

# The effectiveness of metacognitive strategies in enhancing students' reading skills in islamic economics: A cross-sectional study

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## Article Info

### Article history:

Received Jun 27, 2023

Revised Des 13, 2023

Accepted Des 17, 2023

### Keywords:

Metacognitive strategies, reading, islamic economics, psychology

## ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine the effectiveness of metacognitive strategies in enhancing students' reading skills. The sample consisted of 50 Islamic Economics majors selected through random cluster sampling from 100 undergraduate EFL majors studying at different universities in East Java. The participants were randomly assigned to either the experimental group (N=50) or the control group. Five main instruments were used in the study: the Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS), Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ), semi-structured interviews, a background questionnaire, and a reading comprehension test. The experimental group did much better on the posttest for reading comprehension (M=31.96, SD=10.56) than the students in the control groups. The results of this study are important for students, teachers, and people who make tools for teaching English as a second language.



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Reading is a fundamental skill crucial in our personal, academic, and professional lives. It is a means of acquiring knowledge and a gateway to critical thinking, communication, and personal growth. In today's information-driven society, the ability to read effectively and comprehend complex texts is more important than ever before. Furthermore, reading is essential for acquiring knowledge and expanding our understanding of the world. We gain access to a vast array of information, ideas, and perspectives through reading. Whether reading books, articles, or online resources, we can explore different subjects, delve into historical events, or stay updated on current affairs. Reading broadens our horizons, exposes us to diverse cultures, and fosters empathy and understanding. Meanwhile, the reading skills of students in Indonesia have been a topic of concern and research. According to the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) research report, Indonesia's literacy level is among the lowest 10 out of 70 countries Anaktototy (2023). The reading comprehension ability of Indonesian students needs to improve (Nurkamto et al., 2021). The low reading literacy of Indonesian students still needs to improve in the education system (Setyowati et al., 2022). The reading ability of primary school students in Indonesia has been ranked low compared to other countries in international assessments (Inharjanto & Lisnani, 2023).

The problem of reading skills in Indonesia has been a subject of research and concern. Several studies have highlighted various challenges and difficulties students and instructors face in teaching and improving reading comprehension. One of the challenges identified is students' need to identify unfamiliar words, determine the language features of English texts, and predict the main ideas in paragraphs Nurkamto

et al. (2021). These difficulties can hinder students' reading comprehension and overall literacy skills. Factors such as readers' linguistic competence, critical thinking gaps among learners, and reading motivation have also been identified as challenges for instructors in teaching reading comprehension (Guntur & Rahimi, 2019). These factors can impact students' ability to understand and engage with texts effectively. Furthermore, the lack of reading interest among students in Indonesia has been highlighted as a significant problem (Putri et al., 2021). The environment and lack of support from the government and people around them can contribute to low reading interest. Efforts are needed to address this issue, including improving the education system, providing adequate facilities, and involving parents in promoting reading. The low reading literacy of Indonesian students is a persistent problem in the education system (Setyowati et al., 2022). The effectiveness of different teaching methods and materials, such as visual picture economics textbooks based on problem-based learning, has been explored to improve reading literacy skills. Research has also shown that the level of students' literacy skills in Indonesia is relatively low compared to other countries (Ilmiani et al., 2022). This includes difficulties recognizing letters, pronunciation influenced by the mother tongue, reading fluency, and comprehension. In summary, the problem of reading skills in Indonesia encompasses various challenges, including difficulties in word identification, language features comprehension, predicting main ideas, linguistic competence, critical thinking gaps, reading motivation, and low reading interest. Efforts are needed to address these challenges through effective teaching strategies, improved education systems, supportive environments, and increased parental involvement. By addressing these issues, it is possible to enhance reading skills and promote literacy among Indonesian students.

