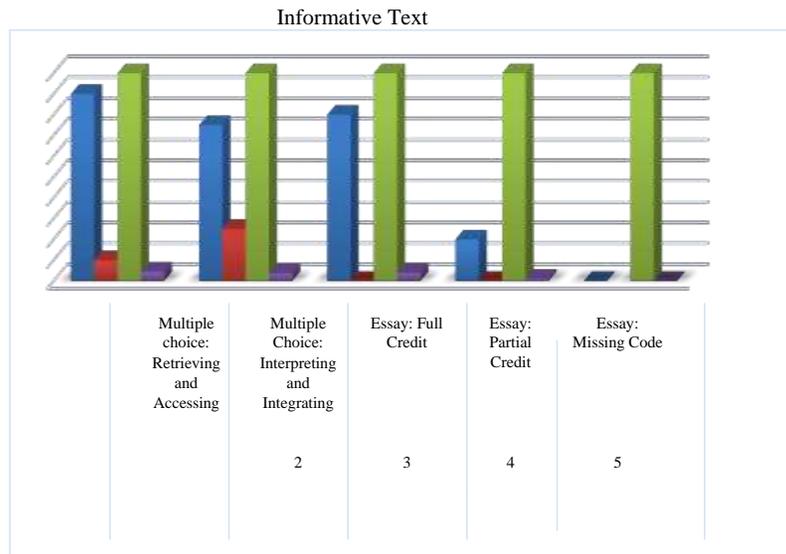
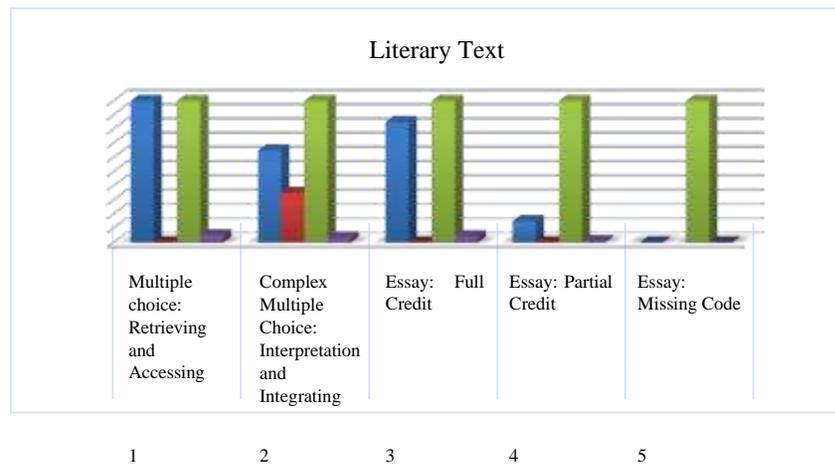


Chart 1. The Students' Outcome of Informative Text

As Chart 1 shows, 18 students can correctly answer retrieving and accessing multiple-choice questions, while only two students get incorrect answers. The process of retrieving and accessing leads to readers going to the space of information where the information they need is processed and retrieving it. In complex multiple-choice that entangles by which the readers build meaning by piecing together bits of knowledge, 15 students get the correct answers, and 5 get incorrect ones. Meanwhile, in the essay of reflecting and evaluating that the students relate information to the knowledge and experience of students outside the text inside a text and make a decision on the content and appropriateness of the text; 16 students get full credit, and 4 students come to partial credit.



In Chart 2, 20 students effectively retrieve and access multiple choice questions, 13 have correct answers to complex multiple choice questions, and 7 have incorrect answers. In the reviewing and reflecting essay, 17 students received full credit, and three received partial credit. Most students have the high-order critical reading ability in accessing and retrieving, interpreting and integrating, and evaluating and reflecting the AKM-like reading literacy test. According to the study's findings, they did these activities for critical reading in accessing, retrieving, and building context by putting together pieces of information and related information. According to the post-test interview, the students were inspired, engaged, and challenged to establish material assessments based on the AKM framework. The future influence or effectiveness of this interview refers to the positive response of students (Van den Akker, 1999).

