English Teachers' Strategies in Teaching Reading Comprehension and the Challenges Encountered

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Abstract

Although substantial research has been conducted on reading comprehension methods in EFL contexts, prior studies predominantly emphasize the identification of discrete strategies rather than exploring how educators adaptively combine various strategies within actual classroom environments. Insufficient focus has been directed towards teachers' pedagogical thinking and the difficulties encountered in delivering reading instruction within mixed-ability secondary classrooms. This study examines the tactics employed by English teachers to teach reading comprehension and the obstacles faced during their implementation at a public senior high school in Indonesia. This research utilized a descriptive qualitative methodology with four English educators. Data were gathered via classroom observations and semi-structured interviews, thereafter analyzed using theme analysis in accordance with Huberman's interactive model. The results demonstrate that educators utilized a blend of scaffolding, think-aloud, reciprocal teaching, Question–Answer Relationships (QAR), and SQ3R methods, adaptively tailored to students' competency levels, text kinds, and educational objectives. Instead of depending on a singular method, educators implemented various ways to enhance comprehension and student involvement. Nonetheless, other enduring issues were recognized, such as restricted student vocabulary, diminished reading enthusiasm, inconsistent reading competency, and an absence of reading habits and confidence. The findings indicate that successful reading instruction in EFL classrooms necessitates the integration of adaptive strategies, underpinned by teachers' awareness of students' cognitive and emotional demands. This study enhances the existing qualitative research on EFL reading pedagogy by emphasizing instructors' strategic decision-making and providing practical implications for curriculum creation and teacher professional growth.

Keywords: Teaching Reading; Teaching Strategies; Reading Comprehension; English Teachers

Introduction

Reading comprehension is acknowledged as a fundamental skill in second and foreign language acquisition, facilitating learners' access to academic knowledge, important information interpretation, and meaningful participation in educational and professional contexts. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) environments, where external exposure to English is frequently restricted, reading functions as a principal source of linguistic input and vocabulary enhancement (Grabe, 2009; Harmer, 2007). Thus, pupils' reading proficiency is intricately connected to their entire linguistic competence and academic success. In secondary school, reading comprehension serves

as both a linguistic proficiency and a conduit for grasping subject matter presented in English literature, rendering it a central emphasis of English language training.

In Indonesia, reading comprehension holds a crucial role in the English curriculum for senior high school students. Students are required to interact with various text genres, such as narrative, recount, descriptive, and expository texts, while exhibiting the capacity to discern primary ideas, infer meanings, and critically assess material. Nonetheless, despite ongoing curricular revisions and instructional initiatives, numerous Indonesian EFL learners persist in encountering challenges in reading comprehension. Empirical research has identified ongoing difficulties associated with restricted vocabulary knowledge, inadequate background information, diminished reading motivation, and insufficient strategic awareness (Lutfiyah & Nuraeningsih, 2022; Zia & Ibhar, 2022). These issues have intensified in recent years, especially in the post-pandemic era, where disruptions to learning routines have impacted students' literacy practices and participation with reading activities (Suparman et al., 2025).

In EFL classrooms, teaching reading comprehension needs more than the mere implementation of established methodologies. Educators are anticipated to create instructional choices that address students' cognitive, linguistic, and emotional requirements. In mixed-ability classrooms, prevalent in Indonesian public schools, educators frequently encounter the issue of bridging significant disparities in students' reading competency, vocabulary breadth, and enthusiasm to learn within constrained instructional time. This scenario underscores the significance of instructors' strategic competency, which encompasses not only knowledge of reading techniques but also the capacity to select, integrate, and adjust these strategies dynamically throughout teaching (Van den Branden, 2016; Zhang & Zhang, 2021).

A substantial corpus of research has investigated reading comprehension strategies in EFL contexts, demonstrating the efficacy of methods such as think-aloud, reciprocal teaching, Question–Answer Relationships (QAR), SQ3R, scaffolding, and cooperative learning (Ahmadi & Gilakjani, 2020; Astutik et al., 2024; Thu & Vien, 2022). These studies indicate that explicit strategy education can improve students' understanding, metacognitive awareness, and engagement with texts. Nonetheless, a

significant portion of this study employs a quantitative or quasi-experimental framework, concentrating on the assessment of learning outcomes rather than a comprehensive examination of teachers' teaching methodologies. Consequently, there exists a paucity of qualitative understanding on the actual implementation of these tactics by instructors in daily classroom settings, as well as their responses to contextual limitations and learner diversity.

Furthermore, current research frequently analyzes reading strategies as discrete instructional methods, neglecting to adequately explore how educators amalgamate several techniques during the many phases of reading education. Contemporary research in language pedagogy highlights that effective reading instruction is intrinsically dynamic and context-dependent, necessitating ongoing pedagogical decision-making rather than the rigid adoption of a singular method (Oxford, 2017; Grabe & Stoller, 2020). From this viewpoint, educators' methodologies have to be perceived as a coordination of cognitive, metacognitive, and sociocultural methods that assist learners prior to, during, and following reading actions. Nonetheless, research that encompasses this integrative approach—especially from the viewpoints of educators—remains scarce in the Indonesian EFL environment.