Many strategies, including the Metacognitive reading strategy, might be used to improve student reading skills. It is a cognitive process that individuals use to monitor and regulate their reading comprehension. These strategies involve the awareness and control of one's thinking processes during reading (Meniado, 2016). Several categories of metacognitive reading strategies include problem-solving strategies, which are the most frequently used (Meniado, 2016). Other categories include advance organizers, self-management, comprehension monitoring, production monitoring, self-assessment, self-evaluation, and self-reflection (Muhid et al., 2020). Research has shown that metacognitive reading strategies positively affect learning a second language and can improve reading comprehension (Ahmadi et al., 2013). Explicit instruction in metacognitive reading strategies has been found to contribute to improved reading performance (Teng, 2019). Students who receive metacognitive strategy instruction tend to outperform those who do not receive such instruction (Teng, 2019). Motivation also plays a role in the use of metacognitive reading strategies. It has been found that students who have high motivation to read are more likely to use these strategies (Meniado, 2016). In particular, students have been found to prefer reading humor/comic books (Meniado, 2016). Gender differences have also been observed in the use of metacognitive reading strategies. A study comparing female and male EFL students found differences in their metacognitive reading strategies, awareness, and use (Deliany & Cahyono, 2020). However, the impact of gender on metacognitive reading strategies may vary across different countries (Wu, 2014).

*Metacognitive reading awareness* is defined as the awareness of individuals in using their cognitive processes to achieve reading comprehension (Dardjito, 2019). It involves controlling cognitive or thinking processes to employ effective reading strategies (Dardjito, 2019). Metacognitive reading awareness is considered an important skill in English language teaching, but it has often been overlooked in research and instruction (Ahmadi et al., 2013). Metacognitive reading strategies are valuable tools for improving reading comprehension and language learning. They involve the awareness and control of one's thinking processes during reading, and explicit instruction in these strategies can improve reading performance. This study aimed to determine the effectiveness of metacognitive strategies in enhancing students' reading skills.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

### 2.1. Participants

The sample consisted of 50 Islamic Economics majors selected through random cluster sampling from 100 undergraduate EFL majors studying at different universities in East Java. The participants were randomly assigned to either the experimental (N=50) or control (N=50) group.

### 2.2. Instruments

Five main instruments were used in the study: the Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS), Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ), semi-structured interviews, a background questionnaire, and a reading comprehension test.

### 2.3 Procedure

The study consisted of three main phases: (1) pretesting, (2) strategy instruction, and (3) post-testing. Before the strategy instruction, both groups of students were given a test reading as a pretest to assess their reading comprehension ability. After administering the reading test, the SORS was given to students to assess their current awareness of the metacognitive strategies in reading comprehension. Then, the MSLQ was given to students to assess their self-efficacy in reading comprehension. Before the SORS and MSLQ were administered, the participants were informed about their purpose of them and that there were no right or wrong answers to them. They were also informed that their responses would be confidential and not affect their course grades. In the second stage, the participants attended English classes for about 60 minutes per week in a twelve-week semester (Spring 2014). During the treatment sessions, the students in the experimental group received instruction in a strategies-based format. More specifically, the strategy instruction phase followed the CALLA Model (adopted from Chamot and O'Malley (1994)

Stage 1 is preparation. The primary objective of this initial phase for the instructor was to assist students in identifying the strategies they were already employing and developing a metacognitive understanding of the relationship between their cognitive processes and effective learning. During this phase, the teacher discussed the significance of metacognitive reading strategies and distributed a booklet containing various metacognitive reading strategies to the students.

Stage 2 is the presentation. This stage centered on describing and demonstrating the learning strategies. The instructor explained the strategy's characteristics, usefulness, and applications explicitly and with examples and illustrated his strategy use with a reading assignment. Learners were taught explicitly how to use the strategy, why it is essential, and when and how it applies to the current task.

Stage 3 is practice. In the third stage of strategy instruction, students practiced a specific set of reading strategies with an authentic reading task. One of the main characteristics of this phase was integrating strategy instruction into regular classwork so that students could connect the new strategy and the tasks and activities they must complete in the real world.

Stage 4 is self-evaluation. Students were given opportunities to reflect on and evaluate their success or failure in implementing reading strategies, enhancing their metacognitive awareness of their learning processes. Students' self-evaluation insights were developed using activities such as debriefing discussions, learning diaries, informal self-checklists, and open-ended questionnaires.

