



**THE IMPACT OF METACOGNITIVE AWARENESS
OF READING STRATEGIES ON THE READING
COMPREHENSION SCORES OF TURKISH EFL
LEARNERS**

MA Thesis

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**THE IMPACT OF METACOGNITIVE AWARENESS OF READING STRATEGIES
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MASTER OF ARTS THESIS

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FINAL APPROVAL FOR THESIS

This thesis titled “THE IMPACT OF METACOGNITIVE AWARENESS OF READING STRATEGIES ON THE READING COMPREHENSION SCORES OF TURKISH EFL LEARNERS” prepared and submitted by Haleh REZA in partial fulfillment of the requirements in “Code of Graduate School of Anadolu University” for the Degree of Master of Arts in the Department of Foreign Language Education has been examined and approved on 25/06/2025

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JÜRİ VE ENSTİTÜ ONAYI

Haleh REZA'nın "YABANCI DİL OLARAK İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRENEN ÖĞRENCİLERDE OKUMA STRATEJİLERİ ÜZERİNE ÜSTBİLİŞSEL FARKINDALIĞIN OKUMA BECERİSİ PERFORMANSINA ETKİSİ" başlıklı tezi 25/6/2025 tarihinde aşağıdaki jüri tarafından değerlendirilerek "Anadolu Üniversitesi Lisansüstü Eğitim-Öğretim ve Sınav Yönetmeliği'nin ilgili maddeleri uyarınca, Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı İngilizce Eğitimi Programında Yüksek Lisan tezi olarak kabul edilmiştir.

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ABSTRACT

THE IMPACT OF METACOGNITIVE AWARENESS OF READING STRATEGIES ON THE READING COMPREHENSION SCORES OF TURKISH EFL LEARNERS

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Department of Foreign Language Education

Programme in English Language Teaching

Graduate School of Anadolu University, June 2025

Supervisor: Assoc. Dr. Meral CEYLAN

Considering reading skills as one of the fundamental areas of language learning, especially in the EFL context, various teaching approaches should be used to enhance their development. The aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between Turkish EFL learners' metacognitive awareness of reading strategies and their academic reading comprehension scores. A mixed-methods research design was adopted, including both quantitative and qualitative data collected from a sample of 157 EFL students studying at the School of Foreign Languages at Anadolu University. Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory, reading test scores and semi-structured interviews were used to collect the required data for the study. The results of this study indicate that the majority of the students have a high level of metacognitive awareness of reading strategies. However, when compared to their reading scores, the findings showed that although students may be aware of the reading strategies, they are unable to apply them effectively in practice. The study concludes that explicit reading strategy instruction should be prioritized in ELT classrooms to ensure learners' development of reading comprehension skills.

Keywords: Reading Comprehension in EFL, Reading Strategies, Metacognitive Awareness, Metacognitive Strategies in Reading

ÖZET

YABANCI DİL OLARAK İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRENEN ÖĞRENCİLERDE OKUMA STRATEJİLERİ ÜZERİNE ÜSTBİLİŞSEL FARKINDALIĞIN OKUMA BECERİSİ PERFORMANSINA ETKİSİ

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Okuma becerisi, özellikle yabancı dil olarak İngilizce (EFL) bağlamında, dil öğreniminin temel alanlarından biri olarak kabul edilmekte olup, bu becerinin geliştirilmesi için çeşitli öğretim yaklaşımlarının kullanılması gerekmektedir. Bu çalışmanın amacı, Türk EFL öğrencilerinin okuma stratejilerine yönelik bilişsel farkındalık düzeyleri ile akademik okuduğunu anlama başarıları arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemektir. Araştırmada nicel ve nitel verilerin birlikte kullanıldığı karma yöntemli bir araştırma deseni benimsenmiştir. Çalışmanın verileri, Anadolu Üniversitesi Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu'nda öğrenim gören 157 EFL öğrencisinden toplanmıştır. Veri toplama araçları olarak Okuma Stratejilerine Yönelik Bilişsel Farkındalık Envanteri (MARSI), okuduğunu anlama testi ve yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler kullanılmıştır. Araştırma sonuçları, öğrencilerin büyük çoğunluğunun okuma stratejilerine yönelik yüksek düzeyde bilişsel farkındalığa sahip olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Ancak bu farkındalık düzeyi, öğrencilerin okuduğunu anlama başarıları ile karşılaştırıldığında, öğrencilerin stratejileri uygulamada etkili olamadıkları görülmüştür. Çalışma, öğrencilerin okuduğunu anlama becerilerini geliştirebilmeleri için, İngilizce öğretimi yapılan sınıflarda okuma stratejilerinin açık bir şekilde öğretilmesine öncelik verilmesi gerektiği sonucuna varmıştır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: EFL'de Okuduğunu Anlama, Okuma Stratejileri, Bilişsel Farkındalık, Okumada Bilişsel Stratejiler

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Finally, I would like to extend my deepest thanks to my family and friends for their unconditional support and encouragement. Without them, this would not have been possible.

STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL PRINCIPLES AND RULES

I hereby truthfully declare that this thesis is an original work prepared by me; that I have behaved in accordance with the scientific ethical principles and rules throughout the stages of preparation, data collection, analysis and presentation of my work; that I have cited the sources of all the data and information that could be obtained within the scope of this study, and included these sources in the references section; and that this study has been scanned for plagiarism with “Scientific Plagiarism Detection Program” used by Anadolu University, and that “it does not have any plagiarism” whatsoever. I also declare that, if a case contrary to my declaration is detected in my work at any time, I hereby express my consent to all the ethical and legal consequences that are involved.

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Bu tezi hazırlarken ChatGPT ve Gemini üretken yapay zekâ programlarından destek aldığımı beyan ederim. Tezin hazırlığı aşamasında üretken yapay zekâ programlarından çeviri, bilimsel makale, taslak oluşturma, ifadeleri yeniden yazma, tablo hazırlama ve istatistiksel hesaplamalar gibi konularda yararlandım. Üretken yapay zekâ programlarından aldığım bilgilerin doğruluğunu kontrol ettiğimi bildiririm.

Herhangi bir zamanda, çalışmamla ilgili yaptığım bu beyana aykırı bir durumun saptanması durumunda, ortaya çıkacak tüm ahlaki ve hukuki sonuçları kabul ettiğimi bildiririm.

Haleh REZA

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ELT	: English Language Teaching
EFL	: English as a Foreign Language
MARSI	: Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory
SPSS	: Statistical Package for Social Sciences



1. Introduction

Reading is regarded as a fundamental skill in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context since it serves as a valuable source of comprehensible input for learners (Krashen, 1989) in addition to its crucial impact on the overall process of language development. Reading is essential for both academic achievement and the growth of general language ability, according to research (Newton et al., 2018). As stated by Anderson et al. (2003, 2016), reading skill is described as an “interactive process” due to the dynamic interactions involved between the reader, the material, the reader’s skills, and their strategic approaches to reading (Anderson, 2003; Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). Therefore, the strategies employed by readers play an essential role in extracting meaning from texts, as the reading process involves complex cognitive and metacognitive functions such as decoding, interpreting, and comprehending the text. These processes show variations depending on the reader’s degree of expertise and the strategies they use (Kintsch, 1998). Thus, effective readers are those who know when and how to apply appropriate reading strategies (Mokhtari, 2002).

Due to the crucial role of reading skills in the overall language learning process, both cognitive and metacognitive reading strategies have been popular research topics in the field. The concept of metacognition is described as "thinking about one's thinking," and it involves the procedures of planning and observing the learning development (Flavell, 1976). In other words, it refers to individuals recognizing and monitoring their own thought patterns, awareness of the content, ability to monitor cognitive activities, and capacity to regulate those processes effectively (Hennesey, 1999). In reading contexts, metacognitive strategies refer to organizing how to approach a text, checking for comprehension during the process, and judging the success of the methods applied. These strategies are a requirement to enhance learning outcomes, through which learners are enabled to actively interact with texts and overcome comprehension challenges (Anderson, 2002).

Moreover, it is widely known that readers who approach reading by using the mentioned techniques such as making predictions, creating summaries, and using inference to decode meaning through texts are identified as more successful and autonomous readers (Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002; Pressley, 2000). This is because such strategies help learners achieve a higher level of comprehension through a more practical approach to decoding, identifying unfamiliar words, improving fluency, recognizing syntax, and activating background information and comprehension, hence automatically resulting in a higher academic performance. Therefore, it

is vital for educators to focus on addressing this issue at its source by encouraging exposure to metacognitive strategies that provide learners with the right tools to tackle breaking down the complex process of reading effectively. For instance, being aware of such strategies can help EFL learners overcome the obstacles they face while reading complex texts, such as how to deal with unknown words, decoding unfamiliar cultural references, and achieving reading automaticity.

Although research has highlighted the significant role of strategic reading in academic success, there are various factors that influence learners' progress in becoming successful readers which should not be overlooked by EFL teachers. One of the major factors hindering the progress of reading skills is the decline in reading habits among younger generations. The study conducted by Adhkari and Shrestha (2023) found that the learners' low language proficiency, lack of self-confidence, and dependency on teachers' notes were the cause of poor reading habits among the students. Such an attitude toward reading contributed to the decrease in extensive reading overall. In addition to that, it was revealed that the increased use of social media was another factor negatively influencing the reading habits of students (Adhkari & Shrestha, 2023). Therefore, this raises concerns about the various challenges that learners are prone to face due to the reduced reading time, limited exposure to academic reading, and the other negative impacts on the progress of the critical reading skills required in academic settings globally (Twenge et al., 2019).

In addition to the decrease in overall reading rates, there is a significant shift from reading printed books to digital reading, due to the rapid development of technology (Yusof, 2021). Studies have shown that students prefer reading on electronic screens rather than in print. This reflects a change not only in the format of reading, but also a decline in motivation towards reading, even for pleasure. Such changes in reading behaviors result in consequences when students face academic reading as they demand a higher engagement, involvement of cognitive processes and active processing to reach comprehension. As mentioned by Wani and Ismail (2024), the change in reading preferences raises challenges such as limiting the concentration span of students resulting in challenges such as focusing on reading, which is essential for successful comprehension of texts, particularly in academic contexts. Additionally, the distractions from social media while reading using electronic devices prevent students from interacting in with the reading material on a deeper level, often leading to a loss of interest in the reading material (Balan et al., 2019; Samsuddin & Aspura, 2021). By taking such reading trends into account, EFL teachers should be checked in the learners' knowledge of reading

strategies to ensure that they are capable of overcoming the challenges that learners encounter while reading through adjusting their teaching approach as required.

This study highlights the need to address these challenges at their root by promoting the important role metacognition and strategic approach play in reading comprehension performance and overall language development in foreign language learning. Finding out how metacognition relates to reading performance of learners will shed light on how the changing reading habits impact academic outcomes which will further provide an opportunity for the institutions to enhance the curriculum accordingly to assist EFL students in building the skills necessary for enhanced academic reading.

1.1 Background of Study

Reading comprehension, being a vital skill that leads to language development, is also a valuable source of exposure to the target language, especially in contexts where interaction with the authentic language is not widely accessible. For instance, in the Turkish context, competency in reading comprehension is a necessary skill for academic success of EFL learners as the examinations and curriculum require them to engage with academic reading. However, despite the central role of reading in language education and the importance of language proficiency, Turkish EFL learners often find reading comprehension as a challenging task due to limited strategy use, lack of explicit instruction in strategic approaches to reading academic texts and inadequate practice time during lessons (Özmat & Senemoğlu, 2021). Overall, English proficiency is essential for Turkish EFL learners, especially for those at the university level, as their academic success greatly relies on learners' ability to comprehend the language of instruction. In other words, reading skills are essential in their academic life and therefore should be given the necessary attention.

Studies have shown that reading texts in a new language is more than simply decoding words, and that it is actually a complex process of cognitive activities, comprehension, analysis and metacognitive awareness (Annury et al., 2019). Academic studies have shown an increasing interest in the concept of metacognition and reading as it is considered an important research area inquiry in a L2 learning context. Among the widely used instruments in this area of research is the tool developed by Mokhtari and Reichard called "Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory (MARSI)" (2002). This tool was designed for the purpose of examining students' intentional application of reading strategies pre, while and post reading tasks. Although numerous works regarding this research claim that there is a strong and positive

link between metacognitive awareness of reading strategies and reading performance of learners, there is a lack of empirical data on this issue representing the Turkish EFL learner context, particularly those enrolled at the university level preparatory school of foreign languages.

Thus, this research study aims to address the gap in the literature through a mixed-methods approach of investigating the link between metacognition levels and Turkish EFL learners' reading abilities. Through focusing on students from the preparatory language program context, the study intends to offer a deeper perspective toward understanding of the strategic reading approaches of learners who are in a critical stage of language development before transitioning to their specific academic departments.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

A comprehensive review of the literature highlights the fundamental function of metacognitive awareness in developing effective strategic readers, particularly in EFL settings (Anderson, 2002; Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002). Several empirical studies confirm that increased knowledge and use of reading schemes can significantly enhance EFL learners' reading performance (Ahmadi, Ismail, & Abdullah, 2013; Avgeria, 2022; Yapp et al., 2021). However, in the Turkish EFL context, generally instructional focus is mainly placed on grammar and speaking skills, while reading instruction remains more on the surface level (Varol & Varol, 2022; Valizadeh, 2021). This results in reading skills to be neglected which results in an imbalance in equal development of the four major language competencies.

Additionally, EFL learners continue to struggle with reading comprehension, especially when explicit training is limited (Gönen, 2015; Oktay, 2015). Conversely, as the literature suggests, learners should know that through the implementation of metacognitive strategies, they can take ownership of their learning process through developed preparation, observing and assessing skills, hence developing their reading skills (Maryam et al., 2019; Paris et al., 1983). Prior research reported that Turkish EFL learners face challenges due to the limitations of their educational settings such as the limited acquaintance to the target language, limited practice opportunities outside classroom, and limited interaction with authentic reading materials (Bayar & Tertemiz, 2022; Oktay, 2015). Such findings indicate that action should be taken toward the enhancement of strategy instruction in language programs in EFL contexts for the development of reading skills (Bayar & Tertemiz, 2022). Overall, these findings emphasize the

need for further research into metacognitive awareness of reading strategies and its impact on reading performance.

This study was also inspired by the desire to achieve pedagogical conclusions and find implications that directly relate to the enhancement of teaching practices and learners' reading comprehension processes within the Turkish EFL context. The current study seeks to enhance understanding by identifying practical implications that promote the enrichment of reading comprehension performance across EFL learner groups. Given the inadequate number of studies addressing the issue of metacognitive awareness of reading strategies, the contribution of this study is considered as significant, especially within the Turkish context.

Furthermore, this study aims to discover how successfully Turkish EFL learners can apply reading strategies in practice and to investigate the relation of metacognitive awareness of reading strategies and reading comprehension performance. The conclusions of several previous studies support the view that an increase in metacognitive awareness contributes to a more advanced comprehension abilities in EFL (Sarıçoban, & Behjoo, 2017; Turhan, & Özer, 2017), however, they have primarily used quantitative methods, providing limited insight into learners' personal experiences with strategy use and their approaches to English academic texts. As suggested by Mokhtari and Reichard (2002), the use of scales such as MARSİ to measure the metacognitive awareness of reading strategies only reveal what the learners perceive of their strategy knowledge, therefore they should be supported with supplementary tools to obtain accurate results to be implemented in educational settings. This raises another reason for conducting the present study. Since previous studies majorly used quantitative data to make conclusions about this research area, the present study's prominence is on the firsthand experiences of EFL learners' reading habits such as how they approach a reading task, what do they consider obstacles while reading and how they cope with such obstacles. To bridge this gap, the present research investigates both the statistical relationship between metacognition and reading success and the personal experiences of EFL learners as they engage with academic reading texts.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the relationship among Turkish adult EFL learners' metacognitive awareness level of reading strategies and their reading comprehension test scores. Addressing the research gap identified, this research is carried out in the Turkish EFL context, and it follows a mixed methods design which results in a more comprehensive

analysis of the data obtained to make more reliable conclusions on the issue at hand. Moreover, the results of this study are expected to enhance reading pedagogy and support the development of the reading skills among EFL learners.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Several studies have investigated the metacognitive awareness of reading strategies in diverse EFL settings (Avgeri, 2021; Bilici & Subaşı, 2022; Gönen, 2015; Maryam et al., 2019; Mortazavizadeh et al., 2022; Turhan & Özer, 2017; Wichadee, 2011; Yüksel & Yüksel, 2012). While some of these studies primarily focused on simply exploring the metacognitive awareness levels of EFL learners (Turhan & Özer, 2017; Yüksel & Yüksel, 2012), others investigated related aspects including the effects of explicit reading strategy training on learners' comprehension performance (Avgeri, 2021; Bilici & Subaşı, 2022), or the association between metacognitive awareness and reading comprehension performance (Ahmadi et al., 2013; Gönen, 2015; Sarıçoban & Behjoo, 2017; Maryam et al., 2019; Rastegar et al., 2017).

The present study differs from the existing studies in literature in terms of context, aim, and the methodology used. Firstly, although most of the existing research presented have been conducted in various countries, there continues to be an insufficient number of studies focusing on the Turkish context, specifically on preparatory level EFL learners. For instance, studies conducted by Bedir and Dursun (2022) and Turhan and Özer (2017) investigated the implication of reading strategies of high school EFL learners in different regions of Türkiye.

Moreover, the objective of the present study is not only limited to investigating the EFL learners' use of strategy. It combines the learners' perceived levels of metacognitive awareness with their real-life experiences they encounter when dealing with English academic texts. In doing so, this study stands out as its findings will result in a more comprehensive conclusion of the research area. Additionally, the outcomes of this study are expected to shed light on to a series of practical insights and valuable information for language educators by highlighting the important role of strategy training in their lesson plans. Lastly, this research also emphasizes the important role of metacognitive awareness can have in enhancing academic performance, specifically in EFL settings.

Furthermore, the existing literature shows that there are only a few studies conducted using the mixed-methods methodology design. A recent systematic review by Kan et al. (2024) revealed that the majority of the studies conducted between 2019 and 2023 have been quantitative in nature (e.g., Bayar & Tertemiz, 2022; Turhan & Özer, 2017; Wallace et al., Yüksel & Yuksel,

2012). Therefore, the present study holds importance as it explores how EFL learners' awareness of metacognitive reading strategies correlates with their academic reading scores through the mixed-methods research design process. The main aim of this research is to reveal how the strategy use, approach and perceptions of EFL students toward an academic reading text can influence the reading comprehension performance. Including both quantitative and qualitative data from the target participants, this study provides a holistic understanding of the impact of implementing metacognitive strategies in academic contexts.

Finally, this research aims to address the identified gap in existing literature by including the qualitative dimension through conducting semi-structured interviews in addition to the quantitative data. Since most studies (Ahmadi et al., 2013; Öztürk & Şenaydın, 2019; Rastegar et al., 2017) primarily relied on quantitative research designs, this study adds value to the literature by including interviews to explore the EFL learners' individual experiences, perceptions and strategic behaviors when reading an academic English text. This mixed methods approach enriches the analysis, offering a deeper understanding of learners' metacognitive engagement with texts. Therefore, the study contributes to the advancement of teaching approaches regarding the enhancement of reading comprehension skills. Thus, the research questions mentioned below were developed to support the study's aim:

1. What is the level of Turkish EFL learners' metacognitive awareness of reading strategies?
2. Which reading strategy categories (Global, Support, Problem Solving) do Turkish EFL learners use more frequently?
3. Is there a statistically significant correlation between Turkish EFL learners' metacognitive awareness and their reading comprehension performance?
4. How do Turkish EFL learners perceive their metacognitive strategy use and their awareness of these strategies?

1.5 Definition of Technical Terms

Some technical terms which are used frequently throughout this study. The definitions of these terms are given in the following section to ensure clarity and consistency.

1. Metacognition:

Defined as the understanding of one's cognitive processes during learning. It is further explained as the process of planning, monitoring and evaluating one's own learning. This process involves planning the approach towards a task, monitoring understanding

during the task, and reflecting on the outcome to evaluate its progress after completion (Flavell, 1979; Schraw & Dennison, 1994).

