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Exploring Thai High School EFL Learners' Perceptions of Metacognitive Strategy Use in Reading Comprehension

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Abstract

This research investigated Thai high school EFL learners' perceptions of metacognitive strategies employed in reading comprehension. Given limited qualitative evidence on how EFL learners' experience metacognitive strategies, a qualitative research design was used to elicit in-depth perspectives from learners. This study used semi-structured interviews with 15 purposively selected Grade 12 students from a public high school in Northeastern Thailand. Interviews were carried out in Thai to ease the process of expression and analyzed applying thematic analysis. The results revealed four interrelated themes: planning, monitoring, evaluating and applying. Participants thought planning strategies helped them set reading objectives, give a preview of what they were going to read and access their previous knowledge about the topic before reading. They also described using monitoring strategies, such as rereading, self-questioning, and using context clues, to identify comprehension difficulties and check their understanding. Regarding evaluation, participants described reviewing their understanding after reading and reported that these strategies were useful when reflecting on their comprehension. In addition, participants reported using, or expressed intentions to use, metacognitive strategies in examinations and other reading contexts. Overall, the findings provide qualitative insights into Thai high school EFL learners' perceptions and reported experiences of metacognitive reading strategy use. These findings may inform considerations for secondary EFL reading instruction, while further research using direct measures of reading comprehension and strategy use is needed to examine the potential effects of metacognitive strategy instruction.

Keywords: learners' perceptions, metacognitive strategies, reading comprehension, self-regulated reading, Thai high school EFL learners

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Introduction

Reading comprehension is a complex cognitive and constructive process, which does not end with the decoding of written words. It is the capacity of readers to utilize textual information that requires interpretation and analysis, while integrating text with background knowledge in an active way to produce meaning and new knowledge. Reading comprehension is often considered to be the most basic academic skill in second and foreign language (L2) contexts because it enables learning, supports achievement across content areas, and contributes to lifelong learning (Grabe & Stoller, 2020). To achieve reading comprehension in EFL, it is necessary to not only possess linguistic knowledge but also use metacognitive strategies to control cognitive processes for coping with unknown words, difficult syntax and nonexplicit content from a text.

Reading comprehension is one of the main core components for English language education at the upper-secondary context in Thailand EFL context. The Thai Basic Education Core Curriculum specifies learners in Grades 10-12 to recognize main ideas, find supporting details, draw conclusions, read for inference and purpose and analyze the content of written texts (Ministry of Education, 2008). These competencies, in turn, are reflected in national standardized assessments, especially the Ordinary National Educational Test (O-NET), which a large part of the English paper was allocated to reading comprehension. Although, by all standards of measure, reading is an important skill in English language learning, it continues to be a challenge for many if not most Thai learners who resort often to word-for-word translation or explanations directed by the teacher rather than consciously utilizing any strategic approaches regarding meaning construction.

To overcome these challenges, specifically planning use, monitoring and evaluating have gained a growing attention through metacognitive strategies to utilize reading comprehension in EFL contexts. Within the framework of this theory, metacognitive strategies help learners to be aware of their own cognition, recognize issues with understanding whether a text is being read efficiently or not, and modify adaptations accordingly (Teng 2025). Specifically, through explicit instruction and guided practice, learners learn how to set a reading goal, activate prior knowledge, monitor their understanding while they read, implement “repair” strategies when the comprehension process breaks down and evaluate the effectiveness of their strategy use after reading. This kind of strategic regulation provides opportunities in which learners become active constructors of meaning rather than mere passive recipients of textual information. The studies outlined above have evidenced that metacognitive strategy instructions foster comprehension, strategic knowledge, and learner independence beyond the surface level of decoding but toward purposeful/meaningful reading (Pressley & Gaskins, 2006; Teng, 2025).

While a considerable amount of research has demonstrated the benefits of metacognitive strategy instruction on reading outcomes, much of the existing literature predominantly utilizes quantitative or intervention studies targeting gains in comprehension, frequency of strategies used, or effectiveness of the instructional approach. These studies have been useful in providing evidence

on learning outcomes, but they have provided relatively little information about how learners experience and understand the use of metacognitive strategies while reading. Since perceptions play a key role in the extent to which strategies are endorsed, adopted, and applied outside of the classroom context. In conclusion, learners were more likely to adopt metacognitive strategies if they perceived it to be useful and easy to manage before the strategy becomes a budgeting passive habit.

In the Thai EFL context, research on metacognitive strategies remains relatively limited, especially concerning learners' learning experiences and perspectives on strategy use in reading. Previous studies have examined aspects such as reading strategy awareness and reading performance. For example, Seedanont and Pookcharoen (2019) investigated learners' metacognitive reading strategy awareness and reading performance using survey and reading test measures. Although the studies showed learners' increased strategy awareness and gains in reading comprehension, qualitative investigation is still needed to gain a deeper understanding of how learners perceive and experience the use of metacognitive strategies during reading. Therefore, this study employed semi-structured interviews to explore Thai high school EFL learners' perspectives on metacognitive strategy use while reading.

