¹ King Saud bin Abdulaziz University for Health Sciences, King Abdullah International Medical Research Center and Ministry of National Guard—Health Affairs, Saudia Arabia. Associate professor.

ENHANCING READING COMPREHENSION: EXAMINING SAUDI EFL TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND IMPLEMENTATION OF METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES

APRIMORANDO A COMPREENSÃO DA LEITURA: EXAMINANDO AS CRENÇAS DOS PROFESSORES DE ILE SAUDITAS E A IMPLEMENTAÇÃO DE ESTRATÉGIAS METACÓGICAS

MEJORA DE LA COMPRENSIÓN LECTORA: ANÁLISIS DE LAS CREENCIAS DE LOS PROFESORES DE EFL SAUDÍES Y LA IMPLEMENTACIÓN DE ESTRATEGIAS METACOGNITIVAS

Abdulaziz ALTHEWINI¹
a.althewini@gmail.com

ABSTRACT: This study examines Saudi EFL teachers' beliefs and practices regarding metacognitive reading strategies and their perceived effects on students' reading comprehension. Using a quantitative, survey-based approach, data were collected from teachers across various institutions to assess their theoretical knowledge, classroom application, and barriers to implementation. Results show that while teachers demonstrate strong theoretical awareness, practical application is limited due to institutional constraints, lack of professional training, and rigid curricula. Teachers highlighted the need for targeted professional development and more flexible curricula to integrate metacognitive strategies effectively. Addressing these gaps through structured training and curriculum reform could improve students' reading proficiency, critical thinking, and academic outcomes, aligning Saudi education with international standards.

KEYWORDS: Metacognitive reading strategies. EFL instruction. Teacher beliefs. Reading comprehension. Professional development.

Revista on line de Política e Gestão Educacional (RPGE), Araraquara, v. 29(esp.1), n. 00, e025038, 2025.

e-ISSN: 1519-9029

1

RESUMO: *Este estudo analisa as crenças e práticas de professores sauditas de inglês como língua estrangeira (EFL) sobre estratégias metacognitivas de leitura e seus efeitos percebidos na compreensão leitora dos alunos. Com abordagem quantitativa e uso de questionários, foram coletados dados de docentes de diversas instituições para avaliar o conhecimento teórico, a aplicação em sala de aula e as barreiras à implementação. Os resultados mostram que, embora os professores demonstrem sólida consciência teórica, a prática é limitada por restrições institucionais, falta de formação continuada e currículos rígidos. Os docentes apontaram a necessidade de desenvolvimento profissional direcionado e de currículos mais flexíveis para integrar de forma eficaz as estratégias metacognitivas. Superar essas lacunas com capacitação estruturada e reformas curriculares pode aprimorar a proficiência leitora, o pensamento crítico e o desempenho acadêmico dos alunos, alinhando a educação saudita aos padrões internacionais.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Estratégias de leitura metacognitivas. Instrução de inglês como língua estrangeira. crenças do professor. Compreensão de leitura. Desenvolvimento profissional.*

RESUMEN: *Este estudio analiza las creencias y prácticas de los docentes saudíes de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) sobre las estrategias metacognitivas de lectura y sus efectos percibidos en la comprensión lectora de los estudiantes. Mediante un enfoque cuantitativo basado en encuestas, se recopilaron datos de profesores de diversas instituciones para evaluar su conocimiento teórico, la aplicación en el aula y las barreras para la implementación. Los resultados muestran que, aunque los docentes demuestran una sólida conciencia teórica, la aplicación práctica es limitada debido a restricciones institucionales, falta de formación profesional y currículos rígidos. Los profesores destacaron la necesidad de desarrollo profesional específico y de planes de estudio más flexibles para integrar eficazmente las estrategias metacognitivas. Abordar estas carencias mediante capacitación estructurada y reformas curriculares podría mejorar la competencia lectora, el pensamiento crítico y los resultados académicos de los estudiantes, alineando la educación saudí con los estándares internacionales.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Estrategias de lectura metacognitivas. Enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL). Creencias docentes. comprensión lectora. Desarrollo professional.*

Article submitted to the similarity system

✔ iThenticate®

INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension plays a vital role in acquiring English as a Foreign Language (EFL), particularly in contexts where English functions as a secondary or even tertiary language, such as in Saudi Arabia. As English continues to dominate as a global lingua franca, proficiency in reading is not only a prerequisite for academic success but also a fundamental skill for accessing knowledge, engaging in international communication, and advancing in professional fields (Althewini, 2016; Koda, 2007). However, Saudi students often face significant challenges in achieving effective reading comprehension, including limited exposure to authentic English texts and entrenched instructional methods that prioritize rote memorization over deeper, more strategic engagement with texts (Luz, 2007).

Although formal English instruction has been integrated into the Saudi educational system, many students still struggle with reading fluency, comprehension, and critical analysis due to insufficient metacognitive awareness and a lack of explicit strategy instruction (Althewini, 2016; Meniado, 2016). Traditional pedagogical approaches in Saudi Arabia tend to emphasize surface-level learning, where students focus on recalling information rather than analyzing, synthesizing, and applying knowledge. This paradigm often results in passive learners who may perform well on exams but lack the ability to engage independently with complex texts (McKenzie, 2010). Given the increasing demands of higher education and the global job market, there is an urgent need for instructional reform that promotes active reading and critical thinking skills.