2. Metacognitive Awareness:

Refers to the conscious knowledge of the learners' thinking process to plan, monitor and evaluate their learning process. Additionally, it refers to the knowledge of what should be done and how to enhance learning process (Noushad, 2008).

3. Reading Skill:

Described as a cognitive activity that is vital for gaining information and learning as it enables decoding of text to comprehend meaning, and interaction with text. It involves the ability to understand details and main ideas, interpretation of writer's intentions, and use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies to plan, monitor and evaluate one's understanding of text (Abbasi, 2021; Pressley & Afflerbach, 2012; Zhang, 2017).

4. Reading Strategies:

A series of mental processes and approaches deliberately that readers use to decode text, monitor understanding and construct meaning out of a text. These strategies guide learners to manage their reading tasks effectively and efficiently (Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002).

5. Reading Comprehension Performance/ Scores:

Referring to the results demonstrated by the learners in their ability to understand written texts, as measured through their responses to the comprehension test questions. The results therefore show how effectively learners can extract meaning, construct comprehension and apply information from a given reading task.

6. MARSI:

Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory is a self-report instrument that measures the learners' metacognitive awareness of reading strategies. It promotes self-awareness and self-evaluation regarding implementation of reading strategies (Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002).

7. EFL Learners:

In this study, English as a Foreign Language learners, refers to the adult Turkish undergraduates at the Anadolu University School of Foreign Languages Preparatory School.



2. Literature Review

In the succeeding section, a comprehensive overview of the research background is presented, including the fundamental theories and the key concepts related to the research topic. Additionally, this chapter provides the outcomes of both empirical and theoretical research studies conducted across various contexts, with a focus on reading and metacognition in EFL settings. This review aims to increase clarity and familiarity with the topic of the current research. Accordingly, this chapter is organized under the following subheadings: Reading Comprehension in EFL Context, Reading Strategies in EFL Context, Cognitive and Metacognitive Reading Strategies, Taxonomies of Metacognition.

2.1 The Role of Reading in Language Learning

It is crucial to acknowledge the significance of learning English as a foreign language given the English language's increasing dominance in a number of domains, such as science, technology, commerce, and education. In particular, proficiency in English has become essential among youth for accessing various academic resources, engaging in international communication and achieving progress career-wise.

Achieving English proficiency requires learners to acquire the main language skills and foundational elements like grammar and vocabulary. Among these skills, reading skills have been referred to as a fundamental skill, especially in academic settings, as they serve as a foundation of comprehensible input (Krashen, 1989), exposure to a variety of structures and developing linguistic and vocabulary knowledge. Therefore, research has consistently shown that reading skills are a vital contributor to overall language proficiency development. For instance, research has shown that reading facilitates vocabulary acquisition (Nation, 2001), strengthens grammatical knowledge (Alderson, 2000), and enhances comprehension skills, all of which are crucial for developing fluency in English. However, despite the crucial role in language learning, reading is often overlooked due to the challenges it presents (Hezam et al., 2022). Additionally, many studies conducted over different EFL contexts have also reported that learners face difficulties in acquiring this skill often due to similar causes such as limited exposure, poor self-esteem and motivation, insufficient strategy training (Al-Jarf, 2021; Hezam et al., 2022; Nanda & Azmy, 2020; Ramadhianti & Somba, 2023).

Numerous studies have shown that reading comprehension is not solely a language skill but a foundational component to overall language and academic development (Grabe 2000; Grabe 2002; Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995; Sweet & Snow, 2002). For instance, Grabe (2000) linked

extensive reading to improved writing, and Grabe (2002) later highlighted its effect on vocabulary acquisition. Furthermore, reading provides learners with models of well-structured texts and a variety of linguistic knowledge needed for language production. Beyond linguistic benefits, reading is also essential for the advancement of cognitive abilities. Research indicates that reading supports the simultaneous improvement of cognitive functions such as making inferences, thinking critically, and solving problems, which are essential for academic success (Koda, 2005). These results emphasize how important reading is for language proficiency as well as general intellectual growth.

2.2 Reading Comprehension in EFL Context

Researchers have described reading in various ways. Put simply, the skill of extracting and generating meaning from written texts is a complicated cognitive function known as reading comprehension (Snow, 2002). According to Grabe and Stoller (2002), reading is a receptive ability in which the reader absorbs language information and decodes symbols to comprehend written material. As to other researchers, reading is a dynamic cognitive procedure in which the reader's pre-existing knowledge and the information in the reading material are connected to create understanding (Kintsch & van Dijk, 1978). In addition, Krashen (1989) emphasizes the importance of improving reading abilities as language learners since reading is a crucial source of language input in acquiring second languages, particularly when learners have minimal opportunities for interaction to the target language.

Due to the complex connection between linguistic, cognitive, and background knowledge factors, reading is often considered as a complicated skill (Grabe, 2009). For reading comprehension to take place successfully, the reader should follow a series of cognitive processes, which are explained as approaches. There are various approaches to reading such as the bottom-up processing in which the linguistic elements such as phonetics, morphology, syntax in decoding the text is emphasized, while the other approach called the top-down processing focuses on the prior knowledge and the expectations of the reader (Rumelhart, 1977). Factors such as the readers' proficiency level, their choice of strategy use, and decoding preferences decide the reading approach they follow in order to achieve meaning. Consequently, many studies have explored the qualities of skilled readers and poor readers (Koda 2005; Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002; Pressley & Afflerback, 1995). Literature presents that skilled readers demonstrate automaticity in word recognition and implement metacognitive strategies to constantly check their understanding (Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995). Whereas poor

readers have a difficult time with decoding, often leading to cognitive overload and difficulties in comprehension (Koda, 2005).

Considering these differences, it is crucial for EFL teachers to identify skilled readers from poor readers so they can appropriately tailor their teaching approaches accordingly and provide learners with the needed instruction that results in their reading development. In addition to identifying these distinctions among their students, teachers must strive to understand the challenges that poor readers encounter in order to provide them with effective guidance.

A major challenge to affective reading comprehension that is reported over various EFL learning contexts is the limited vocabulary of the reader (Alharbi, 2021; Junaidi et al., 2023; Ramadhianti & Somba, 2023). Students with a limited word bank tend to face more difficulty in grasping meaning from written text knowledge, often leading to misunderstandings and confusion (Lucifer, 1922). In the study conducted by Hezam et al. (2022), it revealed that over 60% of the participants reported that insufficient vocabulary knowledge made comprehension very difficult. In addition to vocabulary knowledge, effective comprehension requires the skill to create links between words and the semantic patterns of lexical items (Mahmood, 2020). This becomes even more challenging in academic reading since the reader must understand the specific topic to navigate complex syntax, grasp specific terminology and deal with unfamiliar words and structures all at once (Anderson, 2002). Another challenging aspect of reading comprehension is related to working memory limitations which makes processing long and complex sentences difficult for EFL learners (Grabe, 2009). In addition to that lack of background knowledge, unfamiliarity with the culture of the target language is another factor making comprehension more difficult for learners (Koda, 2005). This issue is supported by a systematic review of studies conducted in Indonesian context which revealed that there are three main challenges that Indonesian EFL learners commonly face. These challenges are the learners' absence of interest, lack of background knowledge about the context and poor vocabulary knowledge (Nanda & Azmy, 2020).

Among other challenges, learners face during reading includes problems with inferencing, challenges with cohesion and coherence of text, direct translating of words to L1 and weak metacognitive strategies. These challenges often emerge as a result of inadequate reading instruction in EFL classrooms, which hinders reading comprehension and overall language proficiency development. Therefore, addressing these issues requires EFL teachers to include structured and strategic approach to reading instruction in the lesson plans guaranteeing that

learners develop the compulsory skills to engage with texts successfully to obtain comprehension.

2.3 Reading Strategies in EFL Context

Considering the significance of the challenges that learners face in reading comprehension and the negative impact it has on their language development, EFL teachers must be equipped to guide students through the obstacles. Explicit strategy training has been repeatedly proven to be an effective way to address the challenges that arise during reading because it gives students the skills they need to solve certain reading difficulties based on their own specific needs (Zhang, 2018). By implementing reading strategies, learners are enabled to decode meaning more efficiently and accurately, which results in better comprehension skills and improved performance.

Reading strategies are commonly arranged into three main categories based on their intended purpose. According to Paris, Wasik, and Turner (1991), these strategies can be identified as the intentional acts readers do to achieve understanding. Pre-reading strategies, such as accessing existing knowledge, making predictions of the content through clues, and previewing the text help readers prepare for comprehension. Skimming, scanning, inferencing, summarizing etc., are strategies used in the during-reading stage which help readers extract and process information effectively. Lastly, post-reading techniques like engaging in reflection about the text, checking comprehension and synthesizing information lead to a more in-depth understanding and retention of the reading task. Mastering these strategies allows learners to organize information, monitor their understanding, and address comprehension challenges more effectively (Sheory & Mokhtari, 2001).

Many research findings support the advantages of explicit guidance to reading strategies on reading skills in various EFL backgrounds (Avgeria, 2022; Fathi & Afzali, 2020; Yapp et al., 2021). As an example, the research conducted by Fathi and Afzali (2020) explored how explicit teaching of strategies influences young EFL learners' comprehension performance. The study involved a comparison between a control group taught using conventional techniques and an experimental group. The duration of the strategy instruction was 12 weeks. The findings proved that the inclusion of strategy training in EFL lessons is effective considering that the experimental group achieved significantly higher scores than the control group in the post-test.

Research conducted in the Dutch context also looked at how a seven-week reading strategy intervention affected students' reading abilities, this time in higher education, especially those

with vocational backgrounds (Yapp et al., 2021) Also following an experimental design, the study resulted in significant improvements in reading comprehension after explicit strategy instruction was implemented. However, this study pointed out that factors such as the students' prior education level have an impact on the results raising a need for tailored instruction based on the students' levels. Overall, these results determined that including explicit strategies in EFL lessons has a beneficial impact on L2 reading growth.

Additionally, the experimental study conducted by Avgeria (2022) examined how strategy instruction affected the development of EFL students' understanding and metacognitive awareness at a Greek State High School. In this study, the sample population were separated into two groupings in the study: a control group that was just briefly exposed to strategies and an experimental group that received explicit strategy teaching. The findings obtained showed that although the control group showed no change, the pupils in the experimental condition greatly exceeded it in terms of improving understanding and fostering autonomy in strategy use. The effectiveness of strategic training in producing excellent readers is increased by this study, which validates the value of explicit strategy teaching in improving reading comprehension and enabling students to become independent learners.

In summary, previous studies in this area strongly support the influence of explicit strategy teaching in the language lessons to foster reading comprehension in EFL students. Considering the results of earlier research, this study targets to further investigate the function of strategic competence in language development by analyzing how EFL learners' understanding of reading strategies relates to their reading comprehension skills.

2.3.1 Cognitive and Metacognitive Reading Strategies

Reading strategies are categorized into two major types: cognitive and metacognitive strategies. Both cognitive and metacognitive strategies hold a vital part in reading comprehension, especially among EFL contexts. These strategies guide learners in navigating their focus during reading, monitoring their understanding and adjusting their approach when faced with obstacles that hinder comprehension.

Cognitive strategies are commonly described as task-specific strategies that require the learners' active interaction with the text. According to Kasimi (2012), these strategies are direct language learning tools that include deliberate mental activities aimed at processing and understanding written input. Semtin and Manian (2015) further identify cognitive strategies as "specific learning tasks employed in the learning process, such as relating the new words in

mind and writing down the main idea.” (p.55). Examples of cognitive strategies include identifying main ideas, making inferences, or using contextual information to make sense of unknown vocabulary (Carrell et al., 1998).

On the contrary, metacognitive strategies refer to the higher order thinking processes that focus on regulating the implementation of the cognitive strategies. These include planning prior to reading, checking understanding when involved in a reading task and assessing comprehension post-reading (Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995). According to Semtin and Maniam (2015), the metacognitive approaches include actions like goal setting for learning, reflections on what and how the learning process is taking place, controlling what is being learnt and not learnt and finally assessment of performance after learning has taken place. Similarly, Silberstein (1994), explains that learners need metacognition in order to monitor and regulate their understanding to get meaning from text. Table 2.1 below presents a list of the cognitive and metacognitive reading strategies as presented by Pressley and Afflerbach (1995), Schraw (1998), Mokhtari and Reichard (2002), and O’Malley (1985).

Table 2.1

Cognitive and Metacognitive Reading Strategies

Cognitive Reading Strategies	Metacognitive Reading Strategies
Identifying the main idea	Planning how to approach the reading task
Making inferences	Setting reading goals
Guessing the meaning of unknown words from context	Previewing the text before reading
Translating from L2 to L1	Monitoring comprehension while reading
Repeating key words or phrases mentally	Identifying comprehension breakdowns
Summarizing text sections	Evaluating understanding after reading
Visualizing content	Deciding whether to continue reading or adjust strategy
Using prior knowledge to make sense of new information	Reflecting on what has been read
Taking notes while reading	Skipping or slowing down difficult parts strategically
Underlining or highlighting important parts	Asking questions during reading
Rereading sentences or paragraphs	Checking consistency between new information and prior knowledge
Recognizing text structure or organizational patterns	Managing time and concentration while reading

While both cognitive and metacognitive strategy types have different roles in the reading process, they are highly intertwined and complement one another to help readers' comprehension. Cognitive strategies provide opportunities for active engagement with the text, supporting comprehension, recall, and the retrieval of information whereas metacognitive strategies allow learners to manage and regulate the interaction during reading through planning monitoring and evaluating the reading approach (Carrell et al., 1998; Flavell, 1979).

This distinction emphasizes the complementary nature of the two strategy types. It indicates that without metacognition learners would not be able to choose, navigate and implement the cognitive strategies appropriately (O'Malley, 1985; Schraw, 1998). Therefore, successful readers should be able to apply both cognitive and metacognitive reading strategies simultaneously for enhancing their reading abilities, particularly in EFL contexts. The differences between the two reading strategy types are presented in Table 2.2 below:

Table 2.2

Differences Between Cognitive and Metacognitive Reading Strategies

Cognitive Strategies	Metacognitive Strategies
Direct interaction with the text	Regulation of the reading process
Enhancing understanding, memory, and information retrieval	Planning, monitoring, and evaluating the reading approach
Do not involve oversight of the reading process <i>(Carrell et al., 1998; Flavell, 1979)</i>	Managing the interaction with the text <i>(O'Malley, 1985; Schraw, 1998)</i>

Therefore, although research has shown that explicit strategy instruction in strategies contributes positively to skill development, it is not sufficient without accompanying metacognitive awareness. Learners also need to be instructed on how, when and why to apply strategies. Therefore, alongside strategy training, teachers should ensure that learners' metacognitive thinking process while reading is also given attention to in the EFL classroom.

2.4 Taxonomies of Metacognition

Over the years, researchers have defined the components of metacognition to help clarify the process learners undergo in gaining awareness and regulating their own thinking. These conceptual frameworks are central to understanding the implication of metacognition in learning and particularly reading. The contributions of Flavell (1979), Schraw & Dennison (1994), Brown (1987) and Paris et al. (1983) have resulted in models that provide foundational

insights into the components and processes of metacognitive awareness. The following taxonomies are as demonstrated in the following table (Table 2.3).

Table 2.3

Theoretical Frameworks of Metacognition

Researcher	Framework
Flavell (1979)	• Metacognitive knowledge • Metacognitive regulation
Paris et al. (1984)	• Self-appraisal • Sel-management
Brown (1987)	• Control Functions • Planning, Monitoring, Clarifying, Revising
Schraw & Dennison (1994)	• Knowledge of cognition • Regulation of cognition

The term “metacognition” was originally coined by John Flavell (1978). He defined metacognition through two key concepts: Metacognitive Knowledge and Metacognitive Regulation. Metacognitive knowledge concerns the learners’ understanding of his own cognitive processes such as awareness of owns’ knowledge, task requirements, and available strategic options. The latter concept, metacognitive regulation denotes to the learners’ competence to use planning, monitoring and evaluation to monitor and regulate one’s own thought processes. This model framed the foundation for all further research on metacognition and is still widely referenced in recent studies as well.

Paris et al. (1984) introduced a framework that specifically investigates the metacognition processes during reading comprehension. This framework is made up of two key components which are: Self-appraisal and Self-management. The first component refers to the readers’ awareness of their own reading ability while the latter component refers to their ability to plan, monitor and adjust their reading approaches according to their needs. This model has a significant role in literature as it creates a bridge between reading strategy use and metacognition which is particularly important in academic reading contexts.

In the model established by Brown (1987), emphasis is given to the control function of metacognition, which is vital for learning. These functions include planning, monitoring, clarifying, and revising. These functions are widely used in educational research, especially as

it helps researchers understand how learners take control of their comprehension and avoid misunderstandings.

Finally, Schraw and Dennison (1994), offer a more detailed model of metacognition by breaking down the two major concepts: knowledge of cognition and regulation of cognition. The knowledge of cognition components includes three types of knowledge: Declarative knowledge, procedural knowledge and conditional knowledge. These types of knowledge are further described as the knowledge of what the learner knows (declarative), the knowledge of how to do the task (procedural), and finally the knowledge of when and why to use it (conditional). The second component, known as regulation of cognition, encompasses processes that facilitate the planning, monitoring, and evaluation of cognitive performance (Schraw & Dennison, 1994; Schraw, 1998).

Overall, while different researchers emphasize slightly different dimensions of metacognition in their models, they all consistently discuss core elements including planning, monitoring, and evaluating. These shared elements highlight the importance of learners' awareness and constant control of the learning practice. Among these frameworks, Schraw and Dennison's taxonomy is remarkably applicable to the present study, as it forms the theoretical foundation of the MARS instrument which is also used in this research (Schraw, 1998). Therefore, this study is based on the taxonomy introduced by Schraw and Dennison (1994).

2.5 Metacognition in Reading Comprehension

As per Mokhtari and Reichard's (2002) description, metacognition is the understanding of when and how to utilize the reading strategies to achieve the objectives of the reading task. Research has emphasized the positive impact metacognition has on improving effective reading comprehension in a language learning context. According to Anderson (1991), to enhance reading achievement, learners must understand how to use the methods carefully to get the best results. O'Mally et al. (1985) describe metacognitive reading strategies as techniques that help learners gain awareness of their thinking process as it involves planning for learning, monitoring their own understanding of the text, and self-evaluation of learning (Paris, Lipson, & Wixson, 1983). As a result of this process, learners can have a better concentration on the task, think and reflect on their existing knowledge, identify their mistakes and adjust their approach accordingly all while reading.

Prior studies present a high correlation between metacognitive awareness and successful foreign language acquisition (Gönen, 2015; Sariçoban & Behjoo, 2017; Wichadee, 2011). The

strategic employment of metacognitive methods supports learners in managing their learning progress—via the practices of planning, observing, and assessing their approach, leading to better reading comprehension outcomes (Zhang & Goh, 2006). O'Malley (1985) adds that without metacognition, learners fail to use reading strategies effectively making them less useful.

Wichadee (2011) looked at how teaching EFL Thai students' explicit metacognitive strategies affected their reading comprehension skills. According to the results, students employed more metacognitive techniques following training, which include techniques like defining goals, recognizing the amount of information left, and asking themselves questions as they read. Evidence of the training's success was seen in the studies' findings that participants with moderate to high reading skills increased their use of metacognitive strategies during reading tasks following the instruction. The findings found that training strategies can assist novice readers in becoming better and that applying metacognitive strategies significantly contributes to reading comprehension improvement.

Therefore, in order to achieve the optimal results, instruction should address not only reading skills but also how and when to use them. As described by Baker and Brown (1984), metacognitive awareness in reading involves the learner's skill in identifying, regulating, and using effective reading strategies. According to Anderson (2002), one of the most essential skills instructors can foster in students is the ability to comprehend and control their cognitive processes. To assist students in organizing, managing, and assessing their learning, EFL teachers should incorporate metacognitive techniques into their lessons rather than concentrating just on language learning. Enhanced metacognitive awareness equips students with the ability to observe and control their learning methods efficiently since metacognitive methods are conscious and controlled, according to Pressley, Borkowski, and Schneider (1987).