In this context, the current study investigates perceptions of metacognitive strategy use in reading comprehension among Thai high school EFL learners. The intent of the study is to provide contextually situated evidence on metacognition and EFL reading by investigating how learners view the utility of planning, monitoring, and evaluating strategies and how they describe their experiences using these strategies while reading. Therefore, the findings are likely to provide practical implications (i.e. for use in the classroom) that contribute to promoting more strategic, autonomous, and engaged readers in Thai secondary schools through fostering both metacognitive awareness and strategy use.

Literature Review

1. Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is a key construct in language education and has been identified as a complex, dynamic, and interactive process where readers actively construct meaning from written texts rather than simply decoding single words (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). Reading effectively means weaving together the information a reader gathers from the text, with what they already know, and using their experiences to give them what they read meaning. Reading comprehension also plays a key role in second and foreign language contexts with implications for academic achievement, knowledge acquisition, and acquisition of lifelong learning skills (Grabe & Stoller, 2020).

Reading comprehension is a process that involves the orchestrated activation of cognitive and metacognitive processes. Cognitive processes help readers to notice phonological forms of the language and comprehend the information in texts, whereas metacognitive processes help them to

control, monitor and assess their comprehension while reading. Grabe and Stoller (2002) suggested that reading comprehension can be viewed as entailing 2 broad classes of processing: lower-level processes and higher-level processes.

Lower-level processes are the relatively automatic and fluent operations that promote efficient reading. These processes consist of word recognition, phonological decoding and graphophonic processing to give readers the ability to recognize words in print both quickly and accurate. These processes are more automatic for skilled readers, allowing cognitive resources to be preserved for the purpose of higher-level comprehension. Then, the automaticity of lower-level processing is a critical aspect required for efficient reading since it removes the cognitive load involved with decoding and allows the more straightforward passage of representations during information processing.

Higher level processes entail the elaboration of more advanced cognitive functions that a reader employs to derive meaning from the text beyond its literal level. These processes encompass syntactic parsing, semantic integration, inferencing, identifying main ideas, recognizing text structure and discourse comprehension. These higher-level processes allow readers to link ideas across sentences and paragraphs, derive constructs that are not directly present in the text, weigh textual evidence, and ultimately build coherent internal representations of the text content by integrating text-based cues with prior knowledge and contextual frames (Meyer et al., 1994; Miller & Gildea, 1987). As such, successful comprehension hinges not only on the effective recognition of words but also on students' abilities to actively engage with the text, self-regulate their understanding, and use cognitive resources strategically to accomplish their reading goals.

Modern contexts perceive reading comprehension as interactive and processive interactions among multiple lower-level processing and higher-level processes that operate simultaneously (Grabe & Stoller, 2020). Readers continually shift between translating the physical (coded) information and inferring meaning, while also accommodating their comprehension to a text's requirements and to the reading goal. This view suggests that rather than being passive receivers of something, competent readers are active meaning generators, who use strategic thinking processes to make sense of what they read, analyze it and evaluate it. Recognizing that reading comprehension is complex gives a meaningful background from which to explore the role of metacognitive strategies in empowering EFL learners to become better readers who self-regulate.

2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical underpinnings of this research are based on metacognitive theory, which serves as the conceptual framework to help understand Thai high school EFL students' perceptions of using metacognitive strategies when reading for comprehension. Metacognition is defined as an individual's awareness, knowledge, and regulation of his or her own cognitive processes (Flavell, 1979). There are three inter-related processes that make up metacognitive regulation in reading

comprehension. Those processes include planning, monitoring, and evaluating. Planning includes setting reading objectives, previewing the material to be read, and selecting appropriate strategies to use prior to reading. Monitoring entails evaluating readers' comprehension, pinpointing challenging areas, and modifying strategies to address comprehension issues as they occur. Finally, evaluating includes reflecting on comprehension results and determining the success of the strategies used.

In this research, we use metacognition to inform the development of an analytical approach that explores learners' perceptions of their metacognitive reading strategy usage. Specifically, the areas of planning, monitoring, and evaluating are the theoretical categories that will be utilized to examine the reading behaviors and experiences reported by learners. In addition to using the theoretical categories to analyze the interview data, the analysis will also allow new themes to emerge from the interview data. The analysis will thus be able to capture those parts of the learners' perceptions that do not fit into the existing theoretical categories. Therefore, by combining the analysis that is based on the theoretical categories with the identification of developing themes, the framework will create a logically consistent foundation to understand how high school EFL students in Thailand perceive and explain their metacognitive strategy use in reading comprehension.

3. Learners' Perceptions in Language Learning

Learner perception is a significant factor that influences students' engagement with learning tasks, interprets instructional experiences and sometimes responds to pedagogical interventions. Perception is the subjective understanding, judgement and belief of learners in relation to learning processes, classroom routines and their own competence as a learner (Pajares, 1992). These impressions influence students by shaping their motivations, attitudes and engagement and implementation of the strategies in classroom instruction. Therefore, the learners' perceptions of different learning activities can be influenced by their mental models. Instructions can also lead to actual behaviors and cognitive changes. From these perspectives, understanding learners' perceptions about teaching practices can help educators identify the benefits and barriers for effective learning outcomes.