A significant gap pertains to the difficulties educators encounter in maintaining successful reading education. Although prior research has recognized barriers such restricted vocabulary and diminished student enthusiasm, there has been a paucity of studies investigating the reasons these issues endure despite educators' deliberate interventions. Recent studies indicate that diminished reading habits, digital distractions, examination-focused curricula, and inadequate institutional support may affect students' involvement with reading (Amatur & Rohmani, 2022; Suparman et al., 2025). Comprehending these obstacles necessitates qualitative investigation that contextualizes instructors' experiences within wider classroom and institutional frameworks, rather than ascribing difficulties exclusively to students' capabilities.

This study examines the tactics employed by English teachers in teaching reading comprehension and the obstacles faced during their implementation at SMAN 1 Jekulo, a public senior high school in Indonesia. This study utilizes a descriptive

qualitative methodology to investigate the ways in which educators implement and incorporate various reading strategies—namely scaffolding, think-aloud, reciprocal teaching, QAR, and SQ3R—throughout distinct instructional phases and varying student competency levels. The study emphasizes teachers' pedagogical thinking, adaptive behaviors, and answers to classroom limits instead of assessing the efficacy of a singular technique.

The research is predicated on the premise that reading comprehension instruction is a socially contextualized activity influenced by educators' ideas, experiences, and perceptions of students' requirements. This study aims to offer a comprehensive picture of reading pedagogy in actual EFL classrooms by analyzing teachers' instructional tactics and the obstacles they face. The results are anticipated to elucidate how educators manage instructional complexity and how the integration of strategies might enhance student engagement and understanding in heterogeneous ability environments. This study examines the subsequent research questions: (1) What strategies do English educators at SMAN 1 Jekulo employ to enhance reading comprehension? (2) What obstacles do English educators encounter when applying reading comprehension practices in the classroom?

The results of this investigation are anticipated to provide both theoretical and practical contributions. The study theoretically enhances the literature on EFL reading teaching by providing qualitative insights into teachers' adaptive utilization of reading methods and their pedagogical decision-making processes. The findings may guide English educators, curriculum designers, and teacher trainers in implementing successful reading instruction strategies that recognize learner variability and contextual limitations. Moreover, the study may provide as a reference for subsequent research investigating reading pedagogy in analogous EFL contexts and educational tiers.

Review of the Literature

Reading comprehension in EFL situations has been extensively examined as a multifaceted cognitive and social process. Initial definitions highlight the reader's

capacity to derive meaning through the interplay of text, reader, and context (Grabe, 2009; Koda, 2021). Research indicates that proficient understanding encompasses not merely decoding but also strategic processing, activation of previous knowledge, prediction, inference, and self-monitoring (Afflerbach, Cho, & Kim, 2021; Alderson, 2021). This multifaceted perspective has impacted educational methodologies that extend beyond fundamental skills to encompass strategic and metacognitive approaches.

In Indonesian EFL classrooms, reading comprehension is regarded as a fundamental objective of English instruction, consistent with curricular requirements that prioritize students' capacity to evaluate and analyze texts (Widianto, 2015; Lutfiyah & Nuraeningsih, 2022). Studies indicate ongoing obstacles, including restricted vocabulary knowledge, inadequate background information, and diminished reading enthusiasm among secondary school students (Zia & Ibhar, 2022; Suparman et al., 2025). The issues stem from both learners' linguistic inadequacies and environmental circumstances, including time limitations in instruction, examination-focused objectives, and a deficient reading culture beyond the classroom (Amatur & Rohmani, 2022; Astutik et al., 2024).

Strategies for Reading and the Role of Educators

The significance of reading methods has been highlighted in several research. Reading strategies are typically defined as intentional, objective-oriented methods that enhance understanding (Oxford, 2017; Grabe & Stoller, 2020). These methods are generally classified into cognitive (e.g., summarizing, inferencing), metacognitive (e.g., planning, monitoring, assessing), and socioaffective (e.g., cooperative learning) categories (Mokhtari & Reichard, 2020; Zhang & Zhang, 2021). Studies indicate that explicit strategy training enhances the comprehension performance and strategic awareness of EFL learners (Ahmadi & Gilakjani, 2020; Thu & Vien, 2022).

Although strategy education has garnered significant attention, there has been less focus on how educators incorporate numerous tactics within actual classroom settings. Numerous studies examine particular methodologies—such as the think-aloud procedure (Al-Jarf, 2021), reciprocal teaching (King, 2023), or QAR (Davis &

McPherson, 2022)—and assess their impact on student results. These methodologies enhance comprehension of effective practices but fall short in elucidating how educators formulate instructional choices in dynamic classroom settings with heterogeneous learners (Van den Branden, 2016; Afzal et al., 2024). The function of teachers in facilitating strategy utilization is influenced by their educational ideas, expertise, and situational awareness. In qualitative study about teacher cognition, scholars emphasize that instructors' decisions are both technical and interpretive, embodying views regarding the instruction of reading and the learning processes of students (Borg, 2021; Zheng, 2023). Teachers may choose scaffolding strategies in mixed-ability classrooms as they provide responsive support customized to individual requirements (Hammond & Gibbons, 2021; Liu & Han, 2024). However, evidence of the manifestation of such pedagogical thinking in practice, particularly within Indonesian EFL contexts, is still few.