2.6 Metacognitive Strategy Use Among EFL Learners

A widely used tool for exploring students' level of metacognitive awareness of reading strategies in the self-report inventory developed by Mokhtari & Reichard (2002) called the Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory (MARSI). This tool is widely used across various contexts by researchers to measure how EFL learners perceive their own metacognitive knowledge and strategy use in reading comprehension. The developers of this tool mention that the target of this tool is to discover learners' awareness of different strategy types and how frequently they employ them (Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002). They categorize the

reading strategies under three main types, which are as follows (Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002, p.252):

(i) Global Strategies – Planning reading approaches, setting goals, and previewing content, (ii) Problem-Solving Strategies – Adjusting reading speed, re-reading, making inferences, (iii) Support Strategies – Using external aids such as note-taking, highlighting and dictionaries. The three categories featured in the MARSII questionnaire are compiled in Table 2.4 below, along with descriptions and example strategies.

Table 2.4

Types of Reading Strategies and Examples

Strategy Category	Description	Example Strategies
Global Reading Strategies	General planning and monitoring strategies used to set the stage for reading and guide comprehension.	- Setting a purpose for reading - Previewing the text before reading - Using prior knowledge - Skimming to get the main idea - Selecting what to pay close attention to and what to ignore
Problem-Solving Strategies	Tactics used while actively working through a text to resolve comprehension issues.	- Rereading difficult parts - Modifying the pace at which you read - Using context to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words - Stopping to reflect on what has been read - Visualizing information
Support Reading Strategies	Practical tools and actions that support comprehension and retention.	- Taking notes while reading - Using a dictionary - Highlighting or underlining information - Reading aloud - Paraphrasing or summarizing parts of the text

Research indicates that among these categories, EFL learners most commonly employ problem-solving techniques (Annury et al., 2019; Gönen, 2015). According to the research carried out by Anury et al. (2019) the findings revealed that students mostly rely on problem-solving techniques, which are followed by global reading techniques and support reading techniques. In order to get over comprehension challenges, students also successfully use strategies including rereading and guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words.

A large portion of the existing literature highlights the impact of metacognitive reading approaches on improved reading comprehension results. This is further proven by a study conducted by Rastegar, Kermani, and Khabir (2017) who assessed this relationship among 120 Iranian EFL students. The findings of the study revealed a significant positive relation concerning the two variables. In another study, Bilici and Subaşı (2022), investigated the effect of strategy teaching, specifically, reciprocal teaching, on Turkish EFL learners. The result of their study concluded that teaching metacognitive methods is highly valuable as the results showed a great enhancement in L2 reading comprehension and an increased knowledge of global reading strategies among the learners. Consequently, studies suggest that fostering metacognitive reading strategy awareness enhances performance in reading comprehension among EFL learners. This is also consistent with previous research claiming that skilled readers are more aware of using metacognitive methods, therefore enhancing their reading performance.

In another study, Mortazavizadeh et al. (2022), investigated the connection between reading comprehension and learners' familiarity with metacognition. In this correlational investigation MARSİ and the reading comprehension components of the Cambridge Michigan Language Assessment (MET) were used. The results indicated that global and support strategies did not have a positive correlation with the reading performance of the participants, however, they did find a strong and positive connection between problem solving strategies and reading comprehension. These findings conclude that developing learners' metacognitive strategy knowledge positively influences learners' reading performance.

In conclusion, research conducted in various contexts has shown the beneficial influences that metacognitive strategies have on reading comprehension. This is a valuable finding as it encourages EFL teachers to adapt according to their learners and aid them to improve their reading skills by giving them the tools they need to handle academic reading.

3. Methodology

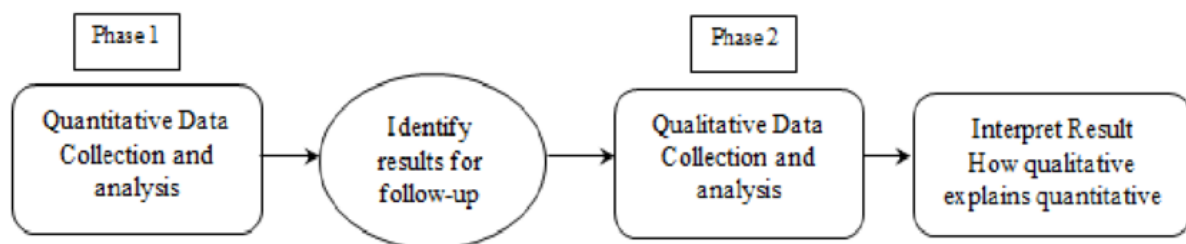
The third chapter details the methodological structure followed by this study through addressing the research design, participants, data collection tools, and the data collection process. The objective is to provide a thorough description of the rationale behind the methodological choices and how the study was conducted. Additionally, details of ethical procedures taken are also addressed within this chapter.

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a sequential explanatory mixed-methods correlational design. This design is made up of two separate phases: a quantitative phase and a qualitative phase (Figure 3.1). According to Creswell (2014), this study design is usually preferred by researchers who want to use qualitative data to clarify or build up primarily collected quantitative data. This design was considered fit for this study as the aim is to find the underlying factors that could be influencing students' strategy use in addition to the link between their strategy use and reading performance. Therefore, this design was chosen to investigate students' perspectives on their awareness of metacognitive reading strategies as well as examine how metacognitive awareness relates to reading comprehension outcomes statistically.

Figure 3.1

The Sequential Explanatory Design Process



Reference: Creswell & Creswell, 2017, p.69

As shown in the figure above (Figure 3.1), the initial phase of the study includes the quantitative data collection and analysis. The MARS questionnaire was administered to determine students' metacognitive awareness levels. Simultaneously, students' reading scores were also collected from the school's assessment department to evaluate the statistical relationship between the two variables. IBM SPSS Statistics (version 20) was used to obtain a statistical calculation.

The subsequent phase of the research involves qualitative data collection, through which the researcher aimed to investigate how students perceive their reading strategies and approaches. Therefore, semi-structured interviews were conducted to reach the required data. This method was chosen as it allows the researcher to obtain rich and detailed responses regarding learners' experiences and perspective (Kvale, 1996). Next, to analyze the responses, thematic analysis approach was preferred. This approach detects repeated themes and patterns in the interviewees' responses, which helps the researcher draw certain conclusions on the topic. This method encompasses systematic identification, examining, and interpreting themes within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

As the final step, the results of quantitative and qualitative phases were combined to draw a comprehensive conclusion about how the metacognitive awareness influences EFL learners' reading scores.

3.2 Participants

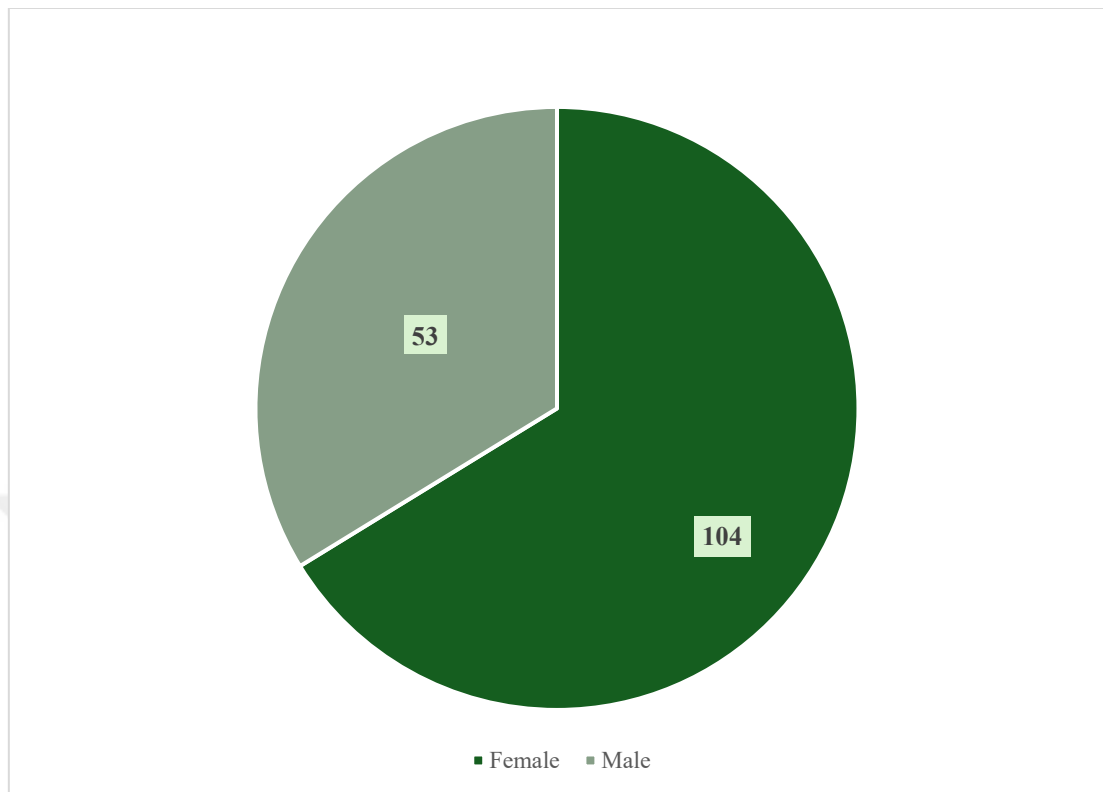
The study was implemented during the spring semester of the 2024-2025 academic year at the School of Foreign Languages at Anadolu University in Eskişehir, Türkiye. The preparatory language school was chosen for this study as it provides an intensive language program for students who need to develop their language proficiency for academic purposes. In this institution, students are grouped into four levels based on their proficiency, from beginner level (D) to advanced (A). Therefore, this institution was chosen as it provides a diverse sample for the current study. Additionally, the school was selected due to its large student population, which facilitated easy access to participants. Thus, the participants were selected through convenience sampling. The length of the program is equivalent to one academic year, i.e., two semesters; however, it may vary depending on the students' progress and initial proficiency level.

About 200 students were approached to take part in the study, and 176 of them finished the first round of data collection by completing the Turkish version of the MARSİ questionnaire, as translated by Öztürk (2012). However, after applying the exclusion criteria, a total of 157 responses were retained for the analysis. Participants were excluded if they did not provide their full name and surname, if they replaced their names with nicknames, or if identical names were identified.

Among the 157 participants, 66% (n=104) were female participants and 34% (n=53) male. The gender distribution is shown in Figure 3.2 below.

Figure 3.2

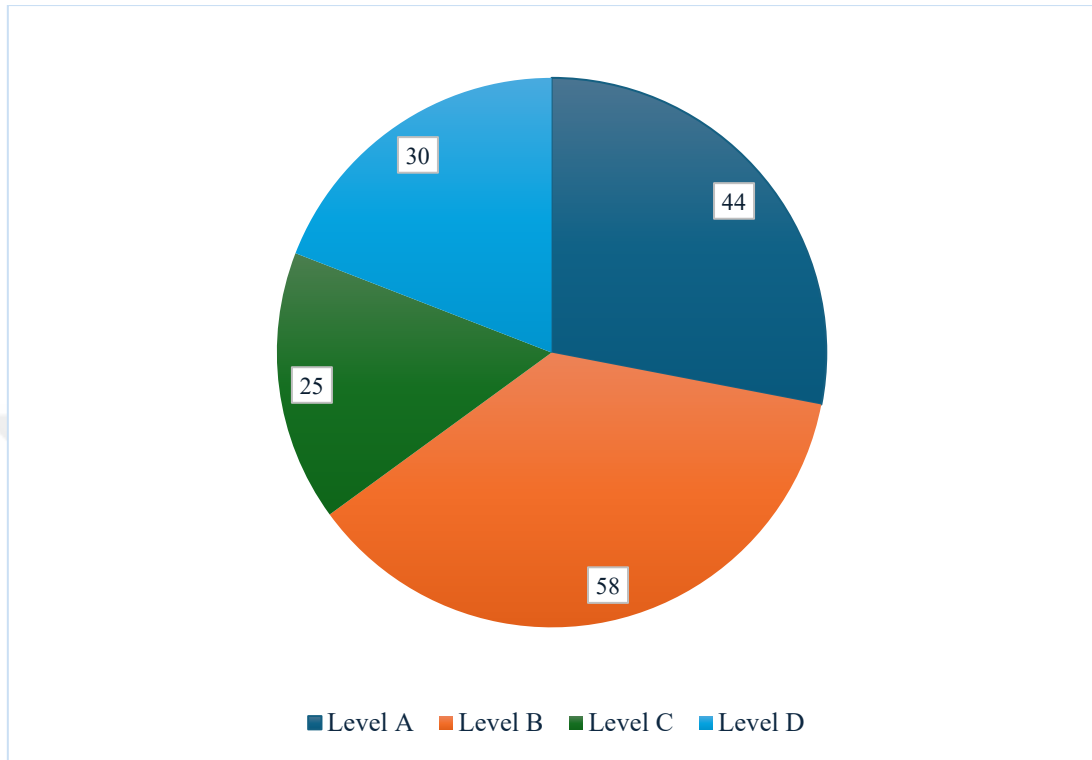
Gender Distribution of Participants



Participants were selected across various proficiency levels (A-D) in order to capture a broad profile of the language learner population. Examinations held at the beginning of the academic year served to establish these proficiency levels. Ensuring that, learners from all four levels were included in the study allowed for a more reliable analysis of metacognitive awareness and reading strategies. Among the 157 participants 37% (n= 58) were from the B proficiency level, 28% (n=44) from the A level, 19% (n=30) from the D level and 16% (n=25) from the C level. This distribution is illustrated in Figure 3.3.

Figure 3.3

English Proficiency Level Distribution of Participants



Participants were selected using convenience sampling methods, given the ease of access to students and the practicality of recruiting volunteers at the chosen institution. Prior to participation, all individuals were fully informed regarding the study and filled in a consent form as a prerequisite for participation (Appendix 1).

In order to further enrich the quantitative results of the study, semi-structured interviews were carried out with a subset of the research sample with the aim of gaining a deeper understanding of the topic through firsthand experiences of Turkish EFL learners. According to Creswell and Clark (2011), for this purpose, conducting between five to twenty-five participants is considered sufficient in explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. In this light, a total of fifteen participants were invited to participate in the semi-structured interviews for practical and participant availability reasons. The convenience sampling method was employed by a pool of approximately seventy participants to reach this sample. Eventually, a total of thirteen students from varied proficiency levels, selected on a voluntary basis, participated in the semi-structured interviews. Among the thirteen interviewees, three students were from A level, four from Level B, three from Level C, and three from Level D. The participation of individuals

across a range of proficiency levels led to a more thorough investigation of reading methods of metacognitive awareness.

3.3 Data Collection Tools

Three primary data collection tools were administered to obtain the information needed for this study: reading comprehension test scores, semi-structured interviews, and the Turkish version of the MARSİ questionnaire. Each of these tools had a specific function in gathering the quantitative and qualitative information required to accomplish the goal of this study and finding answers to the research questions considered.

3.3.1 Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory (MARSİ):

The Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory (MARSİ), which was initially prepared by Mokhtari and Reichard (2002), was used to gather the main quantitative data for this study. This self-report tool consists of 30 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale and its aim is to evaluate learners' metacognitive awareness of reading strategies. To decrease the possibility of misunderstandings due to language barriers the translated and verified version of the MARSİ (Öztürk, 2012) was used in this research. The reliability of the adapted Turkish version of the MARSİ was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding an overall coefficient of .93, indicating excellent internal consistency. Reliability coefficients for individual factors ranged from .76 to .85, demonstrating acceptable reliability across the scale.

To ensure the validity of the tool, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and exploration factor analysis (EFA) were employed. The results of this analysis represented that the structure of the original inventory was maintained. The strong correlation value of .96 between the Turkish and English versions indicated that the data collection tool is valid for educational research purposes (Öztürk, 2012). The items of the inventory evaluate the awareness level and use of metacognitive reading strategies through the inventory items which are categorized under three main groups:

- **Global Reading Strategies (13 items)**
 - Focus on planning and monitoring comprehension at different stages of reading—before, during, and after.
- **Problem-Solving Strategies (9 items)**

- Include techniques such as reading again, adjusting reading speed, and using context clues to deal with difficulties during reading.
- **Support Reading Strategies (8 items)**
 - Involves the use of supplementary tools to boost understanding, including notetaking, highlighting key points, or engaging in discussions about the text.

Permission to use this tool was obtained from the developer (Appendix 2).

3.3.2 Reading Comprehension Test Scores:

The reading section of the preparatory school midterm exam served as the input for evaluating students' reading proficiency. These sections were scored and analyzed separately from the overall test to provide specific data on reading achievement. This approach ensured that the reading scores aligned directly with the focus of the study and served as a reliable indicator of participants' academic reading proficiency.

3.3.3 Semi-Structured Interviews:

In accordance with the explanatory mixed methods approach, semi-structured interviews were performed after the quantitative findings were reviewed, enabling a better comprehension of the students' views on strategy use. Semi-structured interviews function as a flexible qualitative data collection method for obtaining participant insights, resulting in a detailed examination of participants' experiences and viewpoints (Kvale, 1996) and the inclusion of such interviews was significant for this study as it adds insights that may not be fully captured through quantitative measures alone. Compared to the previous studies in literature which focused solely on the quantitative aspect of this research area which investigates how metacognitive awareness relates to reading performance. Therefore, via interviews with the learners, the researcher provided them with the opportunity to express their personal experiences and perspectives on their approaches to reading an academic text in the target language. This qualitative phase was particularly significant as it explored learners' personal experiences and perspectives which prior research has not sufficiently explored, especially in the EFL context. This enriched the overall findings by providing deeper insight into the subject matter.

Based on the MARSİ results, the researcher prepared interview questions to better understand participants' reading strategies and experiences with academic texts. After receiving an expert opinion on the questions, necessary adjustments were made. The improved and final form of

the questions is presented in Appendix 4. Semi-structured interviews, as described by Kvale (1996), allow for in-depth exploration while maintaining a consistent structure. To prevent misunderstandings and allow participants to express themselves comfortably, interviews were administered in the participants' native language, Turkish, and were held online through the Zoom platform. Audio recordings were collected and transcribed for analysis. In order to analyze the qualitative data, thematic analysis was conducted to methodically identify and interpret key themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Prior to data collection, all participants were informed on the study's aim and procedures. Moreover, informed consent was obtained in advance, ensuring that the participants are aware of their rights, including the freedom to discontinue at any stage without any consequences. (Appendix 1). The table below presents specific background information about the interviewees (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1
Demographic Information of Interviewees

Participant	Gender	Proficiency Level
Participant 1	Male	B
Participant 2	Male	B
Participant 3	Male	B
Participant 4	Female	B
Participant 5	Female	C
Participant 6	Female	A
Participant 7	Female	A
Participant 8	Female	A
Participant 9	Female	C
Participant 10	Female	D
Participant 11	Female	D
Participant 12	Female	D
Participant 13	Male	C

After obtaining the recorded audio files of the interviews the transcripts were extracted and organized. Next, the Turkish transcripts were translated to English for analysis using the help

of artificial intelligence software. Table 3.2 below presents the details of the transcripts conducted

Table 3.2

Details of the Interview Audio Recordings

Participant	Words	Pages	Duration
Participant 1	1097	3	9:38
Participant 2	995	3	16:00
Participant 3	949	3	11:38
Participant 4	910	3	07:54
Participant 5	809	3	09:42
Participant 6	1086	3	14:34
Participant 7	999	3	14:14
Participant 8	957	3	10:19
Participant 9	2652	11	26:40
Participant 10	996	3	17:53
Participant 11	897	3	09:01
Participant 12	1086	4	10:00
Participant 13	1244	5	12:57

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

The research was conducted in the academic year 2024–2025 during the spring semester. Participants were students enrolled in Anadolu University's Preparatory Language School program. Approximately 200 students from various English proficiency levels (A-D) were targeted using convenience sampling to complete the MARSİ questionnaire. This sampling method was used to ensure balanced distribution of participants from all levels of proficiency. With the school administration's approval, the Turkish version of the MARSİ questionnaire was distributed and completed during regular class hours.