Learners' perceptions are one component of a main belief system that acts as a cognitive filter in learning experience (Pajares, 1992). These beliefs draw on learners' experience of schooling as they engage with friends, teachers, success, and failure. Such beliefs can be stable, shaping learners' expectations, choices and behaviors in the learning context (Barcelos & Kalaja, 2011; Mercer & Ryan, 2010; Wenden, 1999). However, learners do not passively receive instruction. Instead, they actively interpret and evaluate learning experiences through the lens of their existing knowledge, prior experiences, and beliefs. These perceptions influence how they engage with instructional practices, adopt learning strategies, and respond to pedagogical interventions (Barcelos & Kalaja, 2011; Borg, 2001; Mercer & Ryan, 2010; Wenden, 1999).

Perception possibly also affect how much metacognitive strategy are used, internalized and utilized in the EFL reading comprehension. Learners are more likely to use strategies when they believe that strategies work in their reading. Yet, learners may feel disengaged from reading if they see strategies are too challenging, irrelevant, or ineffective for comprehension. This can be the case although the instruction is highly exemplary.

Investigating learners' perceptions yields useful information about the cognitive and emotional factors influencing strategy use and reading practices. Although achievement tests may show whether a certain instructional method improves learning outcomes, exploring learners' perceptions can enhance the understanding of how and why the approach works from the learners' view. Exploring students' experiences, interpretations, evaluations of metacognitive strategies may provide insight into what promotes or inhibits their strategy use while reading. These insights can be used to create more student-centered reading lessons that respond directly to students and their needs, experiences, and beliefs. In short, this study investigates how Thai high school EFL learners perceive the use of metacognitive strategies in reading comprehension. The study may shed light on the experienced practices of such strategies or their application within secondary EFL classrooms.

4. Metacognitive Strategy in Reading Comprehension

Metacognitive strategies are well-studied as key processes involved in proficiency in reading comprehension (Kitichaidateanan, Yothachai & Sukying, 2026; Noipa & Phusawisot, 2025; Phakiti, 2003; Teng et al., 2022). Based on metacognitive theory, these strategies allow learners to be aware of and control their cognitive processes while reading. In contrast to passive reading, strategic reading involves pre-reading planning, monitoring understanding, while reading and assessing comprehension and strategy use after finishing the task. In this way, the regulatory processes allow learners to detect difficulties in comprehension or when their cognitive resources are not aligned, take corrective action and adapt their reading behaviors according to the type of text and purpose of response.

Metacognition is defined as the ongoing active observation and control of one's own cognitive processes, and metacognitive strategies function as a self-regulating feedback mechanism (Teng et al., 2022). Learners in this system engage in planning, monitoring, and evaluating as iterative processes rather than discrete skills. Planning, which occurs before reading, is the process of establishing goals for purpose and comprehension by previewing text features, activating prior knowledge, and employing appropriate strategies. Monitoring involves checking to see if one understands what one reads, staying focused on the content, while reading. Monitoring also engages in realizing when something does not make sense and using repair strategies for understanding when there is a breakdown in comprehension. After reading, evaluation involves assessing the outcomes of comprehension, checking for understanding, reflecting on the

effectiveness of strategies and determining if your purposes for reading have been met. These processes allow learners to monitor their understanding in real time and vary strategy use according to the specific task requirements.

In a similar vein, Phakiti (2003) conceptualizes metacognitive strategies as involving three interrelated phases: planning phase, monitoring phase and evaluating phase. Planning occurs when one sets goals for reading and previews the text. Monitoring involves the learners continuous checking of his or her own understanding, detecting any confusion that may arise, and staying on task while reading. Evaluating includes looking back on performance, verifying comprehension accuracy, and contemplating if the reading goals have been achieved. These phases work together to help develop working strategic knowledge as well as guide the learner towards becoming more conscious, self-determining readers.

Metacognitive strategy instruction has been proven by empirical evidence to be effective in assisting EFL learners overcome reading comprehension difficulties. For example, Noipa and Phusawisot (2025) employed a mixed-methods quasi-experimental design to examine the impact of Metacognitive Reading Strategy Instruction (MRSI) on reading comprehension among 145 Thai engineering students. Results showed that while both groups improved their reading score, the experimental group gained almost twice as much as did the control group. Additionally, learners stated a very favorable attitude to use of metacognitive strategies. The attitude data suggested that students identified the process of active regulation and recognized metacognitive strategies as useful for comprehension improvement.

In short, the significant role of metacognitive strategies in EFL reading comprehension is highlighted through a combination of theoretical and empirical research. Planning, monitoring and evaluating reinforce each other, helping students to become active, strategic and self-regulated readers. The positive outcomes also indicate that explicit instruction of metacognitive strategies may not only help learners to enhance their reading performance but also facilitate them to develop positive reader attitudes. The findings lend solid theoretical and empirical support for the investigation of perceiving metacognitive strategy use among Thai high school EFL learners in reading comprehension as informing practice through the operation of strategy-oriented reading instruction in secondary EFL classrooms.

Research Objective

Since this study primarily aims to explore learner perceptions of metacognitive strategy use in reading comprehension, the following research question was formulated: How do Thai high school EFL learners perceive the use of metacognitive strategies in their reading comprehension?

Methodology

1. Participants and Setting

This study recruited fifteen Grade 12 students from one intact class at a public high school in Northeastern Thailand. A purposive sampling was deployed to recruit eligible participants based on the criteria relevant for the purpose of their study. Eligible participants were all students who participated in the data collection process; they had to (1) be enrolled in Grade 12 during the time of data collection, (2) be registered in the same compulsory English course dictated by national curriculum policies, (3) experience the metacognitive strategy teacher instruction and (4) agree and give informed consent to participate in this study.