Stage 5 expansion. In the final phase of strategy instruction, students were encouraged to transfer the most effective strategies to new contexts and to create their unique combinations and interpretations of metacognitive learning strategies. During the thirteen-session treatment, the control group received no instruction in reading strategies and instead received traditional-based instruction. After the instruction period, the same pretest for reading comprehension was administered to both groups as a posttest. To compare the experimental group's perception of metacognitive reading strategies and self-efficacy beliefs before and after the intervention with those of the control group, the same SORS and MSLQ was administered to the experimental group after the instruction.

### 3. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Before the treatment, a reading comprehension pretest was given to the experimental and control groups to ensure there was no big difference between them in how well they understood what they were reading. Then, an independent samples t-test was done to see if there were big differences between how the two groups did on the reading comprehension pretest. The results of this statistical analysis showed that the performance of the two groups on the reading comprehension pretest was similar ( $t=.150$ ,  $p=.881$ ).

After the thirteen-session training program was implemented, all the people in the two groups took the same reading comprehension posttest that had been given as a pretest before the training began. Some students from each proficiency group were randomly chosen and interviewed by the researchers about their strategies, the strategies they thought were most helpful, and what they thought of the strategy training program. This was done to improve the reliability of the study's results and allow for some triangulation. Table 1 summarizes the descriptive data from the reading comprehension pretest and posttest.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for the reading comprehension posttest

GROUPS		N	Mean	Std.Deviation
Pre test	Experimental Group	50	2.27	0.39
	Control Group	50	2.13	0.49
Post test	Experimental Group	50	3.14	0.42
	Control Group		2.48	0.54

As shown in Table 1, the students in the experimental group did much better on the reading comprehension test at the end ( $M=31.96$ ,  $SD=10.56$ ) than the students in the control group ( $M=18.92$ ,  $SD=6.06$ ). Both groups did better on the reading comprehension posttest than on the pretest. Univariate analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to see if the treatment given to the experimental group had statistically caused any significant changes in this group and if the student's performance in the experimental group was statistically different from that of the students in the control group. This was done while taking into account the pre-intervention scores. Initial checks were done to ensure that the conditions of normality, linearity, homogeneity of variances, homogeneity of regression slopes, and accurate covariate measurement were not broken. Table 2 shows that the group's F value is 159.955, which is significant at  $p=.00$ . This means that teaching reading strategies helped the students in the experimental group do better on the posttest for reading comprehension than the students in the control group.

Table 2. Results of ANCOVA on post reading scores using pretest as a covariate

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model		2	5.677	24.223	.000	.333
Intercept		1	25.255	107.765	.000	.526
Pre-test			.278	1.186	.279	.012
Groups		1	10.277	43.853	.000	.311
Error		97	234			
Total		100				
Corrected Total		99				

The findings showed that the experimental group did better on the reading comprehension test than the control group. Also, the results from analyzing the interviews are the same as those from the statistical studies. The specific training in metacognitive strategies has helped the students use reading strategies to understand the passages. The advice and help that the experimental group got helped them understand things better. Recent works like Jafari & Shokrpour (2012), Karbalaee (2010), Shokrpour & Fotovatian (2009), Takallou (2011), Zare (2013), and Zare-ee (2007) all came to similar conclusions.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The results showed that explicit teaching in metacognitive strategies when added to everyday activities and tasks in a foreign language classroom, can improve reading skills and self-efficacy in a big way. This study supported the idea that language classrooms should focus on teaching language content and developing learning processes (Ellis & Sinclair, 1989; Willing, 1990; Nunan, 1995a, 1995b). The results of this study are important for students, teachers, and people who make tools for teaching English as a second language.

University students learning English as a foreign language (EFL) need to realize more fully that learning and using the right reading strategies, on the one hand, and learning and using strategies to build self-efficacy, on the other, seem to improve their reading skills in their content areas and their academic performance. Also, using the right learning strategies, in general, and reading strategies in particular, can help

students take responsibility for their learning by increasing their autonomy, freedom, and self-direction (Dickinson, 1987) and boosting their self-efficacy. These things are important because Oxford and Crookall (1989) say learners must keep reading when not in a regular classroom.

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