Following the administration of the MARSİ inventory, the reading test results of the participants were retrieved from the preparatory school's assessment department. These scores served as indicators of learners' academic reading proficiency. To identify the relationship between students' reading comprehension skills and their metacognitive awareness levels, the

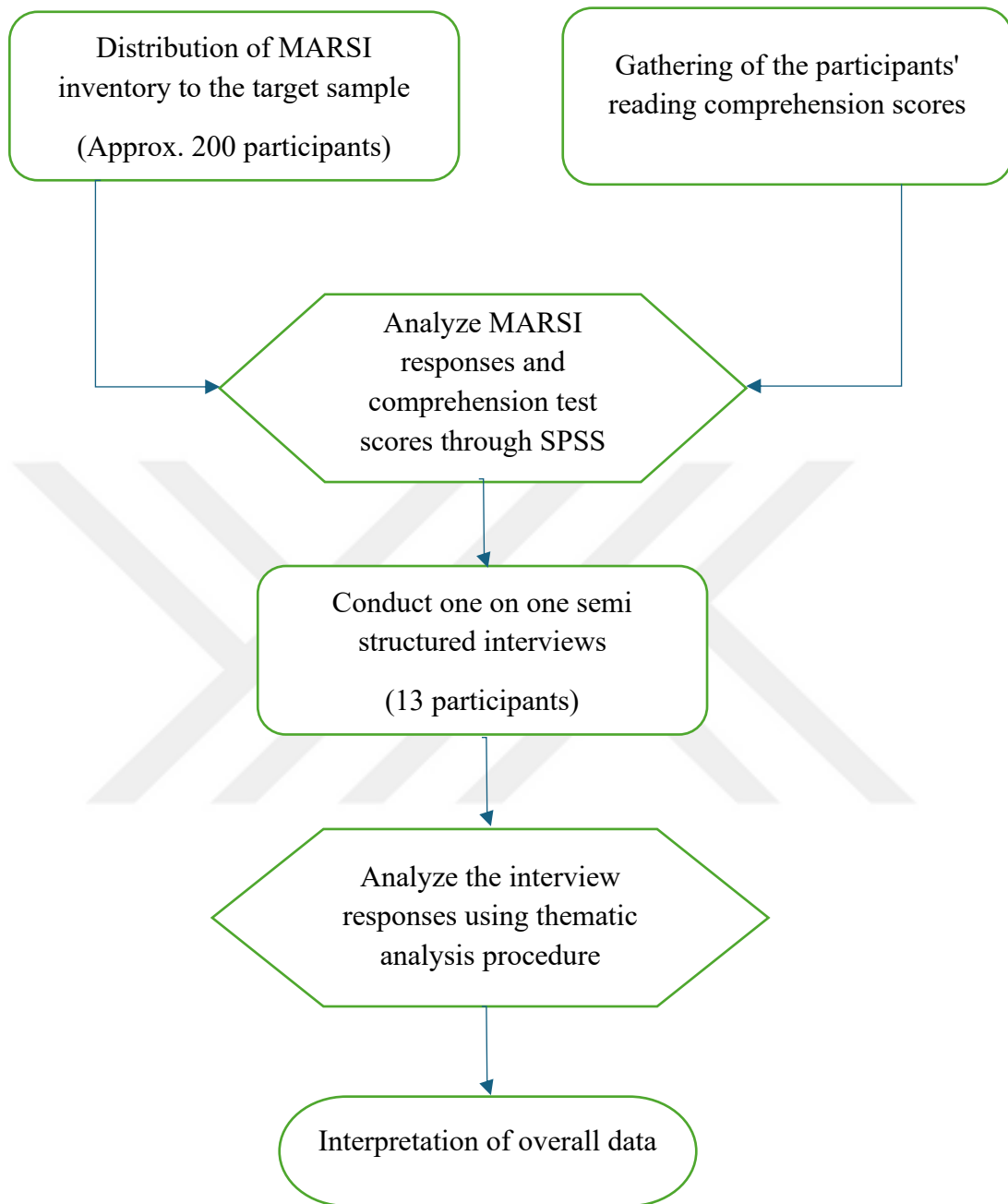
quantitative data—which included MARSİ and reading scores—was examined statistically using techniques including descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis.

For the second phase of the study, approximately seventy participants across all four proficiency levels were approached to participate in the semi-structured interviews out of which only thirteen volunteered to join. The primary objective of these interviews was to provide a deeper comprehension of learners' strategic behaviors. The questions were constructed by the researcher based on the MARSİ responses and the goal was to elicit students' perspectives on reading strategies and their personal experiences.

The interviews were done remotely through the Zoom platform with the volunteers, each interview lasting approximately between 15-18 minutes. Audio recordings of all interview sessions were made to support the data analysis phase. The collected data was first transcribed following the six-step approach to thematic analysis as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). As a result of this analysis important themes and patterns were extracted from the participants' responses.

Figure 3.4

Data Collection Procedure



3.5 Data Analysis

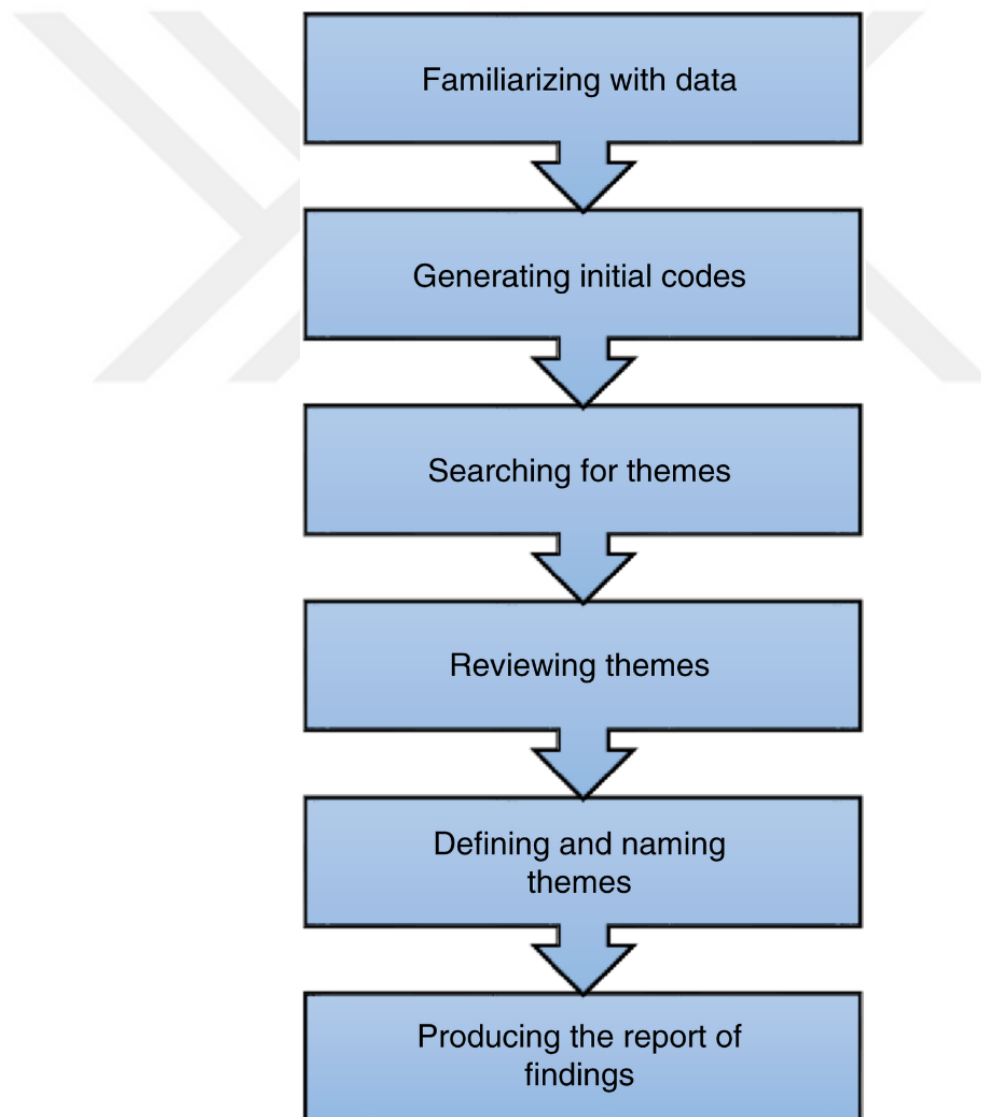
Initially, the quantitative data gathered from the MARSI inventory responses and the reading test scores were analyzed using SPSS software. In order to get the overall mean and standard deviation of the inventory, descriptive statistics were used. Further analysis using quantitative data such as frequencies of each subcategory of the strategies and the most preferred reading strategies items were also carried out. Moreover, Pearson correlation analysis was implemented

to investigate the relationship between the MARSI inventory mean score and the reading test's mean score. The results of this analysis resulted in the quantitative findings of the study.

In the second phase of the study, data collected through the semi-structured interviews were examined through thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a six-step process of identifying codes and categorizing them in order to obtain certain themes which allow the researcher to reach the necessary conclusions about the data. This study followed the thematic analysis as explained by Braun and Clarke (2006). The figure (Figure 3.5) below illustrates the step-by-step process of the analysis.

Figure 3.5

Thematic Analysis Process



Qualitative data's insights enriched the quantitative findings by contributing to a more thorough understanding of the learners' application of strategies and their perceived effects on reading performance.

Intercoder reliability was established during the theme analysis phase. Also known as interrater reliability, it measures how consistently multiple coders interpret and categorize qualitative data. This process ensures that the coding process is not dependent only on the researcher and minimizes subjective interpretation. It also indicates the consistency of the data analysis. A second independent coder, qualified with a master's degree in English Language Teaching (ELT) and familiar with thematic analysis contributed to the coding process to enhance reliability of the results. To maintain consistency between the two coders, an intercoder reliability coefficient analysis was conducted on a portion of the interview data. Specifically, 20% of the interview transcripts were independently coded by both coders (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002). The level of agreement between the two sets of codes was calculated using the standard percent agreement formula. The result was found to be 85.7%, which indicates a high level of coding reliability (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002). Any disagreement that emerged during this process was resolved through discussion and clarification with the thesis supervisor.

Following the initial step of the analysis process, the transcripts were scanned by both coders independently to get familiarized with the data. Next, each coder generated the initial codes from the learners' responses followed by gathering the similar codes under themes. The codes and emerging themes were compared between the two coders. When different opinions on codes and themes emerged, they were discussed together and resolved through consensus. The discussions led to a complete codebook, which reflected the outcomes of the qualitative data that both coders agreed with. The codebook was then shared with the thesis supervisor and the necessary changes were made and the final themes were defined. As a result of this method, a consistent and trustworthy report of the analysis of subjective data was produced which increases the reliability of the findings.

4. Research Results

This chapter outlines the research findings. By adopting a mixed-methods design, the study integrated quantitative and qualitative findings to explore how metacognitive knowledge of reading strategies relates to Turkish EFL students' reading outcomes. To respond to the research questions, quantitative data derived from the MARSI responses and participants' reading scores were analyzed using SPSS and presented accordingly. Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis method, the qualitative interview data were examined, and the results are reported based on the sequence of the four research questions.

4.1 Research Question 1: EFL Learners' Metacognitive Awareness Levels of Reading Strategies

The first question in this study sought to identify the participants' overall level of metacognitive awareness levels of reading strategies. Therefore, the mean score of the MARSI responses were calculated through descriptive statistics in SPSS. According to Reichard and Mokhtari (2002), the mean scores were distributed over three levels for interpretation: high, medium, and low. Table 4.1 displays this distribution.

Table 4.1

Key to Interpreting MARSI Scores

Average Score Level	Interpretation
3.5 or higher	High
2.5 – 3.4	Medium
2.4 or lower	Low

Descriptive statistics were applied to obtain the participants' overall mean score for awareness levels. According to the result, participants' responses to the MARSI inventory had an average score of $M = 3.39$ ($SD = 1.16$), indicating an overall medium level of metacognitive awareness of reading strategies, according to the criteria established by Mokhtari and Reichard (2002) (Table 4.1). As a result, the research sample's participants showed a medium awareness level of reading strategies. The following table (Table 4.2) displays the inventory items' descriptive data.

Table 4.2*Descriptive Analysis of the MARSII Inventory Items*

Strategy	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. I have a purpose in mind when I read.	3.66	0.937
2. I take notes while reading to help me understand what I read.	2.89	1.245
3. I think about what I know to help me understand what I read.	3.25	1.08
4. I preview the text to see what it's about before reading it.	3.78	1.134
5. When text becomes difficult, I read aloud to help me understand what I read.	2.56	1.486
6. I summarize what I read to reflect on important information in the text.	2.71	1.172
7. I think about whether the content of the text fits my reading purpose.	3.01	1.101
8. I read slowly but carefully to be sure I understand what I'm reading.	3.75	1.049
9. I discuss what I read with others to check my understanding.	3.04	1.187
10. I skim the text first by noting characteristics like length and organization.	3.4	1.17
11. I try to get back on track when I lose concentration.	3.39	1.186
12. I underline or circle information in the text to help me remember it.	4.01	1.222
13. I adjust my reading speed according to what I'm reading.	3.75	1.229
14. I decide what to read closely and what to ignore.	3.83	0.942
15. I use reference materials such as dictionaries to help me understand what I read.	3.52	1.212
16. When text becomes difficult, I pay closer attention to what I'm reading.	3.68	1.306
17. I use tables, figures, and pictures in text to increase my understanding.	2.45	1.288
18. I stop from time to time and think about what I'm reading.	3.55	1.118
19. I use context clues to help me better understand what I'm reading.	3.3	1.185
20. I paraphrase (restate ideas in my own words) to better understand what I read.	2.94	1.312
21. I try to picture or visualize information to help remember what I read.	3.27	1.356
22. I use typographical aids like boldface and italics to identify key information.	2.58	1.272
23. I critically analyze and evaluate the information presented in the text.	3.32	1.188
24. I go back and forth in the text to find relationships among ideas in it.	3.54	1.118
25. I check my understanding when I come across conflicting information.	3.87	0.988
26. I try to guess what the material is about when I read.	3.97	0.898
27. When text becomes difficult, I re-read to increase my understanding.	3.89	1.115
28. I ask myself questions I like to have answered in the text.	3.11	1.209
29. I check to see if my guesses about the text are right or wrong.	3.76	1.155
30. I try to guess the meaning of unknown words or phrases.	3.87	1.042
Overall Mean	3.39	1.16

A frequency analysis was utilized to identify the total number of students in each range of awareness levels in addition to the overall mean. This data shows the distribution of participants

across the three levels, showing how many students have participated in each category. The results are presented in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3

Frequency of Participants Across Awareness Levels

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Low	9	5.7	5.7	5.7
	Mid	81	51.6	51.6	57.3
	High	67	42.7	42.7	100.0
	Total	157	100.0	100.0	

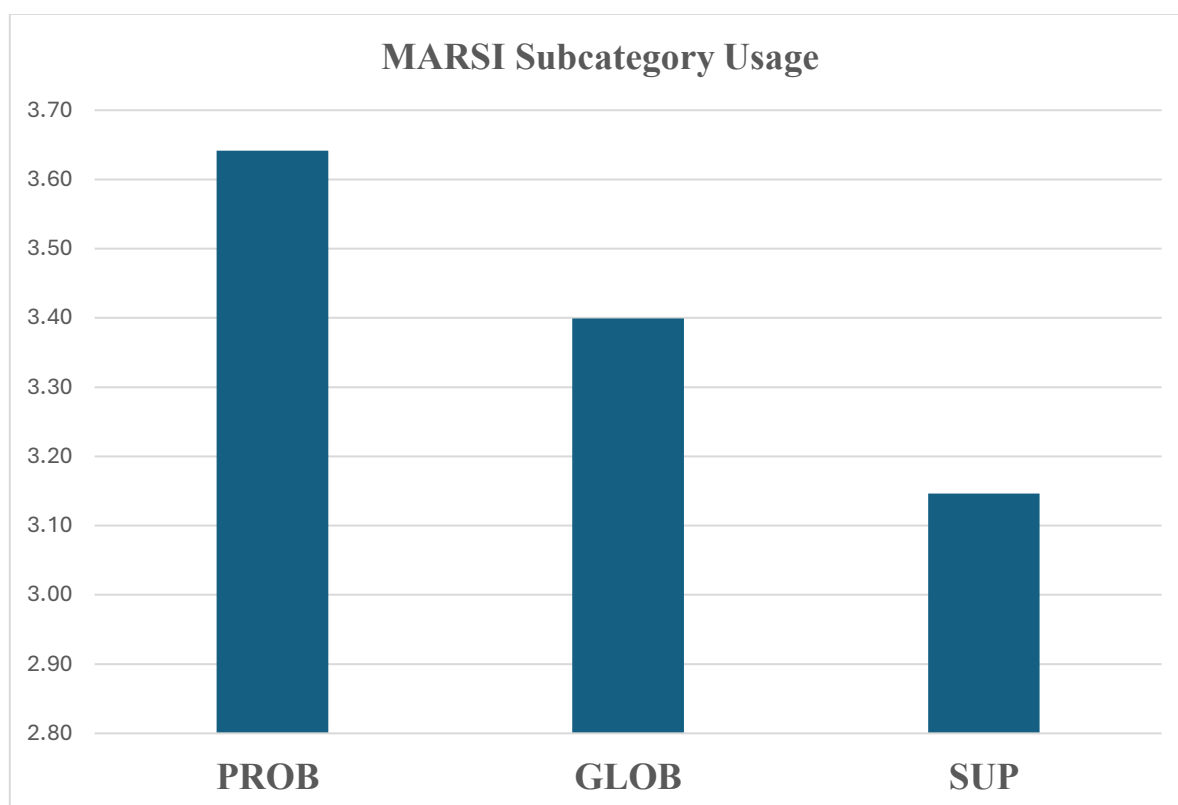
The results reveal that, from 157 participants, 5.7% had a low awareness of reading strategies ($n = 9$), 51.6% had a medium awareness ($n = 81$), and 42.7% had a high awareness. These findings suggest that a large portion of the participants ($n=148$) perceive themselves as strategic readers, falling onto the medium and high range, while only a small minority ($n=9$) fall into the low category. This suggests that Turkish EFL learners enrolled at Anadolu University generally possess a high degree of awareness regarding metacognitive strategies of reading.

4.2 Research Question 2: The Most Commonly Preferred MARSİ Subcategory by Turkish EFL Learners

In order to address the question, “What is the most frequently used category of reading strategies among EFL learners?” descriptive statistics were implied to calculate the mean scores of the inventory items corresponding to each subcategory of MARSİ: Global, Support, and Problem-Solving. This helps us find out which subcategory was mostly preferred by the participants based on their responses to the MARSİ scale. Figure 4.1 visually illustrates this data using bar chart.

Figure 4.1

Bar Chart Representing the Frequency of MARSI Subcategory Use



PROB = Problem-Solving Strategies; GLOB = Global Strategies; SUP = Support Strategies.

The findings of the descriptive analysis showed that, of the three categories, problem-solving strategies were utilized more often than other types ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 0.67$), followed by global reading strategies ($M = 3.40$, $SD = 0.58$) and support reading strategies ($M = 3.15$, $SD = 0.70$).

These findings reveal that, among Global, Support, and Problem-Solving reading strategies, students in the sample mainly employ immediate in-text strategies—like rereading to regain focus, modify reading speed, and inferring meaning from context—instead of support strategies like dictionaries or other organizational strategies like underlining, underlining, and highlighting key points.

For a more detailed description of which specific strategies were used more often by learners a frequency analysis was conducted. Each item in the inventory was calculated and grouped based on the category, *a. problem-solving*, *b. global* and *c. support* strategies. The results are as presented in tables 9-11.

a. Problem-Solving Strategies

The most frequently reported problem-solving strategy used by EFL learners was “When the text becomes difficult, I reread to increase my understanding” ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 1.12$), followed closely by “I try to guess the meaning of unknown words or phrases” ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 1.04$). Participants also commonly reported reading carefully to ensure understanding “I read slowly but carefully to be sure I understand what I’m reading,” ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 1.05$) and adjusting their reading speed based on the complexity of the text ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 1.23$).