Participants aged from 17 to 18 enrolled for the university entrance examination and studying English as a foreign language in the Thai education context. They had learned English formally throughout their schooling but had little opportunity to communicatively use English outside the classroom, especially with native or near-native speakers of English. Thus, the classroom became their main exposure to English. However, it could still be incidental, as many of the participants stated that they used their mobile phones to find out what vocabulary meant or where some translations were quite often on a regular basis and so had incidental access to using English.

2. Instructional Intervention

The two-hour-instructional intervention over six weeks was employed, with a total of 12 hours. The instruction was delivered by the classroom teacher using an explicit instructional approach designed to develop students' awareness and use of metacognitive strategies in English reading comprehension. The intervention focused on three metacognitive processes: planning, monitoring, and evaluating. The teacher openly taught and modeled the metacognitive strategies during the lessons, and then the students had a chance to practice using them on English reading tasks. Through explicit explanation, teacher modelling, and guided practice, students were motivated to develop a greater awareness of how these strategies could support their reading comprehension. The instructional materials included English reading texts selected from the coursebook and supplementary sources, covering a range of topics, including history, culture, the environment, science, and technology.

3. Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were conducted after the six-week instructional intervention to explore Thai high school EFL learners' perceptions and experiences of using metacognitive strategies in reading comprehension. Before data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the relevant human research ethics committee, followed by permission from the school director. Informed consent was obtained from the students' parents or guardians. The students themselves also provided consent or assent in accordance with the approved ethical procedures. The interviews were conducted individually and face-to-face in Thai, the participants' first language, to assist the

expression of their thoughts and experiences and minimize potential language-related difficulties associated with answering in English (Dörnyei, 2007). Each interview lasted approximately 20 to 30 minutes. The interviews were audio-recorded, and the researcher took additional notes to document participants' responses.

The semi-structured interview protocol was developed based on metacognitive theory (Flavell, 1979), with attention to three interrelated processes: planning, monitoring, and evaluating. The interview questions explored how participants prepared for reading, monitored their understanding and addressed comprehension difficulties during reading, and evaluated their comprehension and strategy use after reading. Added questions examined participants' perceived benefits of metacognitive strategies, challenges encountered during reading, and perceptions of strategy effectiveness. The protocol also explored participants' reported use of metacognitive strategies beyond classroom instruction, including during examinations, while completing homework, and when reading content on social media. These questions were aimed to capture learners' perceptions and experiences across different reading contexts while allowing them to describe aspects of strategy use beyond the three predefined metacognitive processes. Although the interview protocol was informed by the theoretical framework, it was not piloted before the main data collection.
The guiding questions were as follows:
1. How did you prepare yourself before reading an English text after learning metacognitive strategies, and how did you feel about these preparation strategies?
2. What kind of things did you typically do to help you process the text when reading it? And why?
3. How did you check or reflect on your understanding of the text?
4. How did preparations, monitoring and evaluating strategies help you with reading comprehension?
5. Were there any challenges you experienced in reading?
6. Have you used any of these strategies outside the classroom, for example in exams, homework, social media or other reading contexts? and
7. What were the most or least effective in using metacognitive strategies in reading comprehension?

4. Data Analysis

The interview data were analyzed using a hybrid deductive-inductive thematic analysis approach, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase procedure: familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. The deductive component was informed by metacognitive theory (Flavell, 1979), with planning, monitoring, and evaluating serving as three initial analytical categories. The inductive component allowed additional patterns of meaning to be identified beyond these predefined categories.

The researcher examined the interview transcripts, identified relevant segments, and assigned initial codes reflecting participants' reported perceptions and experiences. Codes were then organized according to the three metacognitive processes. More precisely, planning involved preparing for reading. Monitoring involved checking comprehension, addressing difficulties, and evaluating concerns, as well as reflecting on comprehension and the effectiveness of strategies. Participants' accounts of using metacognitive strategies across different reading contexts, including examinations, homework, and reading beyond the classroom, informed the development of application as an additional theme. Although the interview protocol comprised questions about strategy use across contexts, this theme was developed through the interpretation of participants' responses rather than treated as a separate metacognitive process.

The analysis yielded four themes: planning, monitoring, evaluating, and application. These themes were reviewed against the interview data to examine their coherence and relevance to the research objectives. To support analytical transparency, the researcher kept annotated transcripts documenting the initial coding and included representative quotations to substantiate the interpretations. Coding and thematic interpretation were conducted by a single researcher, without independent coding or inter-coder agreement calculations. Accordingly, the findings were interpreted as participants' reported perceptions and experiences rather than objective evidence of improved reading comprehension.

Results

Qualitative data from semi-structured interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) the six-phase procedure: familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. Through this methodical approach, teachers can discover regularities and acquire helpful insights about their learners' understandings of how to use metacognitive strategies in Reading comprehension.