Metacognitive Strategies: A foundational Approach

In this context, the use of metacognitive strategies in reading instruction emerges as a key approach. Metacognitive strategies, which include comprehension monitoring, awareness of text structures, and the application of problem-solving techniques, help students regulate their reading processes more effectively (Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002). Research shows that successful readers actively monitor their understanding, adjust their reading speed based on text difficulty, and employ strategies such as summarizing, questioning, and visualizing to enhance comprehension (Pang, 2008). By fostering self-awareness and strategic engagement, metacognitive instruction equips students with the tools to approach texts critically and independently, making reading a more meaningful and efficient process (Alroomy & Althewini, 2019; Rajab et al., 2017).

Moreover, metacognitive strategies have proven effective in bridging the gap between struggling and proficient readers. Studies indicate that students who receive explicit metacognitive training perform significantly better on reading comprehension tasks compared to those who rely solely on traditional methods (Robillos, 2019). This is especially relevant in EFL

contexts, where students often encounter texts with unfamiliar vocabulary and complex structures. Metacognitive instruction provides learners with tools to navigate these challenges, fostering resilience and adaptability in their reading practices (Pressley, 1977).

Significance of the Problem

The lack of effective reading strategies among Saudi EFL students poses a major obstacle to their academic achievement and future professional success. Without the ability to comprehend and analyze texts effectively, students may struggle with higher education coursework, standardized assessments, and global communication (Li & Pan, 2009). Reliance on memorization-based learning inhibits the development of critical thinking and independent problem-solving skills, which are essential for success in today's knowledge-driven world (Kucukuglo, 2012).

Additionally, research suggests that reading difficulties are not solely the result of student limitations but are also shaped by teacher beliefs and instructional practices (Sadeghi, 2007). University teachers in Saudi Arabia play a crucial role in developing students' reading abilities, as their perceptions of reading instruction directly influence their teaching methods (Althewini, 2025). However, studies have revealed a disconnect between teachers' stated beliefs and their actual classroom practices, particularly regarding the use of metacognitive strategies (Miller, 2017). This misalignment often leads to ineffective instruction, where teachers recognize the importance of strategic reading but fail to implement it meaningfully in their lessons (McMaster, 2011).

Bridging the Gap: The Role of Teacher Training

By examining the beliefs and practices of Saudi university teachers regarding metacognitive reading strategies, this study underscores the urgent need for instructional improvements. Understanding the gap between teachers' theoretical knowledge and their classroom implementation provides valuable insights into how professional development programs can be designed to promote the adoption of evidence-based teaching approaches (Morisano et al., 2010). Research suggests that when teachers receive targeted training in metacognitive instruction, they are more likely to incorporate effective reading strategies into their lessons, ultimately enhancing students' comprehension skills (Mokhtari & Thompson, 2006).

Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 places strong emphasis on improving educational outcomes and aligning instructional practices with global standards. Integrating metacognitive reading strategies into Saudi EFL curricula supports these national educational goals by fostering a generation of independent, lifelong learners equipped to navigate academic and professional challenges (Alroomy & Althewini, 2019; Ryan, 2011).

Revista on line de Política e Gestão Educacional (RPGE), Araraquara, v. 29(esp.1), n. 00, e025038, 2025.　　　e-ISSN: 1519-9029

10.22633/rpge.v29iesp1.20473

RPGE

4

Study Objectives and Contributions

This paper explores Saudi EFL teachers' beliefs about metacognitive strategies in reading instruction, offering insights drawn from a detailed analysis of survey data and contextual factors. It aims to examine how these beliefs translate into classroom practices and to provide recommendations for improving the integration of metacognitive strategies in Saudi EFL contexts. By addressing this gap, the study contributes to the broader discourse on effective EFL instruction and the role of teacher cognition in shaping pedagogical outcomes (Althewini, 2016; Kovac & Zdilar, 2017; Althewini & Alroomy, 2023).

Furthermore, this research aligns with global trends in second language reading instruction, reinforcing the view that teaching metacognitive strategies is not merely an optional enhancement but a necessary component of effective language education (Pressley, 1977). Through a data-driven approach, this study seeks to inform policymakers, curriculum designers, and educators about the most effective methods for fostering reading proficiency among Saudi EFL students. Ultimately, it promotes a shift from passive reading habits to active, strategic engagement with texts (Althewini, 2016; Pamittan, 2019).

By bridging the gap between theory and practice, this research aims to support the development of a robust EFL teaching framework in Saudi Arabia—one that empowers both educators and students to achieve higher levels of reading proficiency and academic success.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Background

Reading comprehension in EFL contexts is shaped by cognitive and metacognitive processes that determine students' ability to understand, retain, and analyze texts. Cognitive theories emphasize the importance of automaticity in lower-level processes such as word recognition and syntax processing (Grabe, 2009), while metacognitive theories focus on higher-order skills such as self-monitoring and comprehension regulation (Koda, 2005). The integration of metacognitive strategies enhances students' capacity to navigate complex texts, making it a critical element of effective reading instruction.