Obstacles in Reading Pedagogy

Studies on obstacles in reading teaching frequently emphasize student-related variables, such restricted vocabulary or diminished motivation (Yunus & Jamil, 2023). Nevertheless, a comprehensive viewpoint acknowledges structural and contextual obstacles. Digital distractions, diminished reading habits following the pandemic, and the pressure of test preparation have been recognized as variables that impede prolonged engagement with reading assignments (Suparman et al., 2025; Astutik et al., 2024). Research underscores institutional limitations, like insufficient instructional time and a deficiency in professional development, which influence teachers' pedagogical decisions (Nurhadi & Nuraeni, 2024). Notwithstanding these insights, current literature rarely synthesizes teachers' strategic implementation with the obstacles they face in a comprehensive manner. A more thorough perspective is required—one that encompasses not just the tactics utilized by teachers but also the rationale behind their choices and the influence of contextual barriers on those selections. This integrated knowledge aligns with contemporary calls for research that situates educational approaches within teachers' lived classroom realities (Allwright & Hanks, 2022; Gao & Zhang, 2025).

Recent advancements in EFL reading research have progressively highlighted the significance of teacher mediation in approach instruction. Contemporary studies contend that reading methods should not be perceived as static procedures; rather, their efficacy is significantly influenced by how educators contextualize and modify them to meet learners' requirements (Grabe & Stoller, 2020; Borg, 2021). Educators serve as intermediaries who elucidate curricular objectives, student attributes, and classroom limitations, converting abstract methodologies into significant learning experiences. This viewpoint corresponds with sociocognitive theories of reading, which define comprehension as a contextualized activity influenced by interaction, guidance, and instructional design (Koda, 2021; Afflerbach et al., 2021).

The incorporation of several reading strategies in secondary EFL classes is especially advantageous for accommodating learner variability. Research in Asian EFL contexts demonstrates that students with lower proficiency gain from explicit modeling and scaffolding, but higher-proficiency learners have a more favorable response to collaborative and inquiry-based methodologies (Liu & Han, 2024; King, 2023). This indicates that strategy integration is more effective than single-strategy instruction in addressing the needs of mixed-ability classrooms. Nevertheless, despite these findings, limited research has investigated how educators make instantaneous judgments to integrate methods throughout the pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading phases. Research on teacher cognition underscores that teaching practices are profoundly shaped by educators' ideas regarding language acquisition and students' potential (Borg, 2021; Zheng, 2023). For instance, educators who feel that challenges in reading comprehension mostly arise from vocabulary deficiencies may emphasize pre-teaching vocabulary and structured reading activities. Conversely, educators who perceive reading as a process of meaning construction are more inclined to prioritize prediction, inference, and discussion-oriented tactics. These belief-based behaviors elucidate the differences in approach utilization, even across analogous curricular contexts. Nonetheless, empirical studies linking educators' views, observable practices, and reported challenges particularly within Indonesian EFL classrooms are few. A burgeoning area of research examines the post-pandemic effects on pupils' reading engagement and literacy advancement. Numerous research indicates that extended

exposure to digital media and diminished in-person instruction have adversely impacted students' sustained attention, reading endurance, and motivation (Suparman et al., 2025; Gao & Zhang, 2025). Consequently, educators have novel pedagogical challenges, including reinstating reading patterns, enhancing motivation, and restoring students' confidence in reading English texts. These circumstances necessitate that educators implement adaptive and adaptable teaching practices; nevertheless, institutional support and professional development opportunities are frequently inadequate (Nurhadi & Nuraeni, 2024).

Despite the increasing acknowledgment of these concerns, a significant portion of the current research persists in addressing instructional methodologies and classroom limits as distinct matters. There is an absence of cohesive qualitative research investigating how educators address pedagogical problems while applying reading techniques in genuine classroom environments. Addressing this gap is crucial for cultivating a more sophisticated comprehension of EFL reading instruction as a dynamic, context-dependent practice. This study addresses the demand for research that emphasizes teachers' lived experiences and strategic reasoning, providing insights into the implementation of reading comprehension training in actual classroom settings.

Methodology

Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive qualitative research methodology to investigate English teachers' strategies for teaching reading comprehension and the obstacles they face in instructional practice. A qualitative approach was deemed suitable as the study sought to achieve a comprehensive understanding of teachers' instructional decisions, pedagogical reasoning, and classroom experiences, rather than quantitatively assessing the effectiveness of specific strategies (Creswell, 2018a; Flick, 2009). The research was conducted under an interpretivist framework, positing that teaching practices and classroom dynamics are socially produced and most effectively comprehended through the viewpoints and contextual interpretations of participants (Creswell, 2019; Borg, 2021).