This study adopted metacognitive strategy framework to guide the analysis of the findings to investigate learners' perspectives and experiences that pertained to these domains. The initial coding was performed deductively and reread the interview transcripts until codes were sufficiently refined and themes emerged from the data. To ensure reliability and validity of the coding scheme and theme categorization, two experienced teachers coded these data independently. Given any differences, the coding process was discussed until an agreement would be reached.

Although the initial deductive coding was guided by the metacognitive strategy framework, the analysis also allowed for patterns beyond the three predefined categories to be identified. Specifically, the interview protocol included a question about participants' use of metacognitive strategies beyond the classroom, such as during examinations, while completing homework, and

in other reading contexts. During the analysis, participants' responses concerning the use of these strategies across different contexts were examined, leading to the development of Application as an additional theme. Unlike Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluating, which represent the three theory-informed metacognitive processes, Application captures participants' reported use of metacognitive strategies across reading contexts. Thus, Application extends the analysis beyond the initial framework by highlighting how learners reported applying these strategies outside the immediate reading activities addressed by the three predefined categories. This process reflects the inductive component of the thematic analysis while maintaining a conceptual connection to the original metacognitive framework.

Four themes emerged from the analysis of findings, which reflected learner perceptions for how metacognitive strategies aided their reading comprehension and shaped their behaviors. In general, participants viewed metacognitive strategies as concrete and helpful tools to help them prepare for more effective reading by thinking about the purpose of their reading, monitor comprehension during, reflect on understanding after and transfer these strategic behaviors beyond the classroom. Table 1 presents a summary of the themes and their defined characteristics. Further detailed descriptions of each theme and sample excerpts from the participants' interviews are also presented in the subsequent sections.

Table 1

Themes of Metacognitive Strategies Used by Thai High School EFL Learners

Metacognitive Strategies	Defined Characteristics
Planning	Learners' reported use of strategies before reading to prepare for a text, establish reading goals, and anticipate its content. These strategies include previewing the text, predicting its content, setting reading goals, and scanning for relevant information.
Monitoring	Learners' reported use of strategies to track and check their understanding while reading, identify difficulties, and adjust their reading as needed. These strategies include skimming, scanning, self-questioning, using context clues, checking comprehension, and rereading when necessary.
Evaluating	Learners' reported reflection on their understanding after reading, including reviewing the main ideas, summarizing the text, checking answers, and considering the usefulness of the strategies they used.
Application	Learners' reported use or intended use of metacognitive reading strategies beyond the immediate classroom reading activities, including examinations, homework, online reading, and other reading situations in daily life.

1. Planning

Planning is intentional actions that learners may take before reading, such as previewing text features, predicting content, setting reading goals, activating prior knowledge and identifying relevant information. The findings of this study indicated participant's planning was a critical process in successful reading comprehension. Many participants said that metacognitive strategy training had transformed their approach to reading tasks, prompting them to prepare purposefully before going for word-by-word translation of texts.

The results showed that one of the common planning behaviors was text previewing. Text previewing involves the practice of anticipating and activating background knowledge on what a specific content would be. Most learners said that surveying titles, pictures, headings, and keywords helped them get a first idea about the text and lowered their anxiety rate before reading. For example, Student 1 said: "I read the title and then I look at the pictures before reading," to try to predict what the passage will be about. Student 3 had a slightly similar opinion: "Before, it was just reading, but now, I think what theme it is about, and what I had already known. Student 9 also stated, "If I already know what the passage is about before I read it, then I can understand what I'm reading better because I can relate it to my background knowledge." Along the same lines, Student 12 shared that "I look at keywords in the title so I can guess what information is coming up in the passage." These responses indicate that learners valued previewing because they felt it provided them with the necessary context to understand and prepare their minds for what was going to be the content of a reading task.

Another important element of planning was goal setting. Many students stated that they often reviewed questions before reading to identify the purpose of the task, i.e., types of information in the text. For instance, Student 5 explained, "I look at the questions first before reading because I have to go back and find information that he told me." Similarly, Student 7 also noted, "When I know what the questions ask me, I don't get lost while reading. Student 10 explained, "I decide if I need to look for details or the overall picture since different questions call for reading differently." Student 14 said, "Setting a goal before reading saves time as I know what to focus on." Together, these excerpts demonstrate that learners perceived goal setting as a cognitive tool to help them manage their focus more efficiently and reduce uncertainty in text processing during reading.

However, some of the participants contrasted this with their reading before learning the metacognitive strategy. Student 2 remarked that "I read from the first sentence to the last sentence before knowing these strategies. Now, I pause and think about how it is going to look when I read the passage first." Student 6 further noted that "I always translated every word in the beginning, but now I try to read for overall meaning first before analyzing." From these excerpts, the analysis indicates that the training prompted learners to read with strategic and purposeful thought in their minds instead of through script-based automatic functions.

In summary, participants viewed planning strategies such as text previewing, activation of prior knowledge, goal-setting, as being beneficial in helping prepare for reading English-language texts. Participants' reports indicated that the use of such strategies enabled them to anticipate what was going to occur within the text, locate pertinent information, and establish clear objectives when beginning to read. Additionally, some participants reported a change in their method of reading from translating each individual word to first understanding the larger picture prior to delving into greater detail. The results demonstrate participants' views regarding the benefits of planning to facilitate more deliberate participation in English-language reading activities.

