

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the research background, research problems, research objectives, the significance of the research, the scope and limitations of the study, and the definitions of key terms.

A. Background of the Research

Metacognition refers to an individual's awareness of their own thinking and learning processes, which goes beyond simple recognition of knowledge. This awareness involves the ability to consciously monitor, regulate, and evaluate how information is acquired, processed, and applied (Goren & Kaya, 2022). According to JH Flavell (1979), emphasized that metacognition consists of two essential components: knowledge about cognition and regulation of cognition. Knowledge about cognition includes understanding available strategies, when they should be used, and how effective they are, while regulation of cognition refers to planning, monitoring, and evaluating the learning process. In the educational context, this reflective awareness enables students to set clearer goals, assess their progress independently, and adapt strategies to meet their needs. Thus, metacognition is not merely passive awareness, but an active and purposeful reflection on one's cognitive activity, making it a fundamental basis for successful and autonomous learning (Çini et al., 2023). With metacognition, students no longer rely entirely on teachers. Instead, they become independent and strategic students. Therefore, metacognition can be considered the fundamental basis for successful learning.

Metacognitive reading strategies consist of three main stages: planning, monitoring, and evaluation. The planning stage takes place before reading and involves establishing clear goals. At this stage, students also predict the content of the text and activate their prior knowledge. The monitoring stage occurs while reading, involving continuous assessment of understanding. Students can identify difficult parts of the text and seek solutions promptly (Özçakmak et al., 2021). Strategies used during this stage may include rereading or using context to clarify meaning. The evaluation stage takes place after reading, during which it is determined whether the goals were achieved. Students reflect on the effectiveness of the strategies they used and consider ways to improve for future reading tasks. Through this cycle, students become reflective readers who can adjust their approaches according to the text and context (Armbruster et al., 1982).

Metacognition is closely related to critical thinking skills. Critical thinking involves the ability to analyse arguments thoroughly. (Thienen dan Weinstein, 2023). It also includes both inductive and deductive reasoning. Students who think critically can evaluate information more objectively (Ossa et al., 2023). They can also solve problems in a systematic manner. When critical thinking is combined with metacognition, the thinking process becomes more purposeful. Students can question the assumptions in texts. They're also able to make more accurate decisions based on information. Metacognition provides a framework for self-regulation, while critical thinking offers tools for analysis. Together,

these two abilities create a synergy that enhances academic and professional performance.

Although the benefits of metacognitive strategies and critical thinking have been proven, their implementation in the classroom still faces challenges (Ossa et al., 2023). Many students have difficulty articulating their own thought processes. They also often fail to conclude independently. As a result, students tend to rely on the teacher's explanations. This dependence makes them passive students. Teachers need to create an environment that encourages students' independence. Such an environment should value students' critical responses. Additionally, teachers should help students build confidence in expressing their ideas. Strategies that can be used include group discussions, reflective journals, and guided questions (Marthaliakirana et al., 2022). With consistent support, students can move from being passive recipients of information to active participants in the learning process.

Reading is the primary means of activating metacognitive strategies. Reading also helps develop students' critical thinking skills. For beginners, reading aids in acquiring vocabulary and grammar knowledge (Ali et al., 2022). For more advanced students, reading deepens their understanding and analytical skills. In the context of EFL, the goals of reading include mastering linguistic skills and applying various strategies. These strategies include skimming, scanning, and inference. Reading also encourages reflective engagement with the text. Students can critically evaluate information (Köse dan Güne, 2021). They can also connect the ideas in the text to their own experiences. Thus,

reading is not just a linguistic exercise; it's also an intellectual activity that enhances independent and critical thinking skills.

Learning is not limited to reading books or attending formal schooling. According to Louise et al. (2022), everyday life experiences are also valuable sources of knowledge. Social interactions with friends, family, and colleagues broaden one's perspective. The stories shared by others can serve as reflections and sources of inspiration for learners. By combining real-life experiences with reading skills, the learning process becomes more meaningful. Students can connect theories to everyday life situations. This makes learning more relevant and meaningful in context. The essence of learning is the continuous pursuit of knowledge. This knowledge is used to address the ever-changing challenges of life. Therefore, learning should be seen as a lifelong process, not just an activity that takes place in the classroom (Lane et al., 2022).