Recent studies have highlighted the significant role of metacognition in reading comprehension. According to Khellab et al. (2022), explicit instruction in metacognitive reading strategies substantially improves students' reading performance, particularly in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for Science and Technology (EST) programs. Their study revealed that students trained in metacognitive strategies using the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) demonstrated greater strategic awareness and notable

RPGE

gains in reading comprehension compared to peers receiving traditional instruction. Similarly, Villanueva (2022) identified a strong correlation between metacognitive strategy use and reading comprehension performance among college students, emphasizing that learners who applied problem-solving strategies, global reading approaches, and support strategies exhibited higher levels of reading proficiency.

Metacognitive Strategies and Their Impact on Reading

Metacognitive strategies enable students to regulate their reading processes by setting goals, monitoring comprehension, and applying corrective measures when difficulties arise. Research shows that students who actively engage in these strategies demonstrate higher reading proficiency and stronger critical thinking skills (Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995). Strategies such as summarization, prediction, and self-questioning help learners construct meaning from texts and improve retention.

Villanueva (2022) examined the metacognitive strategies used by college students and found that problem-solving techniques, including rereading and adjusting reading speed, were the most frequently applied and had a direct positive impact on comprehension. Similarly, Khellab et al. (2022) emphasized the effectiveness of explicit metacognitive strategy instruction in improving the reading skills of engineering students. Their study provided empirical evidence that learners trained in global reading strategies (e.g., skimming and predicting), problem-solving techniques (e.g., guessing unknown words and rereading), and support strategies (e.g., using reference materials) exhibited significant gains in comprehension.

The role of metacognitive awareness in self-regulated learning has also been widely recognized (Ahmadi et al., 2013). Effective readers continuously monitor their understanding, adjusting their approaches as needed to enhance comprehension (Banditvilai, 2020). Conversely, students who lack these strategies often struggle with reading comprehension, as they fail to recognize when their understanding breaks down and do not employ corrective measures (Barnett & Seefeldt, 1989). These findings underscore the need to integrate metacognitive strategy instruction into EFL curricula to develop independent and proficient readers.

Teachers   Beliefs and Reading Instruction

Teachers' pedagogical beliefs significantly influence their instructional approaches and the extent to which metacognitive strategies are embedded in their teaching. Studies indicate that educators who perceive these strategies as essential are more likely to implement structured training and guided practice in their classrooms (Kuzborska, 2010). However, in many EFL contexts—including Saudi Arabia—teachers often adhere to traditional methods that prioritize rote memorization over strategic reading development.

Several studies have documented the challenges teachers face in applying metacognitive reading strategies. For instance, Khellab et al. (2022) found that although these strategies are highly effective, many teachers lack sufficient training in this area. This gap in professional development limits their ability to integrate such techniques effectively. Moreover, Villanueva (2022) noted that while some educators acknowledge the value of metacognitive strategies, they often struggle with practical implementation due to rigid curriculum structures and insufficient institutional support.

Research also shows that teachers' attitudes toward metacognitive strategy instruction play a crucial role in its success. Ahmed (2015) found that educators who view these strategies positively are more likely to encourage their students to adopt them. In contrast, teachers who are skeptical or unfamiliar with metacognitive approaches tend to rely on traditional methods that do not foster independent reading skills. Addressing these gaps through targeted professional development programs could empower teachers to integrate metacognitive strategies effectively, thereby improving student outcomes.

Saudi EFL Context and Challenges

Saudi EFL learners face unique challenges affecting their reading proficiency, including limited exposure to authentic English texts, overreliance on teacher-centered instruction, and a test-driven academic culture. While some universities have begun introducing strategy-based instruction, many teachers still lack access to professional development programs focusing on metacognitive reading strategies. Addressing these gaps requires a shift in teacher training and curriculum design to emphasize strategic reading instruction.

Villanueva (2022) highlighted the importance of language background in reading comprehension, noting that students' familiarity with their first language influences their ability to apply metacognitive strategies effectively. In the Saudi context, where Arabic is the dominant language, students often struggle with English reading comprehension due to linguistic and cognitive differences between the two languages. This challenge is further compounded by the limited availability of authentic English reading materials, which restricts students' exposure to diverse textual structures and vocabulary.

Moreover, Khellab et al. (2022) emphasized that the success of metacognitive strategy instruction depends on both student engagement and institutional support. Their study revealed that learners who actively participated in metacognitive strategy training achieved significant improvements in reading comprehension. However, the lack of institutional emphasis on strategic reading instruction in Saudi Arabia means that many students do not receive adequate exposure to these essential skills.

Research by Meniado (2016) further supports the need to integrate metacognitive strategies into Saudi EFL instruction. This study found that Saudi students who received explicit strategy instruction performed better on reading comprehension assessments than those taught through traditional methods. These findings underscore the importance of shifting from rote learning approaches to interactive, strategy-based instruction that encourages deeper engagement with texts.