2. Monitoring

Monitoring is the process whereby learners, at least good ones, monitor their understanding during reading. Monitoring also involves applying an appropriate strategy when they run into trouble comprehending the text. The findings showed that monitoring was identified by participants as the most beneficial kind of metacognitive strategy usage. Participants reported that monitoring strategy allowed them to become more aware about their own comprehension process and work actively to fix misunderstandings, instead of passively continuing to read.

The findings showed that participants adopted different monitoring strategies, including skimming for main idea, scanning for details, rereading, using context clues and self-questioning. These strategies made it easier for them to pay attention and pick out key information when reading. For instance, Student 2 admitted, "I first read the questions and then search for keywords in the passage." Additionally, Student 11 also points out that "first I look at what it is about in general with a skimming than looks for the answer ones by one." Student 13 further reported that "Whenever I encounter words that I'm not familiar with, I try to deduce meaning from the sentences surrounding them rather than translating right away." Together, these findings imply that learners viewed monitoring strategies as useful supports for managing the demands of reading and maintaining comprehension across a passage.

Another strategy that was frequently mentioned in coping with comprehension failure was rereading. The findings showed that participants explained rereading challenging passages to shape meaning and link around ideas in the text. For example, Student 4 said, "If I do not understand it, then I read a second time and try to funnel ideas." In the same way, Student 5 said "I have to read a paragraph two or three times before I fully understand what the writer is saying." Student 15 also said, "I go back to few sentence because they help me in understanding that difficult part." These students' excerpts suggest that learners are no longer seeing comprehension breakdowns as signifying failure. Instead, they view them as an opportunity for remediation. More precisely, learners use these strategies to remediate their understanding.

In addition, self-questioning became a significant monitoring behavior. The results showed that many of the participants mentioned a strategy of actively controlling comprehension by making

self-interrogative questions as they read. This claim can be seen in Student 8's statement, "I ask myself, 'Does this sentence relate to the main idea or not?' while reading." Student 10 also commented, "I feel like asking myself, do I really understand what I've just read, or Should I learn this by reading it again? I also ask myself questions like, 'Does my answer make sense according to what I read in the passage?' Student 12 indicate that the learners had developed a better understanding of their thinking processes and were assessing knowledge while completing the reading task.

The study also showed that many participants compared their present monitoring practices against those carried out when reading earlier, expressing beliefs about the perceived efficacy of metacognitive strategy training. For example, Student 6 reported that "If I got confused, before I just quit. It made me realize that I should have reread, or if that context was there." Student 3 also said, "I used to be stressed when I faced difficult words but now, I try some different methods before stopping." "I am not as frustrated with myself anymore because I know about strategies that can be used when I'm confused," said student 14. To sum up, the students' responses indicate that learners felt they became more resilient readers, who were able to compensate for reading challenges.

In summary, the participants viewed monitoring strategies (i.e., skimming, scanning, rereading, using contextual clues, and questioning) as being effective for assessing whether they were understanding what they read, as well as helping them to overcome reading problems. The participants stated that they utilized these strategies to find the main points of a passage, determine the meanings of unknown words, and go back through the passages that they had trouble understanding. Some of the participants indicated that they would try other methods to deal with reading problems instead of just giving up or translating each unknown word. These results demonstrate how the participants felt about the importance of monitoring in dealing with reading comprehension problems and becoming more involved in their English reading activities.

3. Evaluating

Evaluating strategy involves learners' understanding and what strategies worked after reading. The interview results supported that evaluating strategies were valuable assessment tools for participants to confirm their understanding and goal-setting achievement. This evaluating strategy engages in reflective practices to solidify and check their understanding. The findings showed that the most common evaluative behavior was re-reading the text to check answer quality. Participants reported that rereading familiar chapters helped them assess whether the evidence they cited confirmed their interpretations. For example, Student 10 expressed "I reread the passage to check if I got my answers right." Likewise, Student 12 stated, "I check after reading if my answer corresponds to the text". Student 4 also noted, "I have to compare my answers with the passage again, because sometimes I found out that I really misunderstand the question." Similarly, Student 9 stated, "Whenever I look at my answers, I can see the places where I made mistakes and will do

better next time." The students' responses indicate that learners viewed evaluation as a tool for self-checking understanding and enhancing future performance.

The findings also showed that summarization can be used as an assessment to measure a reader's comprehension of the text. Students had assessed whether they understood the key concepts and critical details by putting this in their own words. For example, Student 14 stated: "Sometimes I summarize what I read to make sure whether I understand the gist." Why do we think such processes are important? Similarly, Student 15 expressed, "If I can tell the story in my own language, then it feels more certain." Student 2 further stated, "When I can tell someone what the passage means without looking at the text, then I know that I understand it. Student 7 commented, "I review the major points and check if there is something I forgot as I summarize." Together, these findings indicate that learners viewed summarization as an effective strategy for reinforcing comprehension and monitoring their understanding.

Some participants also reported whether they had reached their reading goal and assessed their strategy use. For example, Student 6 stated: "When I finished, I thought about whether I found what I was looking for." Student 11 shared a similar view: "I ask myself which strategy has helped me the most and I will use it again." Likewise, Student 13 described her reasoning: "When one strategy fails, I know that next time my strategy should be different." These excerpts show that learners were evaluating not only what they read, but how effective their own strategies were in these two instances.