Research Setting and Participants

The study was carried out at SMAN 1 Jekulo, a public senior high school in Kudus, Indonesia, during the academic session of July to August 2025. The participants comprised four English teachers chosen using purposive sampling. This sample method was employed to guarantee that participants possessed direct and prolonged expertise in teaching reading comprehension at the senior high school level. The selection criteria comprised: (1) active engagement in teaching reading comprehension, (2) at least two years of teaching experience, and (3) readiness to partake in classroom observations and interviews. The choice to engage four educators is consistent with qualitative research principles that emphasize depth of comprehension rather than sample size (Creswell, 2018a). This figure facilitated extensive data collecting and for cross-case analysis of educational methodologies across various grade levels.

Data Collection

Data were gathered through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews, facilitating methodological triangulation and a more thorough comprehension of the investigated phenomena (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009; Flick, 2009). Classroom observations were carried out throughout two lessons, encompassing Grade 10 and Grade 12 pupils. Each observation concentrated on the implementation of reading comprehension tactics by teachers throughout the pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading phases. An observation guide was employed to record educational activities, teacher-student interactions, strategy implementation, and classroom responses. Field notes were recorded during each session to document both verbal and non-verbal instructional behaviors. Subsequent to the observations, semi-structured interviews were administered to each educator to investigate their pedagogical rationale, impressions of reading teaching, and the challenges faced in executing reading techniques. The interview methodology comprised open-ended inquiries including technique selection, adaptability for diverse learners, and perceived obstacles to effective reading instruction. Semi-structured interviews were selected to facilitate flexibility in exploring participants' responses while ensuring coherence with the research topics (Creswell, 2018b).

Data Analysis

The data were examined utilizing Huberman's interactive model of qualitative data analysis, encompassing three interrelated and iterative processes: data reduction, data display, and conclusion formulation and verification (Huberman, 1994). In the data reduction step, observation field notes and interview transcripts were transcribed, arranged, and coded. The preliminary coding concentrated on recognizing reoccurring pedagogical tactics, patterns of educator conduct, and mentions of instructional difficulties. During the data display phase, the coded data were systematically grouped thematically in matrices and tables to enable comparison among individuals and data sources. This technique facilitated the identification of predominant strategy categories and prevalent obstacles. Ultimately, in the conclusion drafting and verification phase, emerging themes were analyzed in relation to the study questions and the existing literature. Interpretations were consistently enhanced by cross-referencing data sources and reviewing the original transcripts to maintain analytical consistency (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2020).

To guarantee the credibility of the results, multiple procedures were implemented in accordance with qualitative research standards (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Creswell, 2018a). Triangulation was accomplished by juxtaposing data from classroom observations and interviews to validate conclusions. Member verification was performed by disseminating summary interpretations to participants to validate the accuracy of the researcher's analyses. Furthermore, peer debriefing was employed via talks with academic colleagues to evaluate coding decisions and thematic interpretations. These approaches improved the study's credibility, reliability, and confirmability.

Findings and Discussion

The findings of this study were obtained through classroom observations and interviews with four English teachers at SMAN 1 Jekulo. The findings demonstrate that teachers consistently used structured instructional phases (opening, main, and closing) while implementing a variety of strategies to help students with their reading

comprehension. During the beginning exercises, teachers greeted students, gave a brief prayer, and asked warm-up questions to elicit prior knowledge. They explained difficult vocabulary, led silent reading, organized group conversations, posed comprehension questions, and encouraged students to retell or relate the work to their own experiences. The final stage often included summarizing the lecture, reflecting, and assigning follow-up assignments. These techniques resulted in an engaging, student-centered reading environment.

Strategies Identified from Observations and Interviews

Theme / Strategy	Interview Evidence (Quotes)	Classroom Implementation (Observation)
Vocabulary-Oriented Strategies	*"Vocabulary is the foundation of language. If students understand the words, they can follow the meaning."* (T2)	Teachers explained key vocabulary before reading and gave extra help to students struggling with new words.
Contextual-Based Strategies	*"If the text is about animals, I ask students, 'Do you have pets?' to connect the text with their experience."* (T4)	Warm-up questions used to activate prior knowledge and build student engagement.
Adaptive Teaching Strategies	*"For grade 10 I use fairy tales, but for grade 12 I use stories about their life."* (T1)	Texts were selected based on grade level and students' proficiency to ensure comprehension.
Scaffolding Strategies	*"Before asking students to read, I explain difficult words, give examples, then let them try on their own."* (T2)	Teacher provided step-by-step support, reducing guidance gradually to foster independent reading.
Think-Aloud Strategy	*"I read aloud and pause to verbalize my thoughts, like making predictions."* (T1)	Teacher modeled comprehension strategies by thinking aloud while reading texts.
Reciprocal Teaching	*"I give each student a role like summarizer, questioner, clarifier, and predictor."* (T3)	Students worked in groups, taking roles to support collaborative comprehension.
Questioning Strategies	*"I ask questions like 'Who is the character?' or 'Where is*	Teachers used varied comprehension questions and

Theme / Strategy	Interview Evidence (Quotes)	Classroom Implementation (Observation)
(QAR)	*the setting?' which are Right There questions."* (T2)	guided students to practice making their own questions.
Prediction Strategies	*"I give clues and ask, 'What do you think this story is about?' so students can predict content."* (T1)	Students were guided to make predictions before and during reading, often in game-like discussions.
Student Engagement Techniques	*"Sometimes I ask distracted students to read aloud so they stay focused."* (T2)	Students participated in reading aloud, retelling, group discussion, and making creative projects.