Other commonly used strategies included taking a moment to reflect on the subject while reading ($M = 3.55$, $SD = 1.12$) and paying extra attention when the text became challenging ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 1.31$). These results indicate that learners commonly choose to refer to the text and adapt accordingly to overcome comprehension challenges.

Table 4.4

Frequency Analysis of Problem-Solving Strategies Used by EFL Students

Category	Strategy	Mean	Std. Deviation
PROB	8. I read slowly but carefully to be sure I understand what I’m reading.	3.75	1.049
PROB	11. I try to get back on track when I lose concentration.	3.39	1.186
PROB	13. I adjust my reading speed according to what I’m reading.	3.75	1.229
PROB	16. When text becomes difficult, I pay closer attention to what I’m reading.	3.68	1.306
PROB	18. I stop from time to time and think about what I’m reading.	3.55	1.118
PROB	21. I try to picture or visualize information to help remember what I read.	3.27	1.356
PROB	27. When text becomes difficult, I re-read to increase my understanding.	3.89	1.115
PROB	30. I try to guess the meaning of unknown words or phrases.	3.87	1.042

b. Global Strategies

The most frequently reported global strategy was “I try to guess what the material is about when I read” ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 0.90$), indicating that learners often try to activate their existing knowledge while reading to get ideas about the text. This was followed by “I check my understanding when I come across conflicting information” ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 0.99$) and “I decide what to read closely and what to ignore” ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 0.94$), suggesting that learners employ selective reading techniques based on their goals.

Other global strategies frequently reported include “I preview the text to see what it’s about before reading it” ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 1.13$), and “I check to see if my guesses about the text are right or wrong” ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 1.16$). Additionally, a significant number of students reported reading with a clear goal in mind ($M = 3.66$, $SD = 0.94$), showing intentionality in their reading behavior.

These findings reflect a moderate level of strategic planning and global comprehension monitoring among learners, though several other global strategies showed lower usage, indicating room for further instructional support.

Table 4.5

Frequency Analysis of Global Strategies Reported by EFL Learners

Category	Strategy	Mean	Std. Deviation
GLOB	1. I have a purpose in mind when I read.	3.66	0.937
GLOB	3. I think about what I know to help me understand what I read.	3.25	1.08
GLOB	4. I preview the text to see what it’s about before reading it.	3.78	1.134
GLOB	7. I think about whether the content of the text fits my reading purpose.	3.01	1.101
GLOB	10. I skim the text first by noting characteristics like length and organization.	3.4	1.17
GLOB	14. I decide what to read closely and what to ignore.	3.83	0.942
GLOB	17. I use tables, figures, and pictures in text to increase my understanding.	2.45	1.288

Table 4.5*Frequency Analysis of Global Strategies Used by EFL Learners (CONTINUE)*

Category	Strategy	Mean	Std. Deviation
GLOB	19. I use context clues to help me better understand what I'm reading.	3.3	1.185
GLOB	22. I use typographical aids like boldface and italics to identify key information.	2.58	1.272
GLOB	23. I critically analyze and evaluate the information presented in the text.	3.32	1.188
GLOB	25. I check my understanding when I come across conflicting information.	3.87	0.988
GLOB	26. I try to guess what the material is about when I read.	3.97	0.898
GLOB	29. I check to see if my guesses about the text are right or wrong.	3.76	1.155

c. Support Strategies

According to the MARSII findings analysis, several support reading strategies were reported as being utilized more frequently by participants than others.

As seen in Table 4.6, the highest reported support strategy was “I underline or circle information in the text to help me remember it” ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 1.22$), making it the highest reported item across all categories, suggesting that students rely heavily on this physical annotation strategy to retain information. Furthermore, students reported actively navigating in the text to identify connections between concepts ($M = 3.54$, $SD = 1.12$) and often accessing reference resources like dictionaries to reinforce their knowledge ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 1.21$).

Other support strategies fell just below the 3.50 threshold but still indicated moderate usage. For instance, asking oneself questions while reading ($M = 3.11$, $SD = 1.21$) and discussing the text with others ($M = 3.04$, $SD = 1.19$) showed occasional use. However, strategies such as summarizing ($M = 2.71$, $SD = 1.17$), paraphrasing ($M = 2.94$, $SD = 1.31$), taking notes ($M = 2.89$, $SD = 1.25$), and reading aloud as a way to increase understanding during difficult passages ($M = 2.56$, $SD = 1.49$) were among the least frequently reported.

These results suggest that while some support strategies are actively used, especially underlying, referencing, and text navigation — others that require more effort or metacognitive engagement (e.g., summarizing or paraphrasing) are less commonly applied by learners and may need more instructional emphasis in the EFL context.

Table 4.6

Frequency Analysis of Support Strategies Used by EFL Learners

Category	Strategy	Mean	Std. Deviation
SUP	2. I take notes while reading to help me understand what I read.	2.89	1.245
SUP	5. When text becomes difficult, I read aloud to help me understand what I read.	2.56	1.486
SUP	6. I summarize what I read to reflect on important information in the text.	2.71	1.172
SUP	9. I discuss what I read with others to check my understanding.	3.04	1.187
SUP	12. I underline or circle information in the text to help me remember it.	4.01	1.222
SUP	15. I use reference materials such as dictionaries to help me understand what I read.	3.52	1.212
SUP	20. I paraphrase (restate ideas in my own words) to better understand what I read.	2.94	1.312
SUP	24. I go back and forth in the text to find relationships among ideas in it.	3.54	1.118
SUP	28. I ask myself questions I like to have answered in the text.	3.11	1.209

4.3 Research Question 3: The relationship between reading proficiency scores and metacognitive awareness of EFL students

To investigate the third research question “Is there a significant relationship between EFL learners’ metacognitive awareness levels and reading scores?” Pearson correlation analysis was conducted. Table 4.7 displays the outcome of this analysis.

Table 4.7*The Pearson Correlation Analysis Results*

		Reading Score	MARSI MEAN
Reading Score	Pearson Correlation	1	-.019*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.817*
	N	157	157
MARSI Mean	Pearson Correlation	-.019	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.817	
	N	157	157

Table 4.7 illustrates the outcomes of the correlational analysis, which showed a very low negative correlation ($r = -0.019$, $p = .817$) between the learners' reading scores and their degrees of metacognitive awareness. The analysis indicates that the correlation between the two variables is not statistically significant. In other words, students' metacognitive awareness of reading strategies does not appear to be related to their reading comprehension scores.

In summary, the study's quantitative results showed that, according to their own assessments and answers on the MARSI inventory, a significant number of the sample's students showed medium-to-high metacognitive awareness of reading strategies. Furthermore, it was discovered that, out of the three subcategories of the inventory, problem-solving strategies were used more often than global or support reading methods. Finally, the research showed no statistically significant relationship between reading scores and learners' awareness levels. These results constitute the quantitative dimension of the study and are further reinforced by qualitative insights discussed in the following section.

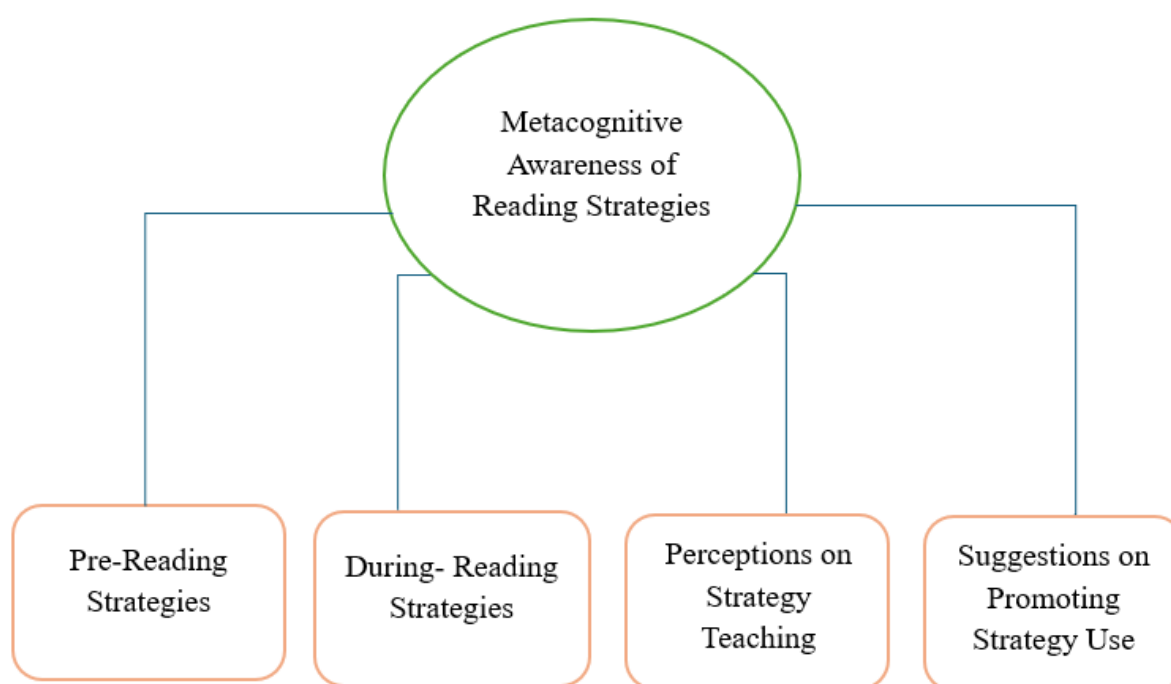
4.4 Research Question 4: EFL Learners' Perceptions on their Reading Strategy Awareness and Use

The fourth research question covers the qualitative phase of the study. The goal of this question was to explore learners' metacognitive awareness of reading strategies in greater depth and to elicit real life examples of their strategy use in academic reading contexts. The following section presents the results of the thematic analysis of the EFL learners' semi-structured interview responses.

Following Braun Clark's (2006) six-phase method, the collected data was examined through thematic analysis for coding and identifying themes. This led to four major themes and related sub-themes to be identified. The themes are: (i) Pre-Reading Strategies, (ii) During Reading Strategies, (iii) Opinions on Strategy Teaching, and (iv) Suggestions for EFL Teachers. The thematic framework of the major themes is represented in Figure 4.2 below. Each theme will be discussed in detail with their corresponding sub-themes, in the following sections.

Figure 4.2

Major Themes Obtained through Thematic Analysis



(i) Pre-Reading Strategies

Out of the four major themes obtained from the thematic analysis, the first one considered is the Pre-Reading Strategies. This theme includes the strategies that students reported as a way of preparing themselves for reading academic English texts. A range of approaches to reading were mentioned such as skimming, scanning, making inferences of the topic and reading the title in order to make the reading task more manageable for themselves. Table 4.8 presents a detailed overview of this theme through its subthemes and frequency counts.

Table 4.8*Theme 1: Pre-Reading Strategies*

Subthemes	Level A	Level B	Level C	Level D	Total mentions
Skimming	0	2	3	2	7
Assessing text length	0	0	2	0	2
Vocabulary Familiarity	0	1	0	1	2
Scanning	2	1	2	2	7
Looking for Main Ideas	2	1	1	1	5
Inferring topic	1	1	1	1	4
Reading the title	0	2	1	1	4
Making predictions	0	2	1	0	3
Reading the questions	0	0	2	1	3

As presented in table 4.8, one of the most frequently mentioned strategies was to skim through the text prior to reading (n=7). Participants described that they generally use this strategy for several purposes. Some mentioned that they skim to gain a general sense of the length of the text is and some to get a quick look at the vocabulary used in the text. For example, participant 5 mentioned that:

“I check whether it’s [the text] long or short, glance at the title, and try to sense what it’s about. Then I start reading.” (Participant 5, level C)

“If I’m supposed to answer questions below the text, I first read the questions and the options... Sometimes I scan the last or first paragraph and try to find the main topic.” (Participant 12, level D)

Another student mentioned that prior to reading, he first looked through the text to check for the unfamiliar vocabulary in the text.

“First, I look at the words, I sort of scan the passage to see if the vocabulary is familiar to me or not. Then I begin reading.” (Participant 2, level B)

Using skimming for such purposes shows that students are trying to make certain presumptions about the text they are about to read. This helps them become cognitively aware of the context

and helps them make connections between the ideas they are about to read. Moreover, it provides them with a sense of preparation on what they should be expecting from the text prior to reading.

Participants also commonly preferred to use the scanning strategy prior to reading (n=7). They mentioned that they briefly look through the text to locate where the key words and main ideas of the text could be (n=5). Through scanning for the keywords, students show that they are analyzing the parts of the text that grab their attention and that they would need to read more carefully later. As mentioned by participant 8:

“Usually, I read to understand and try to pick out keywords. That’s my main focus.”
(Participant 8, level A)

Apart from using the overall text as a starting point, some learners reported that they initially read certain parts of the text to get an idea of the context (n=4). For instance, students mentioned that they read the topic sentences or just the introductory paragraph of the text to make inferences about the overall topic.

“If it’s a familiar type of passage, I might go straight into reading it. But if it’s something more complex or unfamiliar, I first look at the main sentence and then try to make sense of the rest.” (Participant 7, level A)

Similarly, a portion of the learners stated that the first thing they do when reading an academic text is use the title as a means for making predictions about the text (n=4). This results in readers activating their prior knowledge and setting certain expectations based on it before reading. The use of this strategy indicates that students consciously rely on using their prior knowledge as a tool to make comprehension of the text easier. As explained by participant 4:

“First, I read the title. Based on the title, I try to predict the content of the text. That way I can understand it more easily while reading.” (Participant 4, level B)

A few learners mentioned that reading the comprehension questions acts as a guide to the reading text (n=3). They explained that first they go through the comprehension questions and then start reading with the purpose of finding answers to the questions. As participant 12 said:

“If I’m supposed to answer questions below the text, I first read the questions and the options. Then I try to find matching or synonymous words in the text to solve it more quickly.” (Participant 12, level D)

Overall, the strategies grouped under this theme indicate that the EFL learners are attempting to use different parts of the text to engage their prior knowledge, set certain expectations and make predictions through the mentioned pre-reading strategies. The findings show that participants from the lower proficiency levels (levels C and D), demonstrated a more frequent use of pre-reading strategies (n=22), compared to those from the higher proficiency participants – levels A and B n=15). In the next section, the participants’ experiences while reading an academic English text will be reported.

(ii) During-Reading Strategies

The second major theme that was obtained from the analysis was During-Reading Strategies. This theme refers to the strategies learners use while actively reading an academic English text to ensure and simplify comprehension, check their understanding and to find solutions for the challenges they encounter in long or complex texts. The participants reported a range of strategies, including both cognitive and metacognitive approaches. Table 4.9 presents this theme and its associated sub-themes, followed by explanations in the following section.

Table 4.9

Theme 2.1: During-Reading Strategies

Subthemes	Level A	Level B	Level C	Level D	Total Mentions
Guessing Meaning	3	4	3	2	12
Unknown Words' Meaning	2	3	3	2	10
Making Predictions	2	3	2	2	9
Discussing with Others	1	2	1	0	4
Note-taking	0	2	0	1	3
Using questions to guide reading	0	1	2	0	3
Identifying key points	2	2	1	0	5
Visual Annotations	2	2	2	0	6
Drawing Arrows	2	0	0	0	2
Underlining	2	2	2	0	6

One of the most common strategies used during reading was making guesses of unknown vocabulary. Almost all learners (n=12) mentioned that they use textual information to make guesses about unfamiliar words while reading as it avoids the issue of being interrupted (n=10).

“I read the test four or five times. Then I try to come up with the Turkish translation myself-without using a dictionary. I try to guess the meaning of the unknown words from the flow of the sentence.” (Participant 10, level D)

In addition to guessing the meaning of unknown words, participants also mentioned that they use the context to deduce the ideas within the text as well (n=9). Participants 4 and 9 explain their strategy use as follows:

“I try to understand the sentences before and after the difficult part. Then I make a guess about the meaning based on context.” (Participant 4, level B)

“For example, if the text mentions someone losing a pen and later says another person “took” it, I infer the pen was lost. That kind of logical connection helps me understand the meaning of new words.” (Participant 9, level C)

As shown in table 4.9, only three learners (n=3) mentioned that they use the comprehension questions as an initial reference point to direct them to the key ideas in the text. This strategy helps them have an idea of what information they should be looking for, which results in reading more carefully. Participant 2 explained that:

“When I solve questions, I look for specific words in the paragraph that match the question. I try to find exact matches. It doesn’t always work but when it does, it helps me a lot.” (Participant 2, level B)

Learners reported that when they have a difficulty in understanding complex or advanced academic texts such as scientific articles or historical texts, they discuss their ideas with their friends or teachers to clarify meaning (n=4). Participant 9 shared that:

“Sometimes I misunderstand things, so I frequently discuss with my friends. I ask, “What did you understand from this?” and we talk it through together.” (Participant 9, level C)

Participant 9 further explains the benefits of using this strategy in increasing comprehension and checking understanding:

“In high school, we had literature exams based on books. Sometimes I didn’t understand a character’s motivations, and my teachers helped me see things from a broader perspective. I realized that I often interpret things based on my own ethics or logic, which isn’t always accurate. I had to learn to interpret based on the context of the story.” (Participant 9, level C)

Some stated that taking short notes of the key ideas of each paragraph helps them better understand and remember the content of the text (n=3). In addition to notetaking, some mentioned that they write down short summaries of the key ideas in simpler terms to help them remember the flow of the text they are reading.

“If it’s about history or science, I sometimes write a short summary below the paragraph. Like a few keywords to capture the meaning” (Participant 3, level B)

Five interviewees reported that they to look for key ideas in the text (table 4.9). Commonly learners reporting the use of visual annotations such as underlining and drawing arrows as a strategy to highlight the key points while reading a text (n=6). As presented in table 4.9, six participants mentioned that underlining the key points helps them increase their comprehension and two participants mentioned drawing arrows helps them keep track of the text. Participants 1 and 8 gave clear examples of how they use this strategy during reading:

“...underlining and for example drawing arrows and writing “this part is about this” [notetaking] really helps me focus and makes it easier to understand.” (Participant 1, level B)

“I underline the important parts. I especially focus on conclusion sentences that summarize paragraphs. I underline them and try to identify the main idea of each paragraph.” (Participant 8, level A)

Participant 5 further emphasizes how underlining can be effective while reading:

“I underline the important parts—at least the sentences I can understand. That way, I can try to piece things together and ignore the words I don’t know. I try to get the meaning from the sentences themselves.” (Participant 5, level C)

In summary, the during reading strategies that students have reported indicate that they have an adequate understanding of various reading approaches aimed at maximizing the effectiveness of their reading and to minimize the difficulty level of the task. The findings in Table 4.9 report that a larger portion of the during strategies reported were from the responses of higher proficiency level students from levels A and B (n=37) whereas fewer strategies were mentioned by those from lower proficiency levels C and D (n=23). This finding could be an indicator of the impact of proficiency level on strategy use.

Despite the range of reading strategies, they employ while reading, when asked what makes reading an English academic text a challenge, they reported a variety of obstacles that hinders their ability to extract meaning from text successfully. The subsequent section will report the challenges that the learners reported during the interviews. Table 4.10 below presents the codes of the second sub-theme of the During-Reading theme. This subtheme includes the common challenges that learners reported they face while reading English academic texts and is followed by the strategies they use to overcome such issues.