This literature review provides the foundation for examining Saudi teachers' beliefs about metacognitive strategies and their influence on classroom practices. By exploring these dimensions, the study aims to offer insights into how teacher cognition shapes reading instruction in Saudi EFL contexts. The findings highlight both the effectiveness of metacognitive strategy instruction and the significant challenges associated with its implementation. Addressing these challenges through teacher training, curriculum reforms, and institutional support will be critical for improving the reading proficiency of Saudi EFL learners.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a virtual, quantitative, survey-based approach to examine Saudi EFL teachers' beliefs and practices regarding metacognitive reading strategies. Using a structured survey allowed for the collection of standardized data from a representative sample, enabling statistical analysis and the generalization of findings. Both descriptive and inferential statistical methods were applied to identify patterns in teachers' beliefs, instructional practices, and perceived challenges related to metacognitive reading strategies.

Population and Sample

The study targeted Saudi EFL teachers employed at higher education institutions. A total of 78 teachers from six universities participated in the research, representing a diverse range of teaching experiences and institutional backgrounds. The sample distribution was as follows:
- Early-career teachers (1–5 years of experience): 26 participants (33.3%);
- Mid-career teachers (6–10 years of experience): 32 participants (41.0%);
- Veteran teachers (11+ years of experience): 20 participants (25.6%).

Participants were recruited through official university networks and during educational conferences. The sample was designed to include teachers from various academic disciplines where English serves as the primary medium of instruction.

Revista on line de Política e Gestão Educacional (RPGE), Araraquara, v. 29(esp.1), n. 00, e025038, 2025.   e-ISSN: 1519-9029

10.22633/rpge.v29iesp1.20473

RPGE

8

Sampling Method

A purposive sampling method was used to ensure the inclusion of teachers actively engaged in English language instruction across diverse academic programs. This approach focused on selecting individuals most relevant to the research objectives.

Measurement Instrument

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire specifically developed for this study. The questionnaire was designed to assess four key areas:

1. Teachers' beliefs about metacognitive reading strategies (e.g., comprehension monitoring, self-questioning, and summarization);
2. Teachers' current implementation of metacognitive strategies in classroom settings;
3. Challenges encountered in applying these strategies;
4. Perceived needs for professional development to enhance instructional practices.

The questionnaire included 30 items presented on a 5-point Likert scale to measure the level of agreement with key statements related to beliefs and practices.

Data Analysis Method

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). The following statistical procedures were applied:

• Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) to summarize participants' responses and highlight general trends;
• Chi-square tests to examine relationships between teaching experience and the use of metacognitive strategies;
• One-way ANOVA tests to assess variations in the application of metacognitive strategies among teachers with different levels of teaching experience.

This analytical approach provided both an overview of teachers' perceptions and practices and detailed insights into factors influencing the implementation of metacognitive reading strategies in Saudi EFL classrooms.

RPGE

RESULTS

The study's results are presented in four categories, as outlined below.

1. Teachers' Beliefs About Metacognitive Strategies

Table 1. Perceptions of Metacognitive Strategies in EFL Reading Comprehension

Statement	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Metacognitive strategies improve reading comprehension	81.7
Explicit strategy instruction should be an essential part of EFL curricula	74.4
Metacognitive strategies are beneficial for developing student autonomy in reading	69.2

Note. Data reflect the percentage of respondents who strongly agreed or agreed with each statement.
Source: created by the authors.

The survey results revealed a strong consensus among Saudi EFL teachers regarding the importance and effectiveness of metacognitive reading strategies (Table 1). A significant majority—81.7% of respondents—strongly agreed that metacognitive strategies play a critical role in improving students' reading comprehension. This reflects a widespread recognition of the value of helping learners become more aware of their thinking processes while reading, which, in turn, enhances their ability to understand and retain information from texts.

In addition to acknowledging the benefits of these strategies, teachers also emphasized the importance of formally integrating them into educational programs. Specifically, 74.4% of participants believed that explicit strategy instruction should be an essential part of the EFL curriculum. This indicates a strong demand for curriculum reform that goes beyond teaching language skills in isolation and instead focuses on developing higher-order thinking skills. Teachers recognize that simply exposing students to reading materials is insufficient; learners must be explicitly taught how to approach texts strategically to become effective readers.

Furthermore, 69.2% of teachers agreed that metacognitive strategies are particularly beneficial for fostering student autonomy in reading. By equipping students with tools such as self-questioning, comprehension monitoring, and summarization, teachers believe that learners can take greater control over their reading processes. This not only improves immediate comprehension but also supports long-term academic independence, enabling students to navigate complex texts without constant teacher support.

2. IImplementation of Metacognitive Strategies

Table 2. Classroom Implementation of Metacognitive Strategies in EFL Instruction

Description	Percentage (%)
Teachers regularly incorporating metacognitive strategies	56.4
Most Frequently Used Strategies	
Comprehension monitoring	63.7
Summarization	**59.8**
Self-questioning	**52.5**
Less Commonly Used Strategies	
Predictive reading	**43.6**
Using graphic organizers	**38.5**

Note. Percentages reflect teachers' reported use of metacognitive strategies in their lessons.
Source: created by the authors.

Despite strong theoretical support for metacognitive reading strategies, the actual implementation of these strategies in classroom settings has proven to be inconsistent. While most teachers acknowledged the value of such strategies, only 56.4% reported regularly incorporating them into their lessons (Table 2). This highlights a significant gap between theoretical understanding and practical application, possibly due to institutional constraints, limited professional development opportunities, or rigid curriculum requirements.

Among the strategies employed, comprehension monitoring was the most frequently used, with 63.7% of teachers indicating regular use. This strategy involves encouraging students to actively assess their understanding while reading and apply corrective measures when comprehension breaks down. Such practices are critical in helping learners become more independent and aware of their reading processes.

The second most commonly implemented strategy was summarization, reported by 59.8% of participants. Teachers using this approach emphasized its effectiveness in helping students distill key ideas from texts and reinforce their understanding of main concepts. Summarization not only supports comprehension but also improves students' ability to retain and recall information.

Self-questioning was the third most commonly used strategy, with 52.5% of teachers incorporating it into their reading instruction. This technique encourages learners to pose questions before, during, and after reading, fostering deeper engagement with the text and promoting critical thinking skills.

However, some metacognitive strategies were applied less frequently. For instance, only 43.6% of teachers reported using predictive reading strategies, which prompt students to anticipate content and outcomes based on contextual clues. This lower rate of use may reflect

RPGE

a lack of familiarity with how to implement predictive techniques effectively or a preference for more direct instructional methods.

Similarly, the use of graphic organizers—a visual strategy designed to help students organize and connect ideas—was reported by just 38.5% of teachers. Despite being a powerful tool for enhancing comprehension and supporting visual learners, the limited adoption of graphic organizers suggests that many teachers may lack the training or resources necessary to integrate them effectively into their lessons.

3. Challenges Faced in Implementation

Table 3. Barriers to Implementing Metacognitive Reading Strategies

Barrier	Percentage (%)
Time limitations	72.3
Lack of professional development	**65.2**
Curriculum constraints	58.9
Lack of concrete teaching materials	**62.1**
Student resistance	**44.9**

Note. Percentages reflect participants' reported barriers to incorporating metacognitive reading strategies in EFL instruction.
Source: created by the authors.

The study also explored the barriers that prevent Saudi EFL teachers from effectively implementing metacognitive reading strategies in their classrooms (Table 3). One of the most frequently cited challenges was the lack of professional development, reported by 65.2% of participants. Many teachers indicated that they had not received formal training on how to teach metacognitive strategies effectively. Without structured guidance and exposure to best practices, teachers often feel unprepared to incorporate these techniques into their lessons confidently.

Another significant barrier was curriculum constraints, identified by 58.9% of respondents. Teachers noted that rigid and prescriptive course structures left little room for integrating metacognitive strategy instruction. With curricula often heavily focused on covering a fixed set of language skills and content within limited timeframes, teachers struggled to introduce additional activities that promote reflective and strategic reading.

Time limitations emerged as the most pressing concern, with 72.3% of teachers reporting that heavy teaching loads and time-intensive syllabi restricted their ability to devote sufficient attention to metacognitive strategy instruction. Teachers expressed frustration that the pressure to meet syllabus requirements often forced them to prioritize content delivery over skill development, leaving little space to engage students in reflective reading practices.

Furthermore, 62.1% of respondents identified the lack of concrete teaching materials as a major barrier to implementing metacognitive strategies. Teachers highlighted the need for curriculum-embedded resources that provide ready-to-use activities and instructional guides. Without such materials, even teachers motivated to apply metacognitive strategies find it challenging to do so consistently and effectively.

Lastly, student resistance was noted by 44.9% of participants as a barrier to effective implementation. Some students found metacognitive activities unfamiliar and challenging, particularly when asked to take greater responsibility for their own learning. These learners often struggled with independent strategy use and preferred more traditional, teacher-directed approaches to reading instruction.

4. Professional Development Needs

Table 4. Preferred Training Formats and Barriers for Metacognitive Strategy Instruction

Description	Percentage (%)
Preferred Training Formats	
Workshops with practical demonstrations	**78.4**
Online training modules	64.7
Mentorship programs with experienced educators	**59.2**

Note. Percentages reflect teachers' preferences for training formats.
Source: created by the authors

When asked about their preferred formats for professional development, teachers expressed a clear preference for practical, hands-on training opportunities (Table 4). The majority, 78.4% of respondents, favored workshops with practical demonstrations, indicating a strong desire for training that goes beyond theory and focuses on applying metacognitive strategies directly in classroom settings. Teachers emphasized the value of observing real-life examples and participating in interactive sessions where they could practice and refine their instructional techniques.

In addition, 64.7% of participants expressed interest in online training modules, reflecting the growing demand for flexible, self-paced learning options. Online courses were seen as a convenient way to access professional development resources without the constraints of scheduling conflicts, allowing teachers to build their skills alongside their regular teaching commitments.

Another preferred option was mentorship programs with experienced educators, supported by 59.2% of teachers. This suggests that many teachers value ongoing, personalized support from more experienced colleagues who can provide practical advice, share effective strategies, and offer feedback based on real-world teaching experiences.

Summary of Key Results:

• There is strong theoretical endorsement of metacognitive strategies among Saudi EFL teachers;

• Practical implementation lags behind due to curriculum constraints, time limitations, and a lack of training;

• Teachers express a clear demand for structured professional development programs focusing on practical application and instructional resources.

DISCUSSION

The findings underscore a significant recognition among Saudi EFL teachers regarding the importance of metacognitive strategies in reading instruction. However, the disparity between their beliefs and actual classroom practices highlights challenges in implementation. While teachers acknowledge the benefits of strategic reading instruction, factors such as institutional constraints, limited training opportunities, and the absence of structured metacognitive strategy integration impede effective application. This gap between belief and practice aligns with prior research, which emphasizes the necessity of explicit instruction in metacognitive strategies to improve reading comprehension (Khellab et al., 2022; Villanueva, 2022).

The moderate level of metacognitive strategy awareness among Saudi EFL students is consistent with findings from multiple studies. For instance, Al-Khresheh and Al-Basheer Ben Ali (2023) found that Saudi EFL students demonstrated only a moderate level of metacognitive awareness of reading strategies, suggesting a need for enhanced instructional approaches. Similarly, Meniado (2016) and Khellab et al. (2022) reported that explicit instruction in metacognitive strategies led to statistically significant gains in reading comprehension, reinforcing the importance of strategic reading instruction. Furthermore, Villanueva (2022) found that problem-solving strategies, such as adjusting reading speed and rereading difficult sections, had a strong correlation with reading comprehension performance. These findings align with those of Soleimani and Alibabaee (2018), who argued that the effectiveness of metacognitive strategy training relies heavily on students' active engagement and teachers' ability to implement reflective reading tasks.

The Need for Systemic Changes in Metacognitive Strategy Instruction

Addressing these barriers requires systemic changes, including the development of professional development programs tailored to metacognitive strategy instruction. Research supports the idea that explicit instruction through structured frameworks, such as the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA), enhances students' ability to self-regulate

RPGE

14

and apply metacognitive strategies effectively (Chamot, 2005; Khellab et al., 2022). Similarly, Villanueva (2022) emphasizes the role of structured metacognitive reading programs in fostering independent reading comprehension skills among students. This is further supported by Rahman (2020), who found that targeted metacognitive instruction significantly improves students' ability to employ self-regulated learning techniques in reading.

Curriculum reform is also necessary to provide teachers with the flexibility to integrate metacognitive strategies into their courses. Studies suggest that embedding metacognitive strategy instruction within the curriculum can significantly improve reading comprehension outcomes (Takallou, 2011; Khellab et al., 2022). The explicit teaching of global, problem-solving, and support strategies enhances students' ability to engage with texts critically and strategically, leading to long-term improvements in reading proficiency. Tavakoli and Tavakol (2018) found that when metacognitive reading strategies were embedded in EFL instruction, students showed increased comprehension, greater reading confidence, and improved self-efficacy. Similarly, Guzman et al. (2018) emphasized that self-monitoring techniques, such as rereading difficult sections and summarizing key points, were among the most effective reading strategies used by high-achieving EFL learners.

Fostering a Culture of Active Reading and Self-Regulation

Promoting a culture of active reading and self-regulation among students is equally crucial. Research by Villanueva (2022) highlights that students who frequently employ problem-solving reading strategies—such as rereading, visualization, and contextual guessing—demonstrate higher comprehension levels. Additionally, fostering a classroom environment that encourages students to monitor their understanding and apply reading strategies can significantly enhance engagement and comprehension outcomes. Ahyar and Sari (2018) argue that developing self-regulated reading skills through direct instruction in metacognitive strategies enables students to better manage cognitive load and improve retention.

Moreover, student motivation and attitudes toward reading strategies play a significant role in their application and effectiveness. Khellab et al. (2022) emphasize that students who perceive metacognitive strategies as useful are more likely to adopt and consistently apply them. This is further supported by research from Rahman (2020), who found that students with higher motivation and a positive attitude toward metacognitive strategy use achieved better reading comprehension outcomes.

Future Research and Recommendations

Future research should explore the effectiveness of different training models in equipping teachers with practical techniques for implementing metacognitive strategies.

Revista on line de Política e Gestão Educacional (RPGE), Araraquara, v. 29(esp.1), n. 00, e025038, 2025.   e-ISSN: 1519-9029

10.22633/rpge.v29iesp1.20473   RPGE

15

Experimental studies could demonstrate the value of structured interventions in improving metacognitive awareness and reading comprehension. Further research should examine how Saudi EFL teachers can systematically integrate these strategies into their instruction to bridge the gap between theory and practice, ultimately fostering more proficient and independent readers.

Additionally, longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into the long-term effects of metacognitive strategy instruction on reading comprehension development. Investigating the role of technology-enhanced learning environments—such as AI-driven reading assistants and interactive digital platforms—could also offer innovative approaches to fostering metacognitive awareness and reading proficiency.

By addressing these key areas, Saudi EFL instruction can move toward a more structured, evidence-based approach that empowers students to become strategic and self-regulated readers, ultimately improving their academic success and lifelong learning abilities.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study highlights the crucial role of metacognitive reading strategies in improving reading comprehension among Saudi EFL students. The findings reveal a persistent gap between teachers' awareness of the importance of metacognitive strategies and their practical implementation in classrooms, a challenge widely documented in second-language acquisition research (Althewini, 2016; Koda, 2007). Institutional constraints, limited professional training, and rigid curriculum structures continue to hinder the effective integration of these strategies into reading instruction, emphasizing the need for systemic changes in teaching approaches.

A key takeaway from this research is that explicit instruction in metacognitive strategies—covering global, problem-solving, and support strategies—can significantly enhance students' reading comprehension skills (Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002). These strategies enable learners to monitor their understanding, regulate their reading pace, and apply effective techniques such as summarization, visualization, and contextual guessing (Meniado, 2016; Rajab et al., 2017). The correlation between metacognitive awareness and academic performance is well-documented: students who actively apply reading strategies are more likely to engage with texts meaningfully and develop higher-order thinking skills (Miller, 2017; Robillos, 2019).

Furthermore, motivation and attitudes toward reading play a critical role in strategy adoption and reading success (Li & Pan, 2009). Research has shown that students with a positive outlook on language learning exhibit higher engagement in reading tasks and are more likely to employ metacognitive strategies effectively (Kovac & Zdilar, 2017; McKenzie, 2010). Similarly, students' language background influences their ability to

RPGE

process and comprehend texts, reinforcing the importance of linguistic awareness in reading instruction (Pamittan, 2019).

Pedagogical Implementation

The findings also underscore the importance of integrating technology and visual learning aids into metacognitive strategy instruction. Studies have demonstrated that multimodal approaches—such as illustrated reading materials and digital tools—can enhance comprehension and engagement by providing students with additional cognitive support (McMaster, 2011; Ryan, 2011). The use of scaffolded reading programs that combine traditional methods with interactive technology may further support learners in developing independent reading skills (Pressley, 1977).

Looking ahead, the pedagogical implementation of metacognitive strategy instruction in Saudi EFL contexts should focus on teacher training programs, adaptive digital reading tools, and understanding cross-linguistic influences on strategy use. These areas of focus will provide valuable insights for optimizing reading pedagogy (Sadeghi, 2007; Pang, 2008).

Ultimately, a strategic shift in Saudi EFL education is needed—one that prioritizes the explicit teaching of metacognitive reading strategies, fosters a culture of active and self-regulated learning, and leverages innovative instructional methods to enhance students' reading proficiency. By addressing these key areas, Saudi EFL learners can acquire the necessary skills to navigate complex texts, engage in critical reading, and develop lifelong learning habits essential for academic and professional success.

RPGE

REFERENCES

Althewini, A. (2025). Exploring the Impact of Gender, Campus, and College Affiliation on Health Sciences Students' Perceptions of Facilities, Equipment, and Digital Library Resources in an English-Medium Instruction University. *Pegem Journal of Education and Instruction, 15*(2), 153-161. DOI:10.47750/pegegog.15.10.15

Ahmadi, M. R., Ismail, H. N., & Abdullah, M. K. (2013). The importance of metacognitive reading strategy awareness in reading comprehension. *English Language Teaching, 6*(10), 235–244. https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v6n10p235

Ahmed, H. (2015). Teachers' perceptions of metacognitive strategies in EFL reading instruction. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature*, *4*(2), 187–196.

Al-khresheh, M. H., & Al Basheer Ben Ali, R. (2023). A mixed method study on the metacognitive awareness of reading strategies used by Saudi EFL students. *Journal of Pedagogical Research, 7*(4), 30-47. https://doi.org/10.33902/JPR.202321535

Althewini, A., & Al Roomy, M. A. (2023). The impact of English reading attitude on students' achievement at a health science university. *Review of Education, 11*(2), e3397. https://doi.org/10.1002/rev3.3397

Althewini, A. M. (2016). *Saudi teachers' beliefs about reading instruction in English as a foreign language (EFL)*. The Pennsylvania State University.

Al Roomy, M., & Althewini, A. (2019). The Impact of Blended Learning on Medical Students' Reading Performance in a Saudi University. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies, 10*(4), 95-104. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1239118

Banditvilai, C. (2020). The effectiveness of reading strategies on reading comprehension. International Journal of Social Science and Humanity, 10(2), 46-50.Barnett, M. A., & Seefeldt, C. (1989). The role of metacognitive awareness in reading development. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 81*(2), 230–238. https://www.ijssh.net/vol10/1012-CH06.pdf

Chamot, A. U. (2005). Language learning strategy instruction: Current issues and research. *Annual review of applied linguistics, 25*, 112-130. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190505000061

Grabe, W. (2009). *Reading in a second language: Moving from theory to practice*. Cambridge University Press.

Khellab, F., Demirel, Ö., & Mohammadzadeh, B. (2022). Effect of teaching metacognitive reading strategies on reading comprehension of engineering students. *SAGE Open*. https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440221138069

RPGE

Koda, K. (2005). *Insights into second language reading: A cross-linguistic approach.* Cambridge University Press.

Koda, K. (2007). Reading language learning: Crosslinguistic constraints on second language reading development. *Language Learning, 57*(1), 1–44. https://doi.org/10.1111/0023-8333.101997010-i1

Kovac, M. M., & Zdilar, A. M. (2017). Students' attitudes towards foreign languages. *Journal of Educational and Developmental Psychology*. https://epe.bac-lac.gc.ca/100/201/300/jrn_educational_developmental_psych/2017/JEDP-V7N2-all.pdf#page=127

Kucukuglo, H. (2012). Improving reading skills through effective reading strategies. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 70*(2013), 709–714.

Li, P., & Pan, G. (2009). The relationship between motivation and achievement - A survey of the study motivation of English majors in Qingdao Agricultural University. *English Language Teaching, 2*(1), 123–128. https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v2n1p123

Luz, J. M. (2007). A nation of nonreaders. *Philippine Center of Investigative Journalism.*

McKenzie, R. M. (2010). The study of language attitudes. *ResearchGate*, pp. 19-39. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-481-8566-5_2

McMaster, M. (2011). Illustrative material and how to handle it. *The International Journal of Indexing, 29*(3), 123–126.

Meniado, J. C. (2016). Metacognitive reading strategies, motivation, and reading comprehension performance of Saudi EFL students. *English Language Teaching, 9*(3), 117–129. https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v9n3p117

Miller, G. (2017). Metacognitive awareness and reading strategy use: Investigating the intermediate-level ESL students' awareness of metacognitive reading strategies. *St. Cloud State University.*

Mokhtari, K., & Reichard, C. (2002). Metacognitive awareness of reading strategies inventory. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 34*(2), 29-34.

Mokhtari, K., & Thompson, H. B. (2006). How problems of reading fluency and comprehension are related to difficulties in syntactic awareness skills among fifth graders. *Reading Research Quarterly, 46*(1), 73–94.

Morisano, D., Hirsh, J. B., Peterson, J. B., Pihl, R. O., & Shore, B. M. (2010). Setting, elaboration, and reflecting on personal goals improves academic performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 95*(2), 255–264. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0018478

RPGE

Pamittan, F. A. (2019). First Language Component-Bridging Program (FLC-BP): A promising approach facilitating students' performance in reading and writing skills. *Asian EFL Journal Research Articles, 21*(2), 293–310.

Pang, J. (2008). Research on good and poor reader characteristics: Implications for L2 reading research in China. *Reading in a Foreign Language, 20*(1), 199–217.

Pressley, M. (1977). Imagery and children's learning: Putting the picture in developmental perspective. *Review of Educational Research, 47*(4), 586–622.

Pressley, M., & Afflerbach, P. (1995). *Verbal protocols of reading: The nature of constructively responsive reading*. Routledge.

Rajab, A., Rahman, H. A., Wahab, S. R. A., Nor, F. M., Zakaria, W. Z. W., & Rajim, W. Z. (2017). Metacognitive reading strategies among undergraduates. *International Journal of Information and Education Technology, 7*(7), 548–551.

Rahman, K. (2020). Perceived use of metacognitive strategies by EFL undergraduates in academic reading. *Voices of English Language Education Society, 4*(1), 44-52.

Guzman, G., Goldberg, T. S., & Swanson, H. L. (2018). A meta-analysis of self-monitoring on reading performance of K–12 students. *School Psychology Quarterly, 33*(1), 160.

Robillos, R. J. (2019). Crossing metacognitive strategy instruction in an EFL classroom: Its impact on Thai learners' listening comprehension skills and metacognitive awareness. *Asian EFL Journal Research Articles, 21*(2), 311–336.

Ryan, B. D. (2011). Reading through a plan: A visual interpretation of what plans mean and how they innovate. *Journal of the American Planning Association, 77*(4), 309–327.

Sadeghi, K. (2007). The key for successful reader-writer interaction: Factors affecting reading comprehension in L2 revisited. *Asian EFL Journal, 9*(3), 198–220.

Soleimani, H., & Alibabaee, A. (2018). Enhancing metacognitive reading skills through strategic instruction.

Tavakoli, M., & Tavakol, M. (2018). The effects of metacognitive reading strategies on EFL students' reading comprehension and self-efficacy.

Takallou, F. (2011). The effect of metacognitive strategy instruction on EFL learners' reading comprehension performance.

Villanueva, J. M. (2022). Language profile, metacognitive reading strategies, and reading comprehension performance among college students. *Cogent Education*. https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2022.2061683

RPGE

CRediT Author Statement

Processing and editing: Editora Ibero-Americana de Educação
Proofreading, formatting, normalisation and translation

Revista on line de Política e Gestão Educacional (RPGE), Araraquara, v. 29(esp.1), n. 00, e025038, 2025.   e-ISSN: 1519-9029

10.22633/rpge.v29iesp1.20473   **RPGE**

21