Overall, the participants considered evaluating strategies as helpful in assessing their knowledge of what they read. Their descriptions revealed three major ways they evaluated: checking answers to the reading questions using the text, creating summaries of the most important concepts from the reading in their own words, and evaluating if they met their reading objectives and what types of strategies were helpful. From these responses, the participants saw evaluating as a chance to reflect on both their understanding of the reading material and their application of different types of strategies. This study has shown how participants perceived the importance of evaluation in encouraging them to reflect on how well they understand the reading process and determine which strategies they will choose to apply when reading in the future.

4. Application

Application is the learners' ability to transfer and implement their metacognitive strategies on reading texts outside the classroom context. The results of the study indicated that students viewed metacognitive strategies as useful and important. The students also reported that they used them autonomously in diverse reading tasks across academic and non-academic settings. This finding indicated that learners gradually developed a degree of ownership of the strategies and learned their application as a useful tool for reading comprehension beyond limited contexts.

Several participants reported using metacognitive strategies while reading for pleasure, such as online browsing, social media use, and leisure reading. For instance, Student 3 said that "I employ skimming and scanning when reading novels or online posts". In addition, Student 7 mentioned: "I don't translate every single word anymore when I read English on social media." Student 2 added that, "I try to guess the meaning first from the context before using a dictionary because it wastes time." Similarly, Student 8 stated: "When I use the Internet to find the information, I previewed the text first to know what is important." These responses suggested that the use of metacognitive strategies was viewed by learners as a practical resource supporting them to read more quickly and intentionally in their real lives.

The participants also reported that these strategies were useful for them in the examination setting. Several learners found that the planning and monitoring strategies helped them understand how to manage their time effectively and lead a reading task more confidently. For example, Student 11 explained, "The strategies help me do some time management in English tests." Likewise, Student 14 told: "In the exams, I feel safer because I know how to deal with this text." Additionally, Student 5 described, "I read the questions beforehand and determine what information matters to me so that I do not spend time wasting my effort on things outside the question. Student 10 further described that, "I don't panic when I see a long passage anymore because I know how to tackle it." These excerpts indicate that learners viewed metacognitive strategies time saving and improved self-confidence during high-stakes tests.

Some participants reiterated that the strategies had become part of their routine reading. For example, Student 6 said, "At first, I had to remind myself to use the strategies but now, I do them automatically." Likewise, Student 9 said, "I think more about how I read than before knowing it takes different strategies for different situations." Student 12 also added: "These strategies do not only belong to the English lesson. They assist me whenever I need to read and comprehend something significant." In sum, these excerpts suggest that this teaching facilitated learners to extend beyond basic strategy use when prompted and started functioning with it in their self-selected reading.

In summary, the results showed that learners viewed metacognitive strategies as helpful for reading and that they reported using these strategies outside of class. The students' descriptions also indicated that planning, monitoring, and evaluating strategies can be used in various reading environments. Finally, the study results emphasize the students' perception of the possible benefits of metacognitive strategies to help them read effectively across multiple contexts.

Discussion

The present results showed that Thai high school EFL learners considered metacognitive strategies as important and useful to reading comprehension. They encouraged participants to handle reading tasks in different ways. These findings indicate a change from passive, word-for-word translation

reading practices to more active, goal-directed and self-regulated activity in reading. This shift resonates with the four inter-relating themes: planning; monitoring; evaluating and application.

The findings showed that learners' planning strategies have helped them prepare to read. Previewing text features, activating background knowledge, and setting reading goals were strategies that participants reported used to make them feel much clearer and more confident about what they were reading. For instance, Student 5 described that "the information from the questions beforehand made you realize what you should pay attention to when reading." Student 3 stated that they had also become more aware of making connections to prior knowledge on the subject matter. These results suggest that planning led learners to read with particular attention, in contrast to the sequential decoding of reading. These findings correspond with the background knowledge (Anderson, 1977), where the activation of previously stored constructs allows for new data to be appropriately filtered and categorized by learners. The findings also indicate that planning strategies can reduce uncertainty, provide learners with a conceptual focus on relevant information from texts, and empower them to read more targeted and goal-oriented.

The findings also indicate that participants develop greater learner agency and strategic awareness. Some students contrasted their present techniques with what they used to do when they translated every single word. For example, Student 6 discussed that they continued to read when facing problems with reading. Instead, they learned how to back track read sentences again and use contextual clues to return their understanding. This change suggests that learners had begun to think of themselves as some sort of active agent capable of agency over their activity. This shift in focus support Pressley and Afflerbachs's (1995) argument that good readers actively construct meaning, monitor comprehension, and adjust behaviors when the text changes.

Moreover, the result showed that students considered the application of metacognitive strategies to out-of-classroom settings. Participants reported employing strategies on reading online and in social media, leisure reading, and exam-taking. Student 3 reported making use of skimming and scanning whenever he read novels and posts online. Similarly, it is unnecessary to translate everything when confronting with materials (Student 7). Furthermore, the result showed that the strategies are effective in an exam and with increased confidence. These results support that learners perceive metacognitive strategies as helpful in their English classes.