Table 4.10*Theme 2.2: During Reading – Challenges*

Subthemes	Level A	Level B	Level C	Level D	Total Mentions
Content Unfamiliarity	1	2	1	0	4
Text Complexity	1	1	2	2	6
Genre Difficulty	0	0	2	1	3
Complex Grammar	2	0	0	3	5
Losing Focus	3	3	2	3	11
Underlining	0	1	1	0	2
Rereading	2	2	3	3	10
Giving Up Reading	0	1	0	0	1
Taking a Break	2	1	1	2	6
Reviewing previous notes	0	1	0	0	1
Lexical Difficulty	2	2	2	3	9
Dictionary	1	2	1	0	4
English Definition	1	2	1	0	4
Translation Tools	2	2	1	3	8
Word Level Translation	1	4	1	2	8
Sentence Level Translation	1	2	0	2	5

As shown in the table 4.10, participants expressed that the content of the text can be a major factor influencing their comprehension (n=4). Students mentioned that reading becomes difficult, especially when the text is about a topic that they are unfamiliar with or that they are uninterested in, which makes understanding difficult. Participant 1 mentioned that:

“I usually struggle with topics that don’t interest me. I have to read them multiple times. It becomes really challenging for me. Especially boring topics are difficult.”
(Participant 1, level B)

Another common issue was the complexity of the language used in the text (n=6). For example, texts with longer sentences or having to read texts that are more advanced than the readers’ language level make reading a challenge.

“When the vocabulary is very academic or when long sentences are crammed into one, I struggle” (Participant 7, level A)

A few students stated that the challenging nature of the text can also depend on the genre of the text (n=3). For instance, it was mentioned that reading academic texts such as scientific articles,

or articles in general take more effort to understand rather than a novel or story. Participants 10 and 3 explained their experiences as such:

“If it’s a story, I can follow the flow. But if it’s academic, I usually read it several times. If I understand the first paragraph well, I can often predict what will follow.” (Participant 10, level D)

“I struggle with academic texts. Mostly because of the vocabulary.” (Participant 3, level B)

The grammatical structures and patterns used in the text were another challenge repeatedly mentioned by the learners (n=5). Participants stated that long, complicated grammatical structures such as relative clauses can be confusing.

“When reading more advanced texts, I struggle more with grammar than vocabulary. Vocabulary is something I can overcome, but grammar makes it more difficult. Sometimes I ask for help to understand sentence structures. I break down the sentences piece by piece, figure out which part refers to what, and then I try to reassemble the meaning.” (Participant 6, level A)

Moreover, the findings presented in table 4.10 revealed that losing focus during reading, especially during long reading and texts that were out of the students’ interest, was also another major issue common among the learners (n=11). Therefore, when asked how they overcome this issue the certain strategies to regain their focus on the task were mentioned. A large portion of the participants (n=11) responded that they overcame this issue by re-reading either from the start or from the section that they got distracted.

“I try to refocus and reread the text from the beginning. If I’ve lost focus, I can’t understand it anyway, so I start over.” (Participant 5, level C)

Another strategy was to underline the sections that resulted in losing focus in the first place (n=2). One participant said that they prefer to take a look at the notes they have taken on the sides of the text to regain their concentration back on the topic. Others said that if they notice that focusing is becoming challenging, they take a break from reading and continue again with a fresh start (n=6). For instance, participant 1 stated that:

“I underline the part where I got distracted, go back and reread up to that point, and then continue.” He continued: “If I’ve taken notes beforehand, I reread those to recall what I was focusing on and what I’ve read so far. Then I try to continue based on that. But if I’m still unfocused, I start reading again from the beginning.” (Participant 1, level B)

“I usually lose focus if there are too many unfamiliar words. Then I start reading the same part again, I rewind and start over.” (Participant 11, level D)

In contrast to these coping strategies, one participant admitted that they tend to give up when they are distracted:

“If I lose focus, I just stop reading. I don’t force myself to continue.” (Participant 2, level B)

Table 4.10 shows that lexical difficulty was one of the most common obstacles that hindered learners’ comprehension when reading an English academic text (n=9). Participants widely acknowledged that encountering unfamiliar words during reading tasks is a primary barrier to comprehension. Participants 3 and 13 stated that:

“I usually struggle with academic texts. Mostly because of the vocabulary.”
(Participant 3, level B)

“In some texts, there are a lot of unfamiliar words. That definitely makes it difficult.”
(Participant 13, level C)

Most of the students also depended on using external tools such as dictionaries, online and paper back (n=4), and a variety of translation applications (n=8). They mainly opted for such tools when encountered lexical difficulties of complex sentences. Many students reported that they use translation apps such as ‘Tureng’ and other online dictionaries for word-level translation (n=8). While some said that they prefer looking up for the English definitions directly (n=4). Participant 4 justified their preferences by stating that:

“I prefer using a dictionary. They often provide the meaning in English too, which helps me remember better. I think I’ve improved my vocabulary that way.”
(Participant 4, level B)

In some cases, students mentioned that they also tend to use Google Translate to translate an entire sentence or paragraph to ease comprehension (n=5). For example, participant 3 explained that:

“I use them in two ways. Sometimes I look up the meaning of specific words or expressions. Other times, if I don’t want to spend too much effort, I translate the entire sentence or passage.” (participant 3, level B)

However, some students also mentioned that they do not rely too much on this approach as it can be misleading or unreliable. Participant 8 shared their experience as follows:

“I use Tureng and ChatGPT sometimes. They provide English explanations, which help me remember better.” (Participant 8, level A)

“Although Google Translate isn’t always reliable, I still use it for individual words—not full sentences. I also keep a physical dictionary on hand.” (Participant 9, level C)

Overall, while the findings indicate that students are able to find their way around reading challenges, it also reveals that there is still room for more support in developing more effective strategies to minimize the challenges they face while reading. Moreover, the data presented in Table 4.10 illustrates that students from both higher proficiency (levels A & B) and the lower proficiency (levels C & D) groups encounter similar reading challenges (n=45 and n=43, respectively).

(iii) Perceptions on Reading Strategy Instruction

The next theme that emerged from the qualitative data was the perceptions of the participants on how the reading strategies are being instructed in the EFL classroom alongside their personal experiences (Table 4.11). From this theme three other subthemes were obtained, which are: the reading strategies explicitly taught by EFL teachers (Table 4.11), EFL learners’ perceptions regarding the independently learned reading strategies (Table 4.12), and the learners’ perceptions of ineffective reading strategies (Table 4.13). This section demonstrates the findings of this theme and its subthemes as presented in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11*Theme 3.1: Reading Strategies Explicitly Taught by EFL Teachers*

Subthemes	Level A	Level B	Level C	Level D	Total Mentions
Making Predictions	1	0	1	2	4
Keyword identification	0	1	0	2	3
Paraphrasing using synonyms	0	1	0	1	2
Recording and reading aloud	0	0	1	0	1
No strategy taught	0	2	2	0	4

Table 4.11 presents the reading strategies that learners recognized being taught explicitly in the EFL classroom. Among these strategies were using context clues such as topic sentences and introduction paragraphs to make predictions (n=4), keyword identification where students were guided to scan the text and identify key words (n=3), replacing unknown words with synonyms to find their meaning and when applicable (n=2), and one student mentioned that they were taught to record themselves reading to encourage reading aloud. Participant 11 illustrated the use of the prediction strategy by sharing their classroom experiences:

“We used to focus on keywords. When dealing with a larger text, we’d look at key words – adjectives, pronouns, verbs. That way I could get an idea of what the text is about.” (Participant 11, level D)

Participant 1 provided further details on the strategy taught by explaining that:

“My teacher taught me to focus on the keywords in the question and locate them in the paragraph. The answer is often clearly given around those keywords. I use that strategy too, especially when time is limited. It helps me filter the information.” (Participant 1, level B)

However, some students bluntly responded that they were not being taught any reading strategies in the lessons (n=4). For instance, participants 2 and 9 stated that:

“Honestly, no. The classes are quite boring, so I don’t pay much attention. (Participant 2, level B)

“No, I didn’t even know these were called strategies until recently. I just did what worked for me, and only later realized they had names.” (Participant 9, level C)

These varied views on instruction in the classroom indicate that instruction on reading strategy is being given; however, the students perceive it differently as a result of multiple factors such as attention to the lesson, level of motivation, their proficiency level, etc. Moreover, a number of students stated that they developed their own strategies through their personal efforts. These findings are as demonstrated in the table below (Table 4.12).

Table 4.12

Theme 3.2: Perceptions of Independently Discovered Reading Strategies

Subthemes	Level A	Level B	Level C	Level D	Total Mentions
Visualizing Text	1	2	1	0	4
Reading Questions Before Text	1	2	0	0	3
Scanning for Keywords	0	2	0	2	4
Regular Practice	2	1	1	0	4
Translating to L1	1	0	0	0	1

As shown in table 4.12, one of the most commonly reported self-discovered reading strategies is visualization (n=4). Participants explained that since they have a strong imagination, they discovered that visualizing and creating mental images while reading supports their comprehension of the text. Participant 1 explains:

“I try to visualize the text using my visual intelligence. If it’s scientific content, I imagine I’m the one explaining it like a news anchor. If it’s a story, I imagine I’ve lived through that experience. So, I visualize and imagine, and that helps me understand. This way, I can answer the questions correctly.” (Participant 1, level B)

Following visualization strategy, three students reported that they found out that reading the comprehension questions before reading the text was a practical starting point as it forms a sense of purpose for reading. For example, participant 8 reported that:

“Especially in multiple-choice tasks, I first look at the questions. Then I read the passage with a focus on those areas. I visually search where to concentrate more. That’s a method I use regularly” (Participant 8, level A)

Among the other commonly reported reading strategies are scanning for key words (n=4), regular practice through the use of workbooks and extensive reading habits (n=4), and lastly, using translation to ensure comprehension (n=1).

As illustrated in the table (Table 4.12), learners with a higher proficiency level have reported a greater number of strategies they perceived as independently discovered (n=11). This may suggest that lower proficiency level learners struggle with discovering and applying strategies on their own compared to higher proficiency level learners. This highlights the significance of explicit strategy instruction especially for lower proficiency level learners to guide their strategic reading development.

Finally, when students were asked if they had any experiences when the reading strategies failed to enhance their understanding, they reflected on the instances when the reading strategies did not work efficiently. In this section, their responses along with their justifications are presented (Table 4.13).

Table 4.13

Theme 3.3: Perceptions of Ineffective Reading Strategies

Subthemes	Level A	Level B	Level C	Level D	Total Mentions
Text complexity impacts effectiveness of strategy use	0	2	2	2	6
Learners' low proficiency levels hindered effective strategy use	0	1	1	2	4
Guessing meaning perceived as unreliable	2	1	0	0	3
Visual annotations perceived as ineffective	0	1	0	0	1
Synonym substitution can lead to misunderstanding	1	1	0	0	2
Affective factors influence effectiveness of strategy use	1	1	0	1	3

As shown in the table above, learners reported that the complexity of the text they are reading is a major factor influencing the effectiveness of the strategies they employ (n=6). For instance, participants 11 and 13 explain their experiences as such:

“If the text is way above my level, then they [reading strategies] don’t really help.”
(Participant 11, level D)

“During the placement exam. The vocabulary was so unfamiliar. Honestly, my biggest fear is not understanding the question. If you understand the question, you can at least try. But if you don’t, everything just falls apart.” (Participant 13, level C)

Some students explained that the success of the strategies employed was influenced by learners’ proficiency level, that the strategies did not seem to help increase comprehension due to their

low language proficiency at the early phases of the language learning (n=4). Additionally, several participants mentioned that deducing word meanings from context was occasionally inaccurate and led to misunderstandings (n=3). It was also pointed out that trying to guess work can result in a loss of time, especially when encountered with technical terms that cannot be inferred from the context.

“I don’t think it’s [guessing meaning] useless, but sometimes it’s not worth the effort if the word’s meaning is not obvious. So, I just skip it” (Participant 3, level C)

Similar ideas were shared about using synonyms and paraphrasing, stating that it could sometimes lead to misunderstandings and result in unwanted outcomes (n=2). Moreover, using visual annotations such as underlining (n=1) was also noted as an ineffective strategy as it disrupts the flow of reading. Lastly, participants also mentioned that motivation, tiredness, time constraints, test anxiety as factors that can influence the effectiveness of the reading strategies (n=3).

“Honestly, underlining sometimes doesn’t help-it works about 50% of the time. Sometimes it’s not effective, depending on me. If I am distracted or can’t concentrate, it fails... if the text is boring, it’s a struggle no matter what strategy I use.” (Participant 1. Level A)

Overall, it can be interpreted that the effectiveness of the reading strategies can vary depending on various factors. These responses show that learners are to a certain extent aware of how to make efficient use of strategies; however, they still need to be instructed to develop their strategy use to avoid such instances and to have alternatives when specific strategies fail. Findings revealed that higher proficiency level students reported more instances where strategy use was ineffective (n=11) compared to lower proficiency groups (n=8). This indicates that strategy training is a need across all language proficiency level groups.

(iv) Suggestions on Promoting Strategy Use

The final theme that developed from the qualitative data was the learners’ responses to their suggestions on how their teachers can support them to enhance their metacognitive awareness of reading strategies (Table 4.14). The following section presents learners perspectives on potential adjustments in the EFL lessons with the objective of enhancing reading strategy awareness. The suggestions given are represented in the table below (Table 4.14).

Table 4.14*Theme 4: EFL Learners' Perspectives on Promoting Reading Strategy Awareness*

Subthemes	Level A	Level B	Level C	Level D	Total Mentions
Incorporate regular reading practice	3	1	1	2	7
Encourage frequent reading for strategy development	2	2	1	1	6
Need for reading strategies instruction	2	0	1	3	6
Provide varied reading tasks and methods	2	2	1	1	6
Start with short, simple, and engaging texts	1	1	2	0	4
Guide students in developing reading strategies	2	3	0	0	5
Encourage students to explore and discover strategies	0	1	0	0	1

Although the findings so far have revealed that learners have a moderate level of awareness among learners regarding reading strategies, majority of the students expressed that there is not enough emphasis on reading comprehension in the EFL lessons. To resolve this issue, one of the most reported solutions was that more time should be dedicated to reading comprehension practice during the EFL lessons (n=7). Participant 5 stated that:

“I’d suggest that teachers give students a lot of practice—like short story readings. Something simple and understandable to help build skills.” (Participant 5, level C)

In addition to more practice time, learners also reported the need for clear strategy instruction in order to increase awareness of strategy use (n=6). This highlights that students are aware of the critical role instruction plays in internalization of the reading strategies. Participant 2 emphasized the importance of reading instruction:

“Honestly, I don’t think anyone really cares about reading passages. In class, no one pays much attention either. But we get a lot of reading questions in exams—about 15 questions—so I think teachers should focus more on this... Teachers should spend more time on reading and practicing strategies during class. It’s not emphasized enough.” (Participant 2, level B)

It was further suggested that teachers integrate diverse reading tasks and pedagogical approaches to ensure that learning is taking place (n=6). A practical suggestion mentioned by a few students was that the strategies should be taught gradually starting with short, simple and engaging texts, especially for learners with lower proficiency levels (n= 4). Participants 3 and 6 explain their ideas as follows:

“I think it definitely needs to be developed. When it comes to English, the four skills—reading, writing, speaking, and listening—are all important. Reading is one of the key ones. Teachers could start small with more engaging texts or use materials that students find interesting. They could ask for summaries, use digital resources, or come up with creative tasks to make reading practice more effective” (Participant 3, level B)

“I think teachers should sometimes bring academic texts or professional articles into the classroom. I felt like we didn’t do enough of that. It felt like I had to figure it all out on my own. It would help if they pointed out which parts meant what and explained the structure.” (Participant 6, level A)

In addition to getting the opportunity to explore the strategies, students emphasized that strategy use can vary from student to student, therefore, teachers should help them find those strategies that align with their reading habits, rather than enforcing the same strategies to all (n=5). Participants mentioned that through guided instruction students should be supported to discover strategies that complement their learning style. For instance, participant 4 explains:

“First of all, they shouldn’t generalize. Students need to know themselves, and teachers should offer different methods that suit each student. For example, my vocabulary method may work for me, but someone else might find it confusing.” (Participant 4, level B)

Participant 8 mentioned that there should be more opportunities for exploring and discovering reading strategies (n=1).

“I think in prep school we focus too much on vocabulary. Even I try to memorize vocabulary more than I practice reading. Before exams, we often just go through unknown words instead of reading full paragraphs, because we want to save time and learn quickly.” (Participant 8, level A)

As shown in Table 4.14, the majority of the suggestions discussed were reported by higher proficiency level participants (n=22) when compared to lower proficiency level participants (n=13). This outcome highlights the significant need to improve strategy instruction across all proficiency levels.

To provide a comprehensive interpretation of the study, the MARS items, the data derived quantitative findings, and the qualitative data were brought together and analyzed. The result is presented in Table 4.15 which illustrates the connection between the thematic codes obtained

from the interview data and the three categories of the MARSİ instrument. The table reveals that interview participants have reported strategies that closely correspond to the items within the MARSİ inventory. This overlap supports the fact that a substantial number of learners possess a moderate to high level of metacognitive awareness of reading strategies, as reflected in the quantitative data.

As presented in the table below, most of the reading strategies reported by the participants align with the problem-solving category, suggesting that this is one of the most commonly preferred strategy type among Turkish EFL learners (n=8), followed by global reading strategies (n=8) and the least used strategy type being support reading strategies (n=5) which is also equivalent to the quantitative findings of the study (Table 4.15).

Figure 4.15

Alignment of Thematic Analysis Codes with MARSİ Categories

Themes	Strategy/Subthemes	Aligned MARSİ Category
Pre-reading strategies	Skimming	Global Reading Strategies
	Scanning	Global Reading Strategies
	Reading the Text Title	Global Reading Strategies
	Assessing Text Length	Global Reading Strategies
	Looking for Main Ideas	Global Reading Strategies
	Skimming for Unfamiliar Vocabulary	Problem-Solving Strategies
During-reading strategies	Using Questions to Guide Reading	Global Reading Strategies
	Identifying Key Points	Problem-Solving Strategies
	Guessing Meaning	Problem-Solving Strategies
	Making Predictions	Problem-Solving Strategies
	Context Clues	Problem-Solving Strategies
	Unknown Words	Problem-Solving Strategies
	Discussing with Others	Support Strategies
	Note-Taking	Support Strategies
	Visual Annotation	Support Strategies
	Rereading	Problem-Solving Strategies
Coping Strategies for Challenges	Taking a Break	Problem-Solving Strategies
	Reviewing Previous Notes	Support Strategies
	Using Dictionaries and Translation Tools	Support Strategies

Overall, this alignment between the qualitative findings and the MARSİ categories demonstrates the strong consistency between learners' interview responses and their self-report responses on the MARSİ inventory. Moreover, it supports the reliability of the quantitative data in reflecting learners' strategy use therefore reinforcing the constancy of the thematic analysis results. This also reinforces the role of semi-structured interviews to gain a deeper and more in-depth understanding of learners' strategic reading behaviors.



5. Discussions and Conclusion

In this chapter, the key findings from both the quantitative and qualitative findings of this study are synthesized and interpreted through comparison with previous research in order to reach sound conclusions. This chapter also presents practical implications for the results and offers suggestions for further research in this area. The ultimate purpose of this chapter is to draw final conclusions regarding the research questions.

The objective of this study is to explore Turkish EFL learners' metacognitive knowledge of reading strategies and how it relates to their reading comprehension scores by interpreting the results of the study's quantitative and qualitative components combined. The research questions examined the level of awareness of reading strategies, the most frequently preferred strategy type, the relation between metacognitive awareness level and comprehension, and finally the learners' experiences when reading academic English texts. The first three research questions addressed the quantitative component of the study while the fourth question addressed the qualitative data. Based on the study's findings, several conclusions were reached which are presented in alignment with the order of the research questions.

5.1 Interpretation of Quantitative Findings

a. Research Question 1 – What is the level of metacognitive awareness of reading strategies among Turkish EFL learners?

The first research question in this study aimed to find out the metacognitive awareness level of the participants regarding reading strategies. The results of the descriptive analysis of the self-report MARSİ inventory revealed that the Turkish EFL learners at the Anadolu University School of Foreign Languages have a moderate level of metacognitive awareness of reading strategies ($M=3.39$, $SD=1.16$). This finding aligns with the results of several other studies conducted in EFL context. For instance, Saricoban and Behjoo (2017) found that freshmen EFL learners demonstrated a moderate level of metacognitive awareness of reading strategies. Similarly, a mixed-methods study conducted by Al Basheer Ben Ali & Al-khresheh (2023) with Saudi EFL learners also revealed a moderate level of metacognitive awareness among the participants. These findings suggest a common trend in the metacognitive awareness levels of EFL learners from contexts where exposure to English language is limited. However, the study conducted on undergraduate students majoring in Linguistics by Ay (2013) revealed contrasting results. The participants of this study revealed a high level of metacognitive awareness of reading strategies. This difference could possibly be the result of the participants' academic

background, where they are naturally more engaged with language structure hence resulting in a higher level of metacognitive awareness.