Several previous studies have highlighted various challenges faced by EFL students in reading comprehension. The first study, conducted by Nur Aisah et al. (2021) found that introverted students in non-formal education could improve their confidence and motivation, and reduce difficulties related to vocabulary and pronunciation by using metacognitive strategies such as planning, monitoring, and evaluation. Meanwhile, Hasani (2022) emphasized that metacognitive strategies were more effective than cognitive strategies in improving vocabulary and reading comprehension among high school students in Serang. In contrast, Pahrizal et al. (2025) found that although EFL students in rural areas had a high level of awareness regarding metacognitive strategies,

especially problem-solving strategies, their impact on reading comprehension was relatively weak. Additionally, a study by Köse and Güne (2021) in Turkey showed that the use of certain metacognitive strategies. Metacognitive skills are generally high, but they are influenced by gender and educational level. Women and older students tend to use these strategies more frequently. In recent research, Ramadhianti dan Somba (2023) identified the main difficulties students face when reading, such as distinguishing between main ideas and details, understanding vocabulary, and drawing conclusions. They found that simple strategies like predicting content, using dictionaries, and skimming through text were effective ways to overcome these challenges.

From the overall studies, several research gaps can be identified. First, the lack of longitudinal studies means that the development of metacognitive strategies over time has not been thoroughly examined. Second, there is a weak relationship between awareness of strategies and reading comprehension scores, especially in rural areas. Thus, high levels of strategy awareness do not necessarily lead to improved comprehension scores. Third, the range of research contexts is limited, as most studies have focused on middle school and university students. Researchers choose students as subjects because they are considered to have more mature thinking skills.

B. Research Question

Based on the research background discussed above, the researchers formulated the research problem as follows:

What metacognitive strategies do EFL learners employ in their reading activities?

C. Research Objective

Based on the research problems outlined above, the researchers have established the following research objectives:

To identify and describe the metacognitive strategies (planning, monitoring, and evaluating) employed by EFL learners in their reading activities.

D. Significance of the Research

The findings of this research are likely to be useful both theoretically and practically.

1. Theoretically speaking

Understanding the metacognitive strategies used by EFL learners to improve their reading skills enriches students' understanding of metacognitive strategies in general. This study also provides information about the types of metacognitive strategies that are most commonly used by students learning English in formal education settings.

2. Practically speaking

It is hoped that this research will be useful to students at universities and similar institutions in designing more effective reading instruction methods. It can also help students develop into metacognitive learners.

Additionally, it can assist curriculum developers in integrating metacognitive strategies into English language teaching. Ultimately, this research aims to improve students' reading skills and enhance their academic performance.

3. Future Research

This study also serves as a valuable resource for other researchers who may be interested in conducting similar studies in different fields in the future.

E. Scope and Limitation

1. Scope

This study focuses on sixth-year students at UIN Syekh Wasil Kediri who have completed the course “Academic Reading”. The research aims to explore how these students apply metacognitive strategies related to planning, monitoring, and evaluating their reading activities. It also examines how these strategies affect the development of their reading skills. This study is conducted within the context of EFL learning at the university level, with a focus on students who are assumed to possess mature cognitive abilities and critical thinking skills due to their academic background. The study does not aim to generalize its findings to all EFL learners, but rather to provide a detailed description of the phenomena observed among this specific group of students.

2. Limitation

The limitations of this study relate to its design and participants. First, this study uses a qualitative descriptive approach, meaning that the findings are presented in a narrative form and cannot be generalized statistically to larger populations. Second, the participants were limited to sixth- and eighth-semester students at UIN Syekh Wasil Kediri. Therefore, the results may not represent students from other institutions, levels of education, or contexts. Third, the data were collected through classroom observations, interviews, and reading assignments. These methods reflect the subjective experiences of the participants, and the results may be influenced by individual differences in motivation, prior knowledge, and language skills. These limitations are acknowledged to help clarify the scope of the study and ensure that the findings are interpreted within the specific academic context in which the research was conducted.

F. Definitions of Key Terms

To avoid misunderstandings regarding certain terms used in this research, the key terms are defined as follows:

1. Learners of English as a Foreign Language

In this study, EFL learners refer to students who learn English as a foreign language in a formal educational setting. They are not native speakers of English, but they learn the language as part of their school curriculum, in order to develop their communication and academic skills.

2. Metacognitive Strategies

Metacognitive strategies are defined as the learner's conscious efforts to plan, monitor, and evaluate their reading process. This includes activities such as setting reading goals, checking understanding while reading, and reflecting on what has been learned after reading.

3. Reading Skills

In this study, "reading ability" refers to the ability of EFL learners to understand, interpret, and analyze written texts in English. This includes not only recognizing words and sentences, but also understanding the meaning of the text, identifying main ideas, and drawing conclusions from the text.