Table 1. 1 Strategies by the teacher

From the observation and interview results, it was clear that the teachers at SMAN 1 Jekulo applied various strategies rather than relying on one fixed method. The strategies were selected based on the students' proficiency level, the type of text, and the learning objectives. The most prominent strategies included Scaffolding, Think-Aloud, Reciprocal Teaching, SQ3R, and QARs.

Scaffolding was frequently observed, especially at the beginning of lessons, because it provided a structured way for students to bridge the gap between their current abilities and the demands of the reading task. For example, in Meeting 1, the teacher explained new vocabulary from a narrative text before students started reading, and in Meeting 2, the teacher guided them to identify verbs in the past tense before discussing the recount text. One teacher mentioned in the interview, "Before asking students to read, I introduce the topic, explain the difficult words, and give an example of how to read a sentence properly" (T2). This common adoption of scaffolding suggests that teachers saw it as an efficient technique to reduce students cognitive stress when dealing with unfamiliar texts, therefore avoiding frustration and disengagement. Scaffolding was preferred above other strategies because it allowed teachers to provide focused, step-by-step support at the moment of need while gradually delegating responsibility to students.

The Think-Aloud strategy was also applied to model the reading process. During observation, the teacher sometimes read aloud and paused to share her thoughts, saying things like, "Maybe this part means the boy is sad because something bad happened" (T3). By using think-aloud, teachers provide direct examples of how thinking occurs while reading, so students understand that reading involves more than just pronouncing words, but also constructing meaning from the text. Teachers often choose this strategy when students encounter difficult vocabulary or complex sentences, as think-alouds can directly demonstrate how to solve problems and interpret texts. As teachers make predictions, draw conclusions, and discover main ideas, students gain a concrete picture of how skilled readers think. They can then imitate these examples when reading on their own. This aligns with the view that think-aloud is a form of metacognitive learning that provides students with reusable strategies for dealing with new and challenging texts, making it particularly useful in classrooms with diverse student abilities.

Reciprocal Teaching appeared in group work where students took roles such as summarizer, questioner, clarifier, and predictor. In Meeting 1, after reading a short story, students discussed in small groups, highlighting key points and predicting the ending. As one teacher explained, "I give each student a role, and they work together… they ask each other questions and explain new words" (T4). This collaboration encouraged peer learning and active participation. Teachers tend to choose this strategy when they want students to take more responsibility for their own learning. With clear roles, each student has a role to play and actively contributes. Unlike more teacher-centered methods, reciprocal teaching encourages students to explain and ask questions to each other, so misunderstandings can often be resolved more quickly than if the teacher were to explain repeatedly. This strategy also creates an atmosphere where students learn to understand the meaning of the text together, while simultaneously practicing their communication skills. By combining reading comprehension tasks and cooperative learning, reciprocal teaching is an effective way to engage students of varying abilities, help weaker students through peer support, and keep all students engaged in the learning process.

QARs (Question–Answer Relationships) were used to train students to identify where to find answers. For example, in Meeting 2, after reading the recount text, students answered questions like "Who is the character?" (Right There) and "Why did the event happen?" (Think and Search). Teachers also trained students to answer Author and Me or On My Own questions for higher-order thinking. According to one teacher, "I usually ask questions like 'Where is the setting?' or 'Who is the character?'… then I guide them to make their own questions too" (T4). Teachers prefer QAR to traditional question-and-answer methods because it teaches students how to approach various types of questions. This makes the reading experience more concentrated and less confused. Grouping questions allows students to more quickly discover information in the text, connect ideas from different sections, and relate them to their own experiences. This systematic approach not only improves students' replies, but also helps them become autonomous readers who can apply the same techniques to new materials.

Lastly, SQ3R, which stands for Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review. This strategy helps students to follow a structured process while reading, so they can better understand the content and improve their reading skills step by step. In this method, the teacher guides the students through each stage of SQ3R during classroom reading activities. In stage of survey, at the beginning, the teacher asks students to quickly look at the text. They are not asked to read everything yet, but just to check the title, headings, pictures, and first sentences of each paragraph. This step helps students get a general idea of what the text is about. The findings come from two classroom observations in Grade 10 and Grade 12, along with information gathered from teacher interviews. The explanations below only describe what occurred in these two sessions and therefore do not represent the full range of reading instruction at SMAN 1 Jekulo.

In the Grade 10 lesson, the teacher used a more guided way of teaching. Vocabulary was introduced before the reading activity, and the tasks were arranged step by step so the students could follow more easily. This shows the use of scaffolding, where the teacher first gives clear explanation and guided practice, then slowly reduces the help when students become more confident. Meanwhile, in the Grade 12 lesson, the teacher gave more space for independent learning. The students

worked in groups, asked and answered questions, and applied strategies such as Reciprocal Teaching and QAR to explore the text more deeply. This difference may be related to the higher proficiency of Grade 12 students, but more data is still needed to see if the same pattern also appears in other classes.

In both classes, the lesson usually started with pre-reading activities to build students' background knowledge and make them ready for the text. For instance, when the topic was about weekend activities, the teacher asked the students what they usually do on weekends. This helped them relate the material to their own daily life. During the reading stage, the teacher sometimes used Think-Aloud together with group work, such as showing how to read the text, explaining difficult parts, and giving guiding questions. After that, students continued by reading on their own or with friends, marking important points and sharing their answers in discussion. The post-reading stage was usually done through activities such as making a summary, retelling the text, or connecting the content with real-life situations. In one meeting, the teacher even asked students to create a short video based on a story. This activity encouraged them to be more creative, think critically, and practice speaking with more confidence. From the two lessons, it was seen that the teacher used a variety of strategies in a flexible way, including Scaffolding, Think-Aloud, QAR, Reciprocal Teaching, and SQ3R. These methods helped students take an active role in understanding the text. However, the results only describe the lessons observed and cannot fully represent all reading practices in the school.

Based on the analysis, the researcher concluded that teachers at SMAN 1 Jekulo applied diverse and adaptive reading strategies, such as Scaffolding, Think-Aloud, Reciprocal Teaching, QAR, and SQ3R. The strategies were adjusted to students' ability levels, types of text, and learning goals. This finding supports Yulianingsih et al. (2021), who reported that the use of Scaffolding by both teachers and peers improved students' reading comprehension and mastery in EFL classes. The Think-Aloud strategy, where teachers model their thinking process while reading, is also in line with Thu & Vien (2022), who proved that this method can improve students' metacognitive awareness and reading skills. In the same way, the use of Reciprocal Teaching with

shared roles in group discussions reflects the findings of Ahmadi & Gilakjani (2020), who showed that this strategy improved both reading comprehension and student participation.

Finally, the QAR strategy, which trains students to recognize question types and sources of answers, matches the research of Thúy et al. (2018). Their study reported that QAR significantly increased students' ability to answer literal and inferential questions in EFL classrooms. The implementation of SQ3R also aligns with the findings by Astutik et al. (2024), who showed that this strategy helps students organize information, retain main ideas, and increase reading motivation. Thus, although the data in this study are limited to two observations, the results strengthen evidence from previous studies that a combination of explicit, collaborative, and structured strategies can improve high school students' reading engagement and comprehension in EFL contexts.

Challenges Faced by Teachers

Interviews also revealed several challenges that hindered the effectiveness of reading comprehension instruction:

Challenge	Evidence from Teacher Interviews
Vocabulary Difficulties	*"The most common problem is vocabulary… when students see too many unfamiliar words, they get stuck." (T3)*
Low Motivation and Interest	*"Not all students see reading as something useful… they lose interest quickly." (T4)*
Different Reading Levels	*"Some students understand quickly, others need more time." (T2)*
Lack of Reading Habit	*"Even in grade 12, some cannot pronounce basic English words… they rarely read." (T2)*
Low Confidence	*"They are not confident… they don't want to try because they think they will make mistakes." (T3)*

Table 1. 2 The challenge by the teacher

Although the teachers applied various strategies effectively, they still faced several challenges during the teaching process. The teacher claim that several students still limited vocabulary. Many students struggled to understand the meaning of a text because they were unfamiliar with several words. In both observations, some students asked about the meaning of certain vocabulary before they could continue reading. One teacher explained, "Many students don't know the meaning of the words, so they don't understand the text" (T2). This difficulty is common among EFL learners because their exposure to English vocabulary outside the classroom is limited, meaning most of their vocabulary knowledge depends on school instruction. Moreover, when students encounter too many unfamiliar words, their working memory becomes overloaded, which disrupts comprehension. To overcome this, teachers often pre-taught key vocabulary, provided lists of important terms, and encouraged dictionary use. However, as also noted by Ali & Razali, (2019), vocabulary gaps remain one of the main barriers for EFL learners, especially when dealing with longer or more academic texts.

The teacher also reported that the students were low motivation and engagement. Some students felt bored or uninterested, particularly when the topic was unrelated to their daily lives. In the interviews, a teacher stated, "They feel bored because the topic is not interesting for them" (T3). From the observations, students were more active when the teacher used relatable topics or short warm-up discussions. For example, in Meeting 1, asking about weekend activities helped create a personal connection with the text. Still, not all students responded positively, and maintaining engagement for the whole class remained a challenge. Still, not all students responded positively, and maintaining engagement for the whole class remained a challenge, partly because interest levels vary depending on students' prior knowledge, personal preferences, and attitudes toward reading. This is similar to the findings of Suparman et al., (2025), who reported that low reading motivation among Gen Z students is influenced by digital distractions, irrelevant reading materials, and minimal support from teachers and parents. Research by Amatur & Rohmani, (2022) also confirmed that teachers struggle to increase student motivation due to limited interest, dedication, and confidence in dealing with English texts.

The teachers also claimed that the students' have different reading levels. In most classes, there were clear differences between students who could read independently and those who needed continuous support. In one session, some students finished the comprehension questions quickly, while others struggled with basic vocabulary. A teacher commented, "Some students understand quickly, others need more time" (T2). Such disparities often occur because students come from diverse educational backgrounds and have had varying degrees of exposure to English before entering the class. Differences in cognitive processing speed, reading fluency, and learning styles also contribute to this gap. This situation required adaptive teaching, such as combining scaffolding for weaker students with collaborative tasks that allowed stronger students to explore deeper analysis. According to Zia & Ibhar, (2022), different vocabulary developments among students also determine differences in their reading interests and motivations, so teachers need to adjust strategies to individual abilities.

Based on the result of interview, some students still lack of reading habits and self-confidence. Some students were hesitant to read aloud or share their understanding because they feared making mistakes or being judged by their peers. As one teacher said, "They are not confident… they don't want to try because they think they will make mistakes" (T3). This lack of confidence is often rooted in limited prior success with reading tasks, fear of negative evaluation, and a classroom culture where mistakes are seen as failures rather than learning opportunities. Additionally, because many students rarely read English texts outside of class, they lack the regular practice that could build fluency and self-assurance. This limited reading habit means they have fewer chances to reinforce vocabulary and comprehension skills, which in turn makes them even more hesitant to participate. To solve this problem, teachers used group reading and peer support. For example, in Meeting 2, students were asked to discuss their answers with a partner before presenting them to the class.

This study's findings reveal that English teachers' reading comprehension teaching is marked by the adaptive integration of several techniques instead of dependence on a singular methodological approach. Throughout the observed classes, educators integrated scaffolding, think-aloud strategies, reciprocal teaching, QAR, and

SQ3R to address students' competency levels, text complexity, and classroom dynamics. This pattern endorses modern viewpoints that regard reading instruction as a flexible and context-dependent activity influenced by instructors' pedagogical discretion (Grabe & Stoller, 2020; Borg, 2021). Instead of rigidly implementing specified procedures, teachers seemed to coordinate instructional actions in accordance with the immediate requirements of the classroom. Scaffolding has become the predominant instructional method, especially in lower-grade and heterogeneous classes. Educators consistently offered explicit instruction via vocabulary elucidation, phrase exemplification, and directed inquiry before progressively shifting responsibility to learners. This illustrates the mediating function of educators in assisting students within their zones of proximal development (Lantolf & Poehner, 2021). The significance of scaffolding indicates that educators were keenly cognizant of students' restricted vocabulary and prior information, which frequently obstructs autonomous understanding. In this regard, scaffolding served not just as instructional assistance but also as an essential educational reaction to contextual limitations.

The implementation of think-aloud tactics exemplifies educators' endeavors to enhance students' metacognitive awareness. By articulating prediction, inference, and monitoring processes during reading, educators rendered professional reading habits observable to students. This corresponds with studies highlighting that metacognitive strategy education improves learners' capacity to manage comprehension and interact effectively with texts (Afflerbach et al., 2021; Thu & Vien, 2022). Significantly, the think-aloud method in this study was employed not as a standalone tool but as an integral component of continuous instructional contact, especially when students had difficulties with implicit meanings or intricate texts. This indicates that educators perceived metacognitive modeling as a means to influence students' reading strategies rather than only enhancing task performance.

Collaborative techniques, especially reciprocal teaching, shown a progressive transition towards joint accountability for meaning-making. Through the allocation of roles and the facilitation of group discussions, educators fostered possibilities for peer contact and dialogic engagement with texts. This corroborates sociocognitive perspectives on reading as a socially constructed endeavor wherein comprehension

evolves through interaction and the negotiation of meaning (King, 2023; Liu & Han, 2024). The increased implementation of reciprocal teaching in upper-grade classes suggests that educators adjusted collaborative tactics according to students' assessed preparedness. This adaptation underscores the significance of teacher cognition in influencing the timing and manner of implementing learner-centered initiatives (Zheng, 2023).

Structured cognitive methods like QAR and SQ3R offered students explicit frameworks for engaging with texts and comprehension activities. QAR assisted students in differentiating between literal and inferential questions, thereby minimizing random guessing and fostering strategic reading. This discovery corroborates other research indicating the efficacy of QAR in improving students' comprehension awareness (Thúy et al., 2018). Likewise, SQ3R provided a methodical framework that directed students through extensive texts, promoting intentional reading and revision. Despite occasional time constraints hindering complete implementation, the existence of these strategies indicates teachers' recognition of the necessity for systematic support to maintain students' focus and understanding, especially in EFL environments where reading endurance is frequently inadequate (Astutik et al., 2024).

Notwithstanding the strategy diversity noted, educators consistently faced enduring issues associated with restricted vocabulary, diminished reading motivation, and disparate competence levels. These challenges align with previous studies in Indonesian EFL classrooms, emphasizing restricted exposure to English beyond the classroom and inadequate reading habits as persistent problems (Amatur & Rohmani, 2022; Zia & Ibhar, 2022). Recent research indicate that post-pandemic learning disruptions have adversely impacted students' reading engagement and confidence, complicating the implementation of sustained reading activities (Suparman et al., 2025). In this environment, teachers' dependence on scaffolding and teacher-directed procedures can be perceived as pragmatic adaptations rather than methodological deficiencies.

The findings indicate that, in addition to classroom-level problems, greater institutional and curricular variables significantly influence instructors' instructional

decisions. Teachers' inclination towards structured and instructor-led procedures may be viewed as a reaction to curricular requirements that prioritize the comprehensive study of text genres and readiness for high-stakes evaluations. In these situations, educators frequently encounter a conflict between promoting profound understanding and adhering to curricular schedules. Comparable trends have been documented in EFL contexts, where assessment-driven frameworks influence educators' instructional focuses and restrict chances for extensive reading engagements (Nguyen & Boers, 2023; Gao & Zhang, 2024). This indicates that the comprehension of instructional technique use is incomplete without acknowledging the systemic factors influencing teachers.

The results highlight the pivotal role of teacher cognition in bridging educational principles and classroom realities. Educators' convictions regarding students' capabilities, motivation, and preparedness affected the selection and integration of techniques. For example, collaborative and student-centered methodologies like reciprocal teaching were more commonly employed in classrooms deemed more adept, whereas lower-level classes got greater explicit instruction and scaffolding. This distinction illustrates teachers' evaluative assessments rather than an ignorance of learner-centered education. In accordance with Borg's (2021) model of teacher cognition, the instructional practices observed in this study resulted from the interplay of teachers' beliefs, experiential knowledge, and contextual limitations.

Moreover, the adaptive integration of methods shown in this study aligns with recent demands for flexible pedagogy in post-pandemic EFL classrooms. Studies indicate that numerous pupils currently demonstrate diminished attention spans, less reading endurance, and heightened reliance on teacher assistance (Suparman et al., 2025; Nurhadi & Nuraeni, 2024). In this context, educators' dependence on scaffolding and structured methodologies like SQ3R may function as compensatory strategies to restore students' engagement and confidence in reading English texts. Instead of perceiving these activities as too teacher-centered, they ought to be recognized as transitional supports that address learners' present requirements. The findings underscore the relevance for teacher professional development. Professional development initiatives frequently advocate particular teaching practices while

inadequately considering how instructors implement them in actual classrooms. This study indicates that effective professional development should concentrate on improving teachers' strategic awareness and reflective decision-making, allowing them to assess the appropriateness of certain methods in terms of timing, rationale, and target audience. This corresponds with contemporary research promoting practice-oriented and reflective professional development frameworks that recognize teachers as proactive educational agents (Darling-Hammond et al., 2022; Afzal et al., 2024).

The data, examined through the suggested conceptual framework, affirm that reading comprehension instruction functions at the convergence of cognitive processes, social interaction, and contextual mediation. The strategic orchestration by teachers illustrates a continuous negotiation among various variables, underscoring the framework's focus on adaptive pedagogy. This comprehensive knowledge reinforces the assertion that enhancing EFL reading instruction necessitates institutional support for instructors' professional judgment, rather than prescriptive methodological directives.

The findings indicate that EFL reading instruction is optimally seen as an adaptive pedagogical process influenced by teachers' professional reasoning and contextual circumstances. Educators consistently reconcile educational objectives, student requirements, and classroom limitations while choosing and integrating solutions. This supports claims in teacher cognition research that instructional practices are not solely reflections of theoretical knowledge but are significantly shaped by contextual interpretation and experiential judgment (Borg, 2021). Therefore, initiatives to enhance reading instruction must transcend the endorsement of isolated tactics and instead assist educators in cultivating reflective, adaptable, and context-sensitive pedagogical methodologies.

Conclusion

This study examined the tactics employed by English teachers in teaching reading comprehension and the obstacles they faced within an Indonesian EFL context. The results indicate that reading instruction is implemented as a flexible and context-aware practice, wherein educators incorporate various strategies—such as scaffolding,

think-aloud, reciprocal teaching, QAR, and SQ3R—tailored to students' proficiency levels, classroom dynamics, and institutional requirements. Instead of implementing procedures rigidly, educators utilized pedagogical discernment to coordinate instructional assistance according to contextual circumstances. This study enhances the literature by emphasizing teachers' pedagogical reasoning as a crucial component in comprehending EFL reading teaching, building upon previous research that has predominantly concentrated on isolated approach application. The data indicate that effective reading instruction necessitates adaptability and response instead of strict compliance with established procedures. Curriculum design and teacher professional development should facilitate adaptable instructional approaches that enable educators to address learner variability and contextual limitations. This study is constrained by its narrow qualitative design and singular school context, perhaps hindering larger generalization. Future study may encompass a broader array of educational contexts, integrate students' viewpoints, or investigate the impact of digital and post-pandemic learning environments on reading instruction. Such experiments would enhance the understanding of reading comprehension pedagogy in EFL classrooms.

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