Moreover, researchers have described readers with a high level of metacognitive awareness of reading strategies as more proficient and effective readers (Mokhtary and Sheory, 2002). High metacognitive awareness of reading strategies implies that the learners are intentionally planning, monitoring and evaluating their reading process which greatly impacts the outcome of their comprehension. Similarly, Anderson (2002) claims that skilled readers adapt a strategic and purposeful approach to reading, often pausing to reflect on their understanding and adjusting when engaged with a text. Therefore, according to previous research, it can be inferred that although the participants of the current study have an adequate awareness level of the reading strategies, there still remains room for further development of self-regulatory skills.

One possible reason for the moderate awareness level of the participants of this study could be due to limited exposure and instruction time dedicated to reading strategy instruction in the EFL classroom. Regular exposure to planning, monitoring and evaluating strategies should be incorporated in the reading sessions of the EFL lessons. Previous research has supported the positive impact of explicit strategy instruction on developing reading comprehension (Avgeria, 2022; Yapp et al., 2021). Therefore, it can be deduced that insufficient focus on exposure and explicit reading strategy instruction could be resulting in students' current level of metacognitive awareness.

To summarize, the findings show that the Turkish EFL learners are moderately aware of the reading strategies which can be further be developed through support from strategy instruction and exposure to the effective use of them in reading English academic texts.

b. Research question 2 - What are the most frequently utilized categories of reading strategies among Turkish EFL learners?

The second question of the study aimed to identify which subcategory of reading strategies as considered in MARSİ is the most frequently used among Turkish EFL learners. The findings in the present study showed that problem-solving strategies ($M=3.64$, $SD=0.067$) were the most frequently used type of strategies during reading English academic texts followed by Global Strategies ($M=3.40$, $SD=0.58$) and then Support Strategies ($M=3.15$, $SD=0.70$). This pattern is parallel with the findings of several other studies previously conducted. As an example, the results of the research conducted by Sarıçoban and Behjoo (2017) revealed that freshman EFL learners tend to prefer using problem-solving reading strategies while engaged in academic

reading texts. Similarly, Annury et al. (2019) observed that Indonesian university level students also most commonly used problem-solving strategies followed by global and support strategies. More recent studies conducted by Kusumawardana and Akhiriyah (2022) and Yudhodibroto and Lolita (2024) also revealed similar results indicating that learners mostly rely on guessing, re-reading, and visualization type of strategies during reading comprehension tasks as they are an immediate solution to the challenges that rise.

In a foundational study on metacognition and reading, Mokhtari and Sheorey (2001) reported that learners with moderate to high proficiency levels preferred using problem-solving strategies when reading. In the study, the researchers refer to problem-solving strategies as monitoring tools in metacognitive strategies. This indicates that the learners in the current study can identify obstacles that hinder their comprehension, and employ deliberate actions such as rereading, guessing meaning of vocabulary and visualization to overcome reading challenges. Therefore, this implies that the participants of the current study are capable of active monitoring comprehension and cope with the challenges they encounter to enhance comprehension.

Following Problem-Solving Strategies, findings showed that global strategies were the next most frequently used strategies according to the findings of this study. Similar results were found in the study conducted among Indonesian university students (Annury et al., 2019). This indicates that learners are also aware of planning out their reading process through predictions and previewing strategies before reading. Finally, the lower use of support reading strategies indicates that learners prefer to use the text itself to make conclusions on the meaning rather than making use of external tools such as dictionaries or discussing with others.

One of the explanations as to why learners prefer problem-solving strategies over global, or support strategies could be that they are more practical and are more straightforward to apply while reading. It can also be suggested that learners tend to favor strategies that provide an immediate solution when faced with challenging texts rather than planning and reflecting strategies. Another factor influencing learners' preferences in strategy use could be that there are more instances where they are exposed to such immediate strategies rather than planning, previewing, and predicting before reading in the EFL classroom. Therefore, it could be concluded that there is little emphasis on global or support strategies being taught.

Overall, the findings point out that Turkish EFL learners use problem-solving reading strategies more often and this finding aligns with previous research. Additionally, this result reveals that learners can monitor their comprehension while reading. The lower usage of the other strategy

types may reflect limited exposure to the variety of strategies during instruction, or simply a result of learners' learning style preferences.

c. Research question 3 – Is there a relationship between learner's metacognitive awareness of reading strategies and their reading performance?

The third research question that shaped this study explored the relationship between Turkish EFL learners' metacognitive awareness levels and their reading comprehension scores. To address this question, a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted. The statistical analysis demonstrated that no meaningful relationship was found between the two considered variables ($r = -0.019$, $p = .817$). This implies that the increase in level of metacognitive awareness did not show any impact on the reading comprehension scores of the learners. In terms of this study, although the results showed that the participants exhibited a moderate level of metacognitive awareness of reading strategies, their reading comprehension scores were not necessarily impacted by this factor.

Majority of the previous studies conducted in this field have frequently reported a positive correlation between metacognitive awareness and reading comprehension emphasizing that the increase in the metacognitive awareness of reading plays a significant role in the reading comprehension scores of EFL learners (Ahmadi, Ismail, & Abdullah, 2013; Avgeria, 2022; Yapp et al., 2021). For example, the research conducted by Rastegar et al. (2017), used the Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS) instrument and a TOEFL paper-based reading test among Iranian EFL learners. The results of this study revealed a statistically significant positive correlation ($r=0.65$, $p<.01$) between metacognitive strategy awareness and reading comprehension scores (Rastegar et al., 2017). Similarly, Wichadee (2011) also found positive relation between learners' metacognitive strategy use and their reading comprehension scores. However, the findings of the present study do not align with these findings, no significant relationship was found between their strategy use and reading comprehension scores among Turkish EFL learners, suggesting that the relation between metacognitive awareness of reading strategies and reading comprehension performance is not fixed among all contexts.

One possible explanation for the present findings is the nature of the MARSİ tool used in the study. The quantitative results of the MARSİ inventory indicate a moderate level of metacognitive awareness of reading strategies among the participants ($M=3.39$, $SD=1.16$), however, considering the self-report nature of the tool, it captures the learners' perceptions of their strategy use. Therefore, it does not necessarily mean that the strategies are applied

effectively. As stated by Mokhtari and Reichard (2002), students may appear as strategic readers but fail to use the strategies appropriately in actual practice, especially during tests.

This interpretation is supported by the interview responses where several interviewees mentioned that their strategies turn out ineffective during reading situations. For instance, they shared that guessing meaning from context strategy can be misleading, not having access to external tools such as a dictionary during exams was mentioned as a disadvantage, the unfamiliarity of text types and content resulted in limited comprehension despite being knowledgeable of strategies. Overall, it can be concluded that learners may be struggling with deciding when and how to apply certain reading strategies effectively.

In addition, affective factors such as motivation levels, test anxiety, and tiredness may have resulted in fluctuation in the reading comprehension test scores. In the interviews, participants reported that such factors interfered with the effective use of reading strategies, particularly during exams. Moreover, the nature of the reading test items may have been another factor that impacted on the findings of this study. Whether the tests were primarily testing reading comprehension or vocabulary knowledge is unknown. Therefore, if the questions involved lower-order cognitive tasks such as matching or word recognition, the learners may not have even had the opportunity to apply the reading strategies effectively. This suggests that the alignment between the type of reading task and the cognitive process it engages is crucial when evaluating the impact of metacognitive awareness on reading performance.

Furthermore, it should be taken into consideration that although reading strategies help readers overcome challenges and ease comprehension, there are many other factors that can directly influence reading comprehension performance. These factors range from learners' vocabulary knowledge, the text's level of complexity, their familiarity with the context, their language proficiency and more (Alharbi, 2021; Junaidi et al., 2023; Nanda & Azmy, 2020; Ramadhianti & Somba, 2023). Thus, in the setting of this study, these factors could have influenced the relationship between the students' metacognitive awareness and their reading comprehension scores. The responses to the interview questions further support this argument as several participants mentioned that the implementation of the reading strategies has not always been effective. They expressed that strategies fail when they lack interest in the topic of the reading text, the material is too difficult, when subjected to time constraints or exposed to unfamiliar text types. These factors underscore that the effective use of reading strategies could have also been influenced by other factors.

Overall, although the statistical analysis revealed no significant relation between metacognitive awareness and reading scores, the findings highlight the complex nature of reading comprehension. This shows that metacognitive awareness alone does not result in a high reading performance rather than a combination of factors such as strategy knowledge, guided instruction, purposeful assessment and task familiarity can influence the outcomes.

d. Research question 4 – What are students’ perceptions on reading strategies while reading academic text in English?

5.2 Interpretation of Qualitative Findings

The aim of the final research question was to find out the Turkish EFL learners’ perceptions on their metacognitive awareness of reading strategies while engaged in an English academic reading task. Therefore, semi-structured interviews including questions that elicited students’ beliefs and experiences about reading strategies were conducted. As a result of the thematic analysis, learners’ responses were coded under four major themes. These themes are as follows.

a. Pre-Reading Strategies

The first theme that emerged from the interview responses was the Pre-Reading Strategies. This theme includes the sub-themes scanning, skimming, inferencing and making predictions which are all strategies that learners reported they use before they start reading the given text. While pre-reading strategies are an essential step toward preparation of reading and enhancing metacognition, participants’ responses demonstrated that there was not much variety in strategies used in preparation for reading.

Although there are a variety of reading strategies available to use to prepare before reading a text, the participants of this study mentioned only a small number of them. Moreover, only a small number of the participants responded with confident purpose behind using such strategies. As an example, participant 9 stated that “I first glance at it to get a sense of what it’s about, I don’t read the entire thing word for word”. This is an example of a purposeful implication of a pre-reading strategy. A large portion of the participants simply replied that they approach the text by looking through the words to point out the vocabulary. Although this is also a strategy that induces certain expectations before reading, it should be supported by a few other strategies such as setting purpose for reading and using the text features and text type to guide comprehension. The limited use of pre-reading strategies reported in this study is parallel to the findings of Zhang and Wu (2009) and Al-Khresheh and Al Basheer Ben Ali (2023),

whose findings also reported similar results stating that EFL learners tend to prefer immediate strategies over planning strategies. These findings imply that there is an inconsistency in the strategy instruction in EFL contexts where problem-solving strategies are given priority and other strategy types are being overlooked. Grabe and Stoller (2011) explain that development of such strategies require explicit instruction within the EFL classroom.

Overall, the learners' approach to preparing themselves before reading align with the quantitative findings of the study where it was found out that the participants use global strategies, which are basically pre-reading strategies, were less frequently used. Additionally, this also aligns with previous research highlighting that global reading strategies are not as commonly used as problem-solving strategies (Annury et al., 2019, Sariçoban & Behjoo, 2017). From this result it can be interpreted that the participants have limited knowledge of planning strategies. Therefore, it indicates that there is a need for more emphasis to be placed on teaching pre-reading strategies in order to introduce students to a larger variety of strategies and how to implement them in academic reading to enhance their learning.

b. During Reading Strategies

The second theme reflects the learners' perceptions on how they interact with a text during the reading process. This theme also includes reports of the challenges students encounter, which offers insights into how they identify a text to be difficult.

Under this theme, the interview responses showed that the participants rely on various strategies such as making guesses of unknown vocabulary and the context of the text, using comprehension questions as the guiding point, paraphrasing and notetaking to tackle long and complex texts and identifying key points by using visual annotations. These findings show that learners are more competent at implementing strategies that help in making connections, check their understanding and stay concentrated on the text while reading. Similarly, the quantitative findings of this study also reported that problem-solving strategies were the most frequently reported reading strategy category. Therefore, the interview findings are consistent with the MARSİ results. These findings are consistent with previous research which highlighted the commonly preferred use of problem-solving strategies among EFL learners (Annury et al., 2019; Mokhtari & Sheory, 2002; Sariçoban & Behjoo, 2017, Yüksel & Yüksel, 2012)

Additionally, this theme also included students' perceptions of what makes comprehension of an English text challenging. According to the responses, students described that complexity of

grammatical structures, lexical difficulty, genre difficulty, the text type, unfamiliarity with the content, and staying focused on lengthy and complex texts resulted in difficulties in comprehension.

These findings indicate that students are competent in identifying issues as they arise, which reveals that they are actively monitoring their understanding throughout the reading process. This ability to identify when they need to interfere with strategies that ensure comprehension reflects a strong level of metacognitive awareness. In order to cope with the challenges, most participants responded that they use annotations such as underlining and notetaking to help them maintain concentration. Among the other frequently reported coping strategies were rereading, guessing meaning of unknown words through context clues and starting again after taking a break to regain concentration.

In sum, the results of the interviews conducted support the quantitative findings of MARSI, which confirms that the participants of this study were mostly confident in using strategies during reading, particularly problem-solving strategies. Students showed that they are skilled at monitoring their understanding of the text, identifying obstacles while reading and applying appropriate strategies as needed to overcome the issues.

c. Opinions on Reading Strategy Instruction

The third theme that emerged from the qualitative analysis, reflected on students' perceptions toward the reading strategy instruction they received during their preparatory education. In the scope of this theme, participants mentioned various experiences, including reading strategies that they were explicitly taught at the institution, those strategies they perceived that they have learnt through their own personal efforts, and finally they also reported instances where reading strategies become ineffective along with their experiences as the justification. Their responses provided insights into their perceptions on the strategy instruction they are receiving and revealed the awareness level of students in deciding what works best for them in the reading process.

While several participants made clear comments that they are taught reading strategies such as how to identify keywords, paraphrasing strategies to understand the context better, and reading aloud, a significant portion of the participants stated that they are not taught any specific strategies in the EFL classroom, with one participant explaining that "honestly, not really. Most of the reading work we did in class was completed on our own. We read the passage and then

answer the questions by ourselves.” (Participant 3, level B). these findings align with the results of previous research done in this field indicating that there is a need for reading strategy instruction (Avgeri 2021; Bayar & Tertemiz, 2022; Turhan & Özer, 2017)

To compensate for the lack of strategy teaching, participants mentioned developing their reading skills through the strategies that they have discovered works best for them and sticking to those. These self-taught strategies include the use of translation to L1, visualizing the text while reading, using the comprehension questions as the starting point to guide their reading, scanning for keywords when answering comprehension questions, and using consistent reading practice as a strategy to develop the necessary skills.

That students reported that they attempted to discover strategies on their own indicates that they perceive strategic reading to be useful in enhancing comprehension and therefore necessary for academic achievement which directly aligns with previous research (Rastegar et al., 2017; Wichadee, 2011). However, despite learners reporting a large variety of reading strategies, the claim that they do not receive any instruction on reading strategies entails that explicit instruction on reading strategies is not given much emphasis on in those classrooms. Overall, these findings highlight the need for more direct instruction to be given on reading strategy use so it is clearly perceived and retained by students. This finding aligns with previous research highlighting the positive influence of explicit strategy instruction on reading skill development (Avgeria, 2022; Bilici & Subaşı, 2022; Fathi & Afzali, 2020; Yapp et al., 2021).

Moreover, students shared incidents when they found strategies to be ineffective for their comprehension of the text. They reported that strategies such as guessing meaning from context could be time consuming and that using synonym substitution could lead to misunderstandings. Some mentioned that the effectiveness of the strategies depended on the text type or their language proficiency level. These findings indicate that students are able to evaluate their comprehension process through the effectiveness of the strategies they use which is an indicator of metacognitive awareness.

d. Suggestions to Enhance Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies

The final theme in the qualitative data involves the suggestions of EFL learners on how their teachers could help them enhance their metacognitive awareness of reading strategies in the EFL lessons. Participants’ responses included practical ideas based on their experiences and personal needs, stating what they perceive could be beneficial in enhancing effective strategy instruction.

One of the most common suggestions reported was the need for explicit training in reading strategies. Students expressed that there is more focus on other language areas such as vocabulary and grammar therefore not much time is allocated to reading skill. Considering students' responses as proof that students are aware of the reading strategies, their need for explicit instruction suggests that they are uncertain about how to implement the strategies appropriately through guided instruction for them to be able to apply them more frequently and systematically. Additionally, participants explained that strategy teaching should be personalized through support from teachers in finding which strategies works best according to the students' learning style. This finding aligns with Grabe and Stoller (2011), who emphasize the significance of explicit strategy instruction in order to develop an understanding of how and when to apply strategies effectively.

Participants also suggested that importance should be given to scaffolding when teaching strategies to ensure that learners are engaged and interested in order to reduce the difficulty load and increase strategy use. Participants expressed that this could be possible if teachers used materials that are short, simple and interesting to the learners during teaching reading strategy stages. This suggestion is supported by researcher Anderson (2002), who agrees that consistent practice through a variety of reading materials will result in autonomous use of the taught strategies. Moreover, emphasis was placed on consistent and varied practice, where learners mentioned that an increase in exposure to variety in text types could be beneficial in gaining the confidence to use strategies across varied context and complexity levels of academic texts.

Overall, the suggestions demonstrate that the participants are knowledgeable about their shortcomings and in addition to that they are aware of how they could develop strategies to overcome this issue through proper instruction.

To conclude, the findings indicate that the participants perceive reading strategy training as an essential part of metacognitive awareness development and that this development is a process that requires time, exposure to a variety of examples, guidance from their teachers and opportunities to implement them as they learn.

5.3 Implications of the Study

The study's conclusions have several significant implications for enhancing the metacognitive awareness of the Turkish EFL learners in Turkish preparatory language institutions. This section provides practical implications for EFL teachers, EFL learners, curriculum developers

and test makers to support the development of strategic EFL readers and enhance the teaching process.

Firstly, teachers should prioritize exposing students to a variety of strategies and increase students' knowledge of how to apply them effectively. One way is for teachers to integrate strategy-based instruction rather than focusing on the comprehension questions. This can be done through the teaching approaches, materials used in the lessons and the activities that are focused on encouraging learners' planning, monitoring and evaluating processes during reading tasks (Hashmi, 2024). One of the most notable outcomes of this study is that there is an inconsistency in the use of strategy categories among the learners. The findings revealed that students commonly preferred using problem-solving strategies rather than global and support strategies. This suggests that teaching of all three types of strategies should be equally integrated in the EFL lesson plans and that the significance of global and support reading strategies should be emphasized through practice (Kan & Noordin, 2024). Each category comprises of strategies that are necessary for students to overcome challenges and ease their reading process and should not be overlooked by teachers.

In addition to exposure, teachers should choose teaching approaches such as modeling and explaining their thought process during reading tasks. Through this approach, learners can notice the effectiveness of strategy use and the process of how and why to apply certain strategies to obtain the effective reading comprehension (Pintrich, 2002). As an example, EFL teachers can adopt the think aloud approach in the reading skill sessions and encourage learners to implement it in their learning process as well. Through this approach, teachers will be able to guide learners through the what, why, how, when, and evaluation of the reading strategies.

To ensure effective reading strategy instruction in the EFL classrooms, teachers' competence and awareness of the significance of metacognitive strategies should be taken into consideration. Therefore, it is essential that EFL teachers take part in ongoing training and professional development on how to integrate metacognitive awareness strategies into the classroom activities, while adapting teaching materials according to learners' proficiency levels and interests, with the aim of enhancing learners' understanding of reading strategies, and internalizing strategic skills such as planning, monitoring and evaluating (Lawrence, 2007). For example, research has shown that reciprocal teaching specifically improves students' reading performance, particularly regarding the use of global strategies (Bilici, Subaşı, 2022).

Therefore, equipping EFL teachers with the knowledge and skills to implement such teaching methods can lead to a more effective teaching and learning process.