Interestingly, this research's findings supported a tenet of the Schemata theory. According to An (2013), the fundamental concept of schema theory is that written text alone does not express meaning; it only instructs readers about how to create or retrieve meaning from the previously acquired information. Readers also refer to this prior information as "context knowledge," whereas "schemata" refers to previously learned knowledge constructs (Nassaji, 2002; Rumelhart, 1980). As students understand, they must integrate their prior knowledge with the details in a text, according to the theory. In this step, the previous information and knowledge system function well in

the cognitive activities of people (Zhao & Zhu, 2012). The schemes of the readers are organized in a hierarchical manner ranging from the most general resides at the upper level to the most unique at the lowest. The schema theory postulates an integrated mechanism between the text and the readers' prior knowledge that seeks to understand the meaning of the writing.

In the reading process, the schema plays a significant role. It has been found that schema theory is essential in helping students develop their reading literacy (Li & Zang, 2016). The schema theory is widely applicable in many disciplines and has dramatically impacted teaching first and second languages, particularly concerning reading (Malcolm & Sharifian, 2002). For this purpose, schemes are hypothesized to assist readers in foreseeing future events by contact between the reader and the text centered on past information frames (Saville-Troike & Barto, 2016). The EFL students are adept at understanding the tone of the texts and the report text, which focuses on scientific background issues such as COVID-19 vaccination and literary texts such as Mulan history. Indeed, this finding reveals the primary distinguishing feature of EFL students classified as social orientation individuals (Brown, 2007; Saracho, 1997; Khatib & Hosseinpur, 2011). Nonetheless, EFL students are more receptive to the content of the voice in the text that communicates the writers' feelings or thoughts concerning what the students have in connection with the Covid-19 problem and the current issue of Mulan.

Meanwhile, some students struggle to comprehend, integrate, evaluate, and concentrate on AKM-like English reading literacy. According to Zin & Eng (2014) and Khodary & Abdallah (2014), students are less likely to infer the text's underlying statement and tone. This backs up Attaprechakul's (2013) findings that students have a poor understanding of interpreting text tone, making it difficult to infer the critical implicit definition. One crucial factor that may contribute to the students' insufficient critical reading capacity is their essential lack of reading training. This is because, when teaching reading, teachers seldom use high-order level questions to trigger students' necessary reading abilities (Sunggingwati & Nguyen, 2013). Another factor that can contribute to students' inability to apply analytical and inferential reading skills is their level of L2 proficiency (Zin & Eng, 2014). Furthermore, the genre of the texts can contribute to the EFL students' high critical reading performance, based on insightful texts in the form of scientific situation texts that focus on evaluating and reflecting events in detail. Regarding pedagogy, directing students' reading strategies and contextualizing their world text for critical reading activities in the classroom would enable them to perform equally well on essential tasks of reading.

#### 4. Conclusion

The study used a research design with a form of development study to examine the validity, practicality, and potential effect of the AKM-like English reading literacy for the eleventh grade, as well as the influence of reading strategies from the AKM. Experts and students collaborated to create a product that met the specifications. The potential impact has provided the students the material assessment creation, inspiration, commitment, and challenge. The researchers also looked at the students' reading strategies when taking the exams. The findings of this study indicated that the schemata tenet plays a significant role in the reading process. To comprehend the meaning of the reading, the students incorporated the mechanism between the text and prior knowledge.

When students were given reading texts to retrieve and access, interpret and incorporate, analyze, and represent insightful and literary texts in a personal and scientific situation, schemata theory was found to be important in helping them improve their critical reading abilities. Regarding pedagogy, it would be beneficial for EFL teachers to use appropriate types of texts that focus on selecting contextualized "world subjects" for students to practice critical reading literacy and introduce various reading comprehension strategies. Further research into the development of instructional materials and practical tests is strongly encouraged to assist students in developing their critical thinking skills, which can affect their reading comprehension.

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