These results correspond with previous research that has found favorable attitudes towards metacognitive strategy use across a variety of EFL contexts (Kitichaidateanan et al., 2026; Noipa & Phusawisot, 2025; Phakiti, 2003; Pressley & Gaskins, 2006; Teng, 2025). This finding aligns with Noipa and Phusawisot's (2025) claiming the benefits of planning, monitoring and evaluating strategies. The findings also supported the argument by Phakiti (2003) that the role of cognitive processes can be regulated based on the learners' metacognitive awareness in reading

comprehension. Together, the current presents evidence for the usefulness of metacognitive strategies.

The present findings extend previous research on metacognitive reading strategy instruction in Thai EFL contexts, including Seedanont and Pookcharoen (2019), by providing qualitative insights into learners' reported experiences. Whereas Seedanont and Pookcharoen examined changes in learners' reading strategy awareness and reading test performance, the present study explored how learners described their use of planning, monitoring, and evaluating strategies. Participants' accounts offered further insight into the ways they reported preparing for reading, addressing comprehension difficulties, and reflecting on their understanding. The Application theme also highlighted participants' reported use or intended use of these strategies beyond classroom reading activities. In this way, the present study complements previous research by adding a qualitative perspective on learners' experiences with metacognitive reading strategies.

Overall, the findings are consistent with previous research highlighting the value of metacognitive strategies in EFL reading while extending this body of research through qualitative insights into learners' reported experiences. These findings suggest that metacognitive strategy instruction may be a useful component of secondary EFL reading instruction.

Conclusion

The research investigated the perception and experience of Thai high school EFL students' use of metacognitive strategies in reading comprehension. In general, the results showed that most students thought metacognitive strategies helped them with English reading tasks, especially when they planned, monitored, and evaluated. Planning was found to be used to prepare for reading, to set goals for reading, and to activate previous knowledge. Monitoring was used to check comprehension, to identify difficulty, and to adjust how they approached reading, and evaluating provided the opportunity for students to think about what they understood from reading and determine if their strategy was effective. Additionally, some students stated that they had more confidence and were able to work independently when reading English. In this regard, it appears as though the students realized the benefit of utilizing metacognitive strategies to enhance their reading experience. Students also reported that they had used or intended to use metacognitive strategies in a variety of other reading situations, such as taking tests, completing homework, and reading online. This additional strategy application indicated that participants viewed the usefulness of the metacognitive strategies as being relevant outside of the classroom environment. Together, the study emphasizes the benefits of metacognitive strategies, including planning, monitoring, and evaluating strategies, in increased reading comprehension.

Recommendations

1. Recommendations for Teachers

The results of this study have potential implications for the instructional practices of EFL educators teaching high school students. Students indicated that the use of planning, monitoring and evaluation strategies was viewed positively as a means of completing English reading tasks and reflecting on the extent to which they had understood the material read. Therefore, educators provide opportunities for students to engage in activities (e.g., guided reading, think-aloud demonstrations and post-reading reflections) where they can utilize these strategies. In addition to utilizing the strategies, educators are encouraged to promote discussions among students about which strategies each student finds most beneficial in various reading situations. These recommendations should be considered within the realm of pedagogy based upon students' perceptions and not as empirical evidence that the application of such practices will ultimately lead to enhanced reading comprehension or greater student autonomy.

2. Recommendations for Curriculum Designers

For curriculum designers, the findings highlight the potential relevance of including metacognitive reading strategies as one component of secondary EFL reading instruction. Curriculum materials may incorporate prompts that encourage learners to establish reading purposes, check their understanding, and reflect on their reading processes. Activities may also invite learners to consider how different strategies could be used in examinations, homework, and online reading. However, the present study does not establish the effectiveness of curricular approaches. Further evaluation would be needed to determine how such materials and activities relate to learners' strategy use and reading outcomes.

3. Recommendations for Researchers

Future research could investigate learners' perceptions of metacognitive reading strategies across different educational levels, English proficiency levels, and learning contexts. Studies involving larger and more diverse samples could explore whether similar patterns of reported strategy use emerge among other groups of Thai EFL learners. In addition, mixed-methods or experimental and quasi-experimental studies could combine interviews with direct measures of reading comprehension and observations or other measures of strategy use. Such designs would help distinguish learners' perceived usefulness of metacognitive strategies from measurable changes in reading performance and strategy use. Longitudinal research could also examine whether learners continue to report and demonstrate the use of these strategies over time, including beyond the period of explicit instruction. Finally, further studies could explore learners' perceptions of metacognitive strategy use in other language skills, such as listening, writing, and speaking, while recognizing that the strategies and their potential roles may differ across skills.

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations that need to be considered. One limitation is that the research included only 15 Grade 12 Thai EFL learners who attended a single public secondary school located in the northeastern part of Thailand. The purposive sampling allowed for a deep exploration of the participants' perceptions and experiences. However, the limited number of participants and the specific context of the sample limit the generalization of the findings to other types of learners in different educational environments, at different levels of proficiency, or within different socio-cultural groups. Second, the study focused on learners' perceptions rather than objectively measured changes in reading comprehension. Therefore, the findings cannot establish whether metacognitive strategy instruction caused improvements in reading performance, increased learner autonomy, or sustained strategy use over time. Further research incorporating direct measures of reading comprehension and additional evidence of strategy use would be needed to examine these outcomes.

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