Instruction should be followed with constant monitoring of learners' strategy use and reading performance. Teachers should keep track of learners' reading behaviors through regular assessments and reflective tasks (Pintrich, 2002). This will help teachers find out learners' weaknesses which results in adjusting teaching process according to the required guidance and instruction. This can be achieved through formative assessments such as reading comprehension quizzes and self-reflection inventories such as MARSİ, as well as summative assessments through midterms and final exams to measure learning.

Alongside assessment, teachers should encourage regular practice of the taught strategies through classroom activities. For example, teachers can provide reading tasks that focus on the effective use of an English dictionary, online dictionaries, or translation tools through which the use of support strategies can be developed. Group work activities can be assigned to encourage asking and finding main ideas of the text, predicting the content of the text from the introductory paragraph or even using peer discussions as a tool to evaluate one's comprehension.

By implementing such approaches, teachers can assist bridge the gap between strategy knowledge and practical application, which eventually results in more proficient and independent EFL readers who are able to successfully plan, monitor, analyze, and assess their own reading comprehension. However, this outcome cannot be fully achieved without the active participation of EFL learners.

It is crucial that EFL learners engage in consistent practice of reading strategies through comprehension tasks as a part of their regular study routine to develop automaticity in strategy use. As the qualitative findings of this study revealed, despite having an awareness of the strategies, learners mentioned that they sometimes fail to implement them effectively. This issue can be addressed through increasing reading practice, which results in internalization of the strategies and enables learners to apply them more comfortably and effectively when engaged with academic English texts.

Furthermore, learners who are aware of their strengths and weaknesses can adapt their learning process according to their needs (Pintrich, 2002). Therefore, it is recommended that learners increase their self-awareness by using self-report tools such as MARSİ, SORS, and other

similar inventories to measure their strategy use and to identify their weaknesses (Gönen, 2015).

Lastly, curriculum and test developers also play a vital role in shaping the development of metacognitive awareness among EFL learners. Curriculum developers should ensure that the programs prioritize the integration of explicit strategy instruction, rather than solely depending on the teachers' individual preferences. For instance, tasks that aim to develop learners' planning, monitoring and evaluation skills can be incorporated within English textbooks and workbooks used in the language learning program. Another addition would be the inclusion of self-reflection tasks for the purpose of promoting learner autonomy and self-awareness of their reading progress. For example, textbooks could include a short self-reflection checklist or reflection questions based on tools such as MARSİ at the end of each reading unit to encourage learners to track their reading progress. Such tasks can also increase learners' motivation as they can take control over their learning process to better improve their reading performance.

Finally, teaching reading strategies and not assessing its application may decrease the effectivity of the instruction. Therefore, language testing should also consider assessing learners' strategic skills. Reading comprehension assessments should include items that evaluate higher level reading comprehension ability of learners by including questions that specifically measure learners' strategy use such as identifying key points, guessing meaning from context, making inferences and note taking. This approach would allow teachers to keep track of the learners' progress more accurately which if necessary, would result in adjustments in the instruction given to support learners' needs.

5.4 Limitations of the study

Although this study offers insightful information about the relationship between Turkish EFL learners' reading comprehension and metacognitive awareness, it should be noted that it has several limitations:

1. Sample Restriction

The sample target of this study was limited to preparatory school students in Eskisehir. This geographic limitation restricted the findings from being generalized to a broader population. Therefore, including a more diverse and reaching out to a larger sample from various regions across Turkey would result in a more representative and reliable outcome of the study.

2. Interview Participants

The aim of the researcher was to reach a minimum of 15 participants to take part in the semi-structured interviews in order to reach a more representative sample of the total participants. However, despite reaching out to over twenty volunteers, only thirteen participants responded and agreed to take part in the interviews. This limited number of interview participants is not sufficient to represent the total sample and may have introduced a degree of response bias which reduces the generalizability factor of the qualitative findings.

3. Instrument Bias

The Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory (MARSI) is a self-reported data collection tool that was used in this study. This indicates that the responses to the inventory reflect what students perceive of their own strategy use which may not be reflected in their actual behavior. Therefore, the results obtained may be affected by response bias and students may have unintentionally overestimated or underestimated their strategic reading practices.

4. Alignment of Exam Content

The reading scores extracted from the midterm exam used in the study may not have been fully aligned with the purpose of the MARSI inventory. Whether the exam items may have focused more on vocabulary knowledge or surface-level understanding rather than requiring the application of metacognitive strategies. A more accurate assessment of the learners' practical strategy usage would have been possible with a second,

strategy-focused reading exam created specifically for this study, but time constraints made this not feasible.

5. Lack of Teacher Perspectives

This study focused solely on student data, leaving teachers' perspectives out of the picture. Including teacher participants in the interviews could have enriched the findings by revealing whether strategy instruction is implemented but not actively applied in reading exams by students. Also, teachers' views on reading comprehension, their instructional practices, and the emphasis they place on metacognitive strategies could have added valuable insights into the absence of relationship between awareness and reading performance of students.

6. Nature of the Exam

The study used the scores of the reading section from the existing midterm exam conducted at the preparatory school as a part of the quantitative data. However, the researcher did not have access to the actual exam questions. Therefore, this results in uncertainty regarding the nature of the exam such as the purpose of the questions, the specific reading skills assessed, and the question types used. Due to this ambiguity, it is unclear what the scores are actually representing, which may have an effect on the interpretation of particularly the quantitative and overall findings of the study.

7. Number of Tests

This study used the results of the reading portion of a single midterm test to measure the learners' performance. This limits the reliability of the results as the learners' test performance can fluctuate due to a number of factors such as motivation levels, stress levels, test anxiety, etc. Therefore, simply relying on the results of one exam may not lead to an accurate representation of the learners' reading performance.

5.5 Suggestions for Future Research

Several areas for further research are suggested to build on the findings of this study:

1. Expanding Sample Size and Diversity

Future studies should consider replicating this research with a larger and more diverse sample across various language preparatory schools in different regions of Turkey. This would enhance the generalizability of the results and offer a more comprehensive

understanding of Turkish EFL learners' metacognitive awareness and reading performance.

2. Implementing Strategy Training Interventions (experimental design)

Conducting experimental studies that involve explicit metacognitive strategy instruction over a defined period could provide deeper insights into the effectiveness of strategy training. For instance, learners could be given explicit instruction on reading strategies, and the effectiveness of this approach could be measured through pre- and post-tests. In this case, the researcher would be able to measure not only the effect of awareness but also the effect of strategy application on reading performance.

3. Administering Standardized Reading Comprehension Tests

In the current study, the reading scores were obtained from an existing midterm test resulted in ambiguity regarding the purpose of the test, the specific skills it assessed, and the types of questions included. To overcome this limitation, future research should instead administer a standardized reading comprehension test specifically designed for EFL learners, and one which encourages the use of reading strategies to make it compatible with the purpose of this study.

4. Increasing the Number of Reading Tests

To enhance the reliability of the reading performance scores, future research should consider conducting multiple tests that assess learners' reading comprehension over a period of time. Then, the average score of those tests should be calculated. Through this procedure, the influence of possible factors affecting learners' performance will be minimized. Hence, this approach would provide a more accurate measure of the learners' reading comprehension ability.

5. Conducting Think-Aloud Protocols

To gain a more detailed understanding of how learners approach reading tasks, future research should integrate think-aloud protocols during the data collection phase of the study. This technique allows researchers to follow the learners' cognitive process while engaged with reading such as the strategies they use and why, the patterns they follow while reading, and their reactions to obstacles and more. Another advantage of this approach is that researchers can record the students' experiences in real time.

6. Exploring Teachers' Metacognitive Awareness and Practices

The current study only focuses on EFL learners' metacognition and reading abilities. Future research could take it a step further and include EFL instructors' metacognitive awareness levels and their teaching approaches toward improving students' reading skills. Through this study the researcher can conclude whether the teaching approach and teachers' level of awareness of strategies have an impact on the students' awareness levels and reading performance.

Conclusion

This study investigated the correlation between the Turkish EFL learners' metacognitive awareness of reading strategies and their reading comprehension performance through a mixed-method approach. Including both quantitative and qualitative data into the study resulted in rich insights on how learners perceive their reading strategy use and how they approach an academic text in EFL context.

The quantitative findings revealed that the participants possess a moderate to high level of awareness of reading strategies, and that problem-solving strategies were the most commonly used type of strategies used among them. Additionally, it was found that there is no significant relationship between metacognitive awareness of reading strategies and the reading exam scores of the learners.

The qualitative findings supported the quantitative findings through the participants' real-life experiences on how they use the reading strategies in practice. The results of the thematic analysis indicated that the participants had an adequate understanding of the various reading strategies, however, it should be supported with more explicit guidance from their teachers to enhance their use and expand the variety of strategies. Overall, the findings indicate that the learners have a positive attitude toward reading strategy use and that they are aware of the impact it has on their reading skill development.

In sum, this study emphasizes the important role of metacognitive awareness in developing effective approaches to reading comprehension. Additionally, it highlights the need for explicit strategy training and consistent opportunities for practice to ensure that effective learning. The findings of this study contribute to the existing body of literature by offering practical implications and suggestions for further researchers, EFL educators and curriculum developers to enhance the quality of teaching and learning for EFL learners.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX-1 Gönüllü Katılımcı Bilgilendirme Formu

Çalışmanın Başlığı:

“Okuma Stratejilerine İlişkin Üstbilişsel Farkındalıkların İngilizce Öğrenen Türk Öğrencilerinin Okuduğunu Anlama Puanları Üzerindeki Etkisi”

Bu çalışma, Türk İngilizce öğrenen öğrencilerin okuma stratejilerine ilişkin üstbilişsel farkındalıkları ile okuma becerisi başarıları arasındaki ilişkiyi araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Araştırma, Anadolu Üniversitesi İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Programı yüksek lisans öğrencisi Haleh Reza tarafından, Doç. Dr. Meral CEYLAN’nın danışmanlığında yürütülmektedir.

Araştırma, dil hazırlık okuluna kayıtlı ve İngilizce dil becerilerini geliştirmeyi hedefleyen üniversite öğrencileri üzerinde gerçekleştirilecektir. Bu araştırmanın bulgularının, İngilizceyi Yabancı Dil Olarak Öğrenenler bağlamında okuma becerilerini geliştirmek için strateji öğretiminin önemini vurgulayarak literatüre katkıda bulunması beklenmektedir.

Araştırmanın amacına ulaşmak için üç yöntemle veri toplanacaktır:

1. Okuma Stratejilerine İlişkin Üstbilişsel Farkındalık Envanteri (MARSI) adlı 30 maddelik bir ölçek kullanılacaktır. Bu ölçek, Reichard ve Mokhtari (2002) tarafından geliştirilmiş ve Öztürk (2012) tarafından Türkçeye çevrilmiştir. Ölçek, Google Forms üzerinden uygulanacaktır.
2. Katılımcıların 2024-2025 Güz döneminde girdikleri YDYO ara sınavının okuma sınavı bölümleri notlandırılacak olup bu çalışmada kullanılacaktır.
3. Gönüllü katılımcılarla yapılacak yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yoluyla nitel veriler toplanacaktır.

Bu çalışmaya katılım tamamen gönüllülük esasına dayanmaktadır ve katılımcılara bulguların yalnızca bilimsel amaçlar için kullanılacağı garanti edilmektedir. Elde edilen bilgiler, araştırmanın amacı dışında veya bir başka çalışmada kullanılmayacaktır. Tüm kişisel bilgiler gizli tutulacaktır. Toplanan veriler, gizlilik ilkesine göre beş yıl süreyle güvenli bir şekilde arşivlenecek ve ardından imha edilecektir.

Bu çalışma ile ilgili sorularınızı, aşağıda belirtilen iletişim bilgileri aracılığıyla Haleh Reza’ya iletebilirsiniz. Katılım formunu değerlendirmek üzere ayırdığınız zaman için teşekkürler.

Arařtırmacı Adı:

E-posta:

Cep Tel:

Bu alıřmaya tamamen kendi rızamla, istediđim takdirde alıřmadan ayrılabileređimi bilerek katılıyorum ve verdiđim bilgilerin bilimsel amalarla kullanılmasını kabul ediyorum.

Katılımcı Ad ve Soyadı:

İmza:

Tarih:

X X X X

APPENDIX-2 ‘Okuma Stratejileri Üstbilişsel Farkındalık Envanteri’ aracı kullanma izni



Ergun Ozturk

to me ▼

Tue, Dec 3, 2024, 1:15 PM



Dear [REDACTED]

I give you permission to use the “The Validity and Reliability of the Turkish Version of the Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory”, which was adapted into Turkish by me, in your work.

Good luck with your study.

Prof.Dr.Ergün ÖZTÜRK

Erciyes University,

Faculty of Education

Sayın [REDACTED],

Türkçe uyarlaması tarafımdan yapılan “The Validity and Reliability of the Turkish Version of the Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory” adlı çalışmayı, çalışmanızda kullanmanız için size izin veriyorum.

Çalışmanızda başarılar dilerim.

Prof. Dr. Ergün ÖZTÜRK

Erciyes Üniversitesi,

Eğitim Fakültesi

Not: Tez yazarı tarafından İngilizce'ye çevrilmiştir.

APPENDIX-3 Okuma Stratejileri Üstbilişsel Farkındalık Envanteri (Öztürk, 2012)

1. Okurken zihnimde bir amaç vardır.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Okurken, okuduğumu anlamak için notlar alırım.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Okuduğumu anlamama yardım edecek neler biliyorum diye düşünürüm.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Okumaya başlamadan önce ne konuda olduğunu anlamak için metni gözden geçiririm	1	2	3	4	5
5. Metin zor geldiğinde okuduğumu anlamak için yüksek sesle okurum.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Metindeki önemli noktalar üzerinde düşünmek için okuduğumu özetlerim.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Okuma amacımla metnin içindekilerin uyup uymayacağını düşünürüm.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Okuduğumu anladığımdan emin olmak için yavaş ama dikkatli okurum.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Anladığının doğru olup olmadığını kontrol etmek için başkalarıyla tartışırım.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Öncelikle uzunluk ve düzenleme gibi konulardaki özelliklerine okumadan önce göz gezdiririm.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Konsantrasyonumu kaybedersen tekrar dikkatimi toplarım.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Hatırlamama yardımcı olsun diye metnin bazı bölümlerini yuvarlak içine alırım veya bu bölümlerin altını çizerim.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Okuma hızımı okuduğum metne göre ayarlarım.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Neleri dikkatle okuyup neleri önemsemeyeceğime karar veririm.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Okuduğumu anlamama yardımcı olması için sözlük gibi kaynaklardan yararlanırım.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Metin zor geldiğinde okuduğum şeye dikkatimi daha çok veririm.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Metni anlamam kolaylaşsın diye tablo, resim ve şekillerden faydalanırım.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Okuduklarım hakkında düşünmek için zaman zaman dururum.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Okuduğumu daha iyi anlamama yardımcı olması için içerik ipuçlarını kullanırım.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Okuduğumu daha iyi anlamak için metindeki düşünceleri kendi sözcüklerimle yeniden ifade ederim.	1	2	3	4	5
21. Okuduğumu hatırlamama yardımcı olsun diye metnin bazı bölümlerini zihnimde resimler veya görsel olarak canlandırırım.	1	2	3	4	5
22. Ana bilgiyi belirlemek için kalın font ve yatık harf gibi yazımsal yardımlar kullanırım	1	2	3	4	5
23. Metindeki bilgi ve bulguları değerlendirip analiz ederim.	1	2	3	4	5
24. Metinde ileri ve geri gidip düşünceler arasındaki ilişkileri bulurum.	1	2	3	4	5
25. Çelişen bilgilere rastladığımda düşüncelerimi gözden geçiririm.	1	2	3	4	5

Okuma Stratejileri Üstbilişsel Farkındalık Envanteri (Öztürk, 2012) (CONTINUE)

26. Okurken metnin ne hakkında olduğunu tahmin ederim.	1	2	3	4	5
27. Metin zorlaşırsa anlamama yardımcı olsun diye yeniden okumalar yaparım.	1	2	3	4	5
28. Metinde cevaplanmasını istediğim soruları kendime sorarım.	1	2	3	4	5
29. Metin hakkındaki tahminimin doğru ya da yanlış olduğunu kontrol etmek için görmek isterim	1	2	3	4	5
30. Cümle ya da kelimelerin bilinmeyen anlamlarını tahmin etmeye çelişirim.	1	2	3	4	5



APPENDIX-4 Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Hello *[participant's name]*, thank you for joining this interview. I'm *[interviewer's name]*, and I'm doing a research study for my master's thesis on how learners use and understand reading strategies in English. Your thoughts and experiences will really help me understand this better.

Everything you share will stay confidential, and your name won't appear in the research. This is completely voluntary, and you can stop at any point if you want to. Please feel free to ask anything before we begin.

If you're ready, we can start now!

Main Questions	Strategy Category	Possible Follow-Up Questions
1. What do you usually do first when you start reading a text in English?	Global Reading Strategies (GLOB)	▪ Do you read with a goal in mind? ▪ What helps you stay focused on your purpose? ▪ Has this always been your habit, or did someone teach you this?
2. Can you describe a time when you struggled to understand an English text? What helped you?	Problem-Solving Strategies (PROB) & Personal Experience	▪ What was difficult about it? ▪ What strategies did you apply? ▪ How did you feel, and what would help in that situation?
3. What do you usually do if you lose focus while reading?	Problem-Solving Strategies (PROB)	▪ How do you notice that you're distracted? ▪ Do you have any tricks to concentrate again?

Semi-Structured Interview Questions (CONTINUE)

4. Do you use any online applications (like Google Translate, online dictionaries, or apps) while reading?	Support Strategies (SUP)	▪ What is your go-to tool? ▪ When do you decide to use them or avoid them? ▪ Do you think they are useful, or could they be disadvantageous?
5. What helps you remember or understand better when reading something long or difficult?	Support Strategies (SUP)	▪ Do you highlight, take notes, or reread parts? ▪ Do you discuss what you read with others? ▪ How do you check if you really understand it?
6. Can you tell me about a strategy that you learned by yourself and that really works for you?	Personal Metacognitive Awareness	▪ How did you discover it? ▪ Do you think it would help others too? ▪ Why does it work for you?

Semi-Structured Interview Questions (CONTINUE)

7. Has any teacher taught you useful reading strategies? If yes, which ones were helpful?	Teacher & Pedagogical Implications	▪ Do you wish teachers would show you more? ▪ What's one thing a teacher did that helped your reading the most? ▪ Would you like to share these strategies with classmates?
8. Tell me about a time when none of the strategies worked in English for you. What did you do?	Problem-Solving Strategies & Personal Challenge	▪ What do you think was missing or didn't work? ▪ Did you try asking for help or try a different way? ▪ What would you do differently next time?
9. What suggestions do you have for your teachers to help students become more aware of reading strategies?	Metacognitive Awareness & Suggestions	▪ What could they do differently in class? ▪ Would explanations, examples, or activities help? ▪ How can reading classes be improved for learners like you?

APPENDIX-5 Ethics Committee Approval

Evrak Kayıt Tarihi: 10.01.2025		Protokol No: 837424		Tarih: 23.01.2025	
					
ANADOLU ÜNİVERSİTESİ SOSYAL VE BEŞERÎ BİLİMLER BİLİMSEL ARAŞTIRMA VE YAYIN ETİĞİ KURULU KARAR BELGESİ					
ÇALIŞMANIN TÜRÜ:	Yüksek Lisans Tez Çalışması				
KONU:	Eğitim Bilimleri				
BAŞLIK:	Okuma Stratejilerine İlişkin Üstbilişsel Farkındalıkların İngilizce Öğrenen Türk Öğrencilerinin Okuduğunu Anlama Puanları Üzerindeki Etkisi The Impact of Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies on the Reading Comprehension Scores of Turkish EFL Learners				
PROJE/TEZ YÜRÜTÜCÜSÜ:	Doç. Dr. Meral CEYLAN				
TEZ YAZARI:	Haleh REZA				
ALT KOMİSYON GÖRÜŞÜ:	-				
KARAR:	Olumlu				

CURRICULUM VITAE

Name Surname :

Foreign Languages :

Birth and Year of Birth :

E-Mail :

Educational Background:

Work Experience: