



An Exploratory Study of Reading Comprehension Difficulties Among Elementary-Levels of EFL University Learners

Nur Ilmi Wathoni^{1,*}, Rizki Alawiya², Muhammad Yani³

¹STKIP Agama Hindu Amlapura

²IAI Al-Manan NU Lombok Timur

³Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris

*Correspondence: nurilmiwathoni510@gmail.com

Abstract

Reading comprehension is an essential skill in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning because it enables learners to understand written information, expand vocabulary knowledge, and support academic achievement. However, many EFL learners experience difficulties in comprehending English texts due to various linguistic and cognitive challenges. This study aimed to investigate the reading comprehension difficulties experienced by EFL learners and identify the factors contributing to these difficulties. The study employed a qualitative descriptive research design involving 26 first semester students from the English Education department in Indonesia. Data were gathered through reading assignments and open-ended surveys sent using Google Forms, enabling students to articulate their perspective. The findings revealed that learners experienced difficulties in four major areas: linguistic, cognitive, strategic, and affective factors. Linguistic difficulties included limited vocabulary knowledge and insufficient grammatical understanding. Cognitive difficulties involved identifying main ideas, understanding implied meaning, and integrating information across texts. Strategic difficulties were related to the limited use of effective reading strategies such as skimming and scanning, while affective factors included anxiety, confusion, and low confidence. The study concludes that reading comprehension difficulties among EFL learners are multidimensional and require comprehensive instructional approaches that address language knowledge, reading strategies, and emotional support simultaneously.

Keyword: Reading Comprehension; EFL Learners; Vocabulary Limitation; Reading Difficulties; Language Learning

Received: 11 Mei 2026; Revised: 2 Jun 2026; Accepted: 3 Jun 2026; Available Online: 8 Jun 2026

This is an open access article under the [CC-BY](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) license.



INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is a fundamental skill in language learning because it allows learners to obtain information, develop knowledge, and improve language proficiency (Grabe & Zhang, 2022; Brown, 2015). In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, reading becomes even more important because learners often have limited exposure to English outside the classroom (Rahman & Hamzah, 2022). Unlike learners in English-speaking environments, EFL learners rely heavily on reading materials such as textbooks, articles, and online resources to gain language input. Consequently, reading comprehension is considered one of the most essential skills for academic success and language development (Nation & Coxhead, 2022).

Reading comprehension involves more than recognizing words and translating sentences. It is a complex cognitive process that requires readers to construct meaning from written texts through interaction between linguistic knowledge, background knowledge, and cognitive abilities (Kintsch, 1988; Rumelhart, 1980). Reading comprehension refers to the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. Readers must recognize vocabulary, interpret grammatical structures, connect ideas, make inferences, and monitor their understanding while reading (Perfetti & Stafura, 2014). For beginner EFL learners, reading comprehension is often challenging because they are still developing basic language proficiency (Kim & Lee, 2023). Learners frequently encounter unfamiliar vocabulary, complicated sentence structures, and limited contextual understanding. These challenges may prevent them from

comprehending texts effectively (Li & Zhang, 2022). In many cases, learners focus excessively on translating individual words rather than understanding the overall meaning of the text. This approach often results in fragmented comprehension and slow reading performance (Rahmawati & Sulisty, 2023).

In Indonesia, reading instruction in EFL classrooms often emphasizes grammar exercises, vocabulary memorization, and translation activities (Rumelhart & Suryani, 2023). These methods may help learners recognize linguistic forms, they may not sufficiently develop comprehension skills and reading strategies. As a result, students may become dependent on dictionaries and teacher explanations instead of developing independent reading abilities (Sulistyo et al., 2022). Previous studies have shown that reading comprehension difficulties among EFL learners are influenced by multiple factors. Linguistic factors such as limited vocabulary and inadequate grammar knowledge are among the most reported barriers (Nation & Coxhead, 2022; Perfetti, 2007). Cognitive factors, including difficulties in identifying main ideas, understanding implied meaning, and integrating information, also contribute significantly to poor comprehension (Cain, 2023; Zhang, 2023). In addition, many learners lack effective reading strategies such as skimming, scanning, predicting, and summarizing (Putri & Fauziati, 2024). Emotional or affective factors, including anxiety, fear of failure, and low confidence, may further reduce learners' motivation and engagement with reading activities (Al-Hassan & Al-Saadi, 2023; López & Serrano, 2023).

Despite the growing number of studies on EFL reading comprehension, research focusing specifically on beginner-level learners remains relatively limited. Most previous studies have focused on secondary school students or advanced university learners (Mukminin et al., 2023; Aeni, 2024). Therefore, there is a need to explore the experiences and challenges faced by beginner-level learners who are still in the early stages of language acquisition. This study aims to investigate the reading comprehension difficulties experienced by beginner EFL learners and identify the factors contributing to these difficulties. By understanding the nature of learners' challenges, teachers and curriculum designers may develop more effective instructional approaches that support reading comprehension development among beginner-level learners (Hidayati & Widodo, 2023). The research seeks to answer the following questions: 1) What reading comprehension difficulties are experienced by EFL learners? 2) What factors contribute to these reading comprehension difficulties.

The findings of this study are expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions to EFL reading instruction. Theoretically, the study contributes to the understanding of reading comprehension difficulties among beginner-level EFL learners (Cain, 2023; Hoover, 2024). Practically, the findings may help teachers design more effective reading activities and provide better support for students who struggle with reading comprehension (Wulandari & Sari, 2024).

Literature Review

Reading comprehension is commonly defined as the process of understanding and constructing meaning from written texts. It involves interaction between the reader, the text, and the context of reading (Grabe & Zhang, 2022). According to Grabe and Zhang (2022), reading comprehension is an active process in which readers integrate textual information with prior knowledge to create meaning. Effective comprehension requires not only linguistic knowledge but also cognitive and strategic abilities. It explains that reading comprehension is the product of two major components: decoding and linguistic comprehension. Decoding refers to the ability to recognize written words accurately and fluently, while linguistic comprehension involves understanding spoken language and interpreting meaning. According to this model, learners cannot achieve successful comprehension unless both components function effectively (Hoover, 2024). Reading comprehension is also closely related to metacognition. Metacognitive awareness enables readers to monitor their understanding and apply strategies when comprehension difficulties occur. Learners who possess strong metacognitive skills are generally more successful readers because they actively evaluate and regulate their reading processes (Garcia & Cain, 2023; Tran & Dang, 2022).

Several components contribute to successful reading comprehension. One of the most important components is vocabulary knowledge. Vocabulary plays a central role because readers cannot understand texts effectively if they do not know the meanings of key words (Perfetti & Hart, 2002). Nation and Coxhead (2022) argue that vocabulary knowledge is one of the strongest predictors of reading comprehension ability. Learners with limited vocabulary often struggle to identify main ideas and understand textual information (Rahmawati & Sulisty, 2023). Another important component is comprehension monitoring. According to Cain (2023),

comprehension monitoring involves evaluating one's understanding during reading and applying repair strategies when comprehension breaks down. Readers who monitor their comprehension effectively can identify confusion and take corrective actions. Background knowledge also affects reading comprehension. Readers with prior knowledge related to the topic can connect new information more easily and understand texts more deeply.

Reading in EFL contexts differs from reading in first-language settings because learners face additional linguistic and cultural barriers (Ellis & Larsen-Freeman, 2022). EFL learners often lack sufficient exposure to English vocabulary, grammar, and authentic communication. As a result, reading becomes cognitively demanding. The lexical threshold hypothesis suggests that learners need to know approximately 95–98% of the vocabulary in a text to comprehend it effectively (Nation & Coxhead, 2022). When too many unfamiliar words appear, comprehension becomes difficult because readers spend excessive cognitive effort decoding vocabulary (Perfetti & Stafura, 2014). Many EFL learners also rely heavily on translation strategies. While translation may help learners understand individual words, excessive dependence on translation can interfere with overall comprehension and reading fluency (Rahman & Hamzah, 2022). Another challenge in EFL contexts is the lack of reading strategy instruction. In some classrooms, reading activities focus mainly on answering comprehension questions rather than teaching learners how to approach texts strategically. Consequently, learners may fail to develop independent reading skills (Putri & Fauziati, 2024).

Linguistic factors include vocabulary limitation, grammar deficiency, and pronunciation-related difficulties (Perfetti, 2007). Vocabulary limitation is often considered the primary obstacle in EFL reading comprehension because unfamiliar words disrupt meaning construction (Nation & Coxhead, 2022). Grammar difficulties may also affect comprehension because learners struggle to interpret sentence structures correctly. Complex grammatical patterns such as passive voice, relative clauses, and conditional sentences often confuse beginner learners (Li & Zhang, 2022). Cognitive factors involve mental processes used during reading. Learners may have trouble identifying main ideas, understanding implied meaning, and integrating information across paragraphs (Zhang, 2023). Weak inferencing skills can also reduce comprehension because learners fail to connect ideas logically (Cain, 2023). Strategic factors relate to learners' use of reading strategies. Effective readers use strategies such as skimming, scanning, predicting, questioning, and summarizing to facilitate comprehension (Grabe & Zhang, 2022). Learners who lack strategic awareness often read passively and depend excessively on dictionaries (Putri & Fauziati, 2024). Affective factors include motivation, anxiety, confidence, and attitudes toward reading. Learners with low confidence may avoid reading activities because they fear making mistakes. Anxiety can negatively affect concentration and reduce comprehension performance (Shao et al., 2022; Al-Hassan & Al-Saadi, 2023).

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore the reading comprehension difficulties experienced by beginner English as a Foreign Language (EFL) university learners at first semester. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of learners' experiences, perceptions, and challenges during the reading process. Rather than focusing on numerical measurement, the study emphasized detailed descriptions and interpretations of the factors influencing reading comprehension difficulties among beginner-level learners (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Sandelowski, 2000). The participants of this study were 26 first-semester students from the English Education Department in Indonesia. The participants were selected through purposive sampling because they represented beginner-level EFL learners who were still in the early stages of developing English reading skills. These learners were considered suitable for investigating the challenges commonly faced by beginner readers in EFL contexts (Dörnyei, 2007; Cohen et al., 2018).

Data were gathered through reading assignments and open-ended surveys sent using Google Forms, enabling students to articulate their opinions freely. The data were subsequently evaluated descriptively to discern patterns associated with linguistic, cognitive, strategic, and affective elements that lead to challenges in reading comprehension. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Students' responses from both the reading tasks and questionnaires were categorized into several themes based on recurring patterns. The themes included linguistic difficulties, cognitive difficulties, strategic difficulties, and affective factors. The researcher then interpreted the data to understand how these factors contributed to learners' reading

comprehension problems. The analysis aimed to provide a comprehensive description of the reading difficulties experienced by the EFL learners and the factors influencing their comprehension performance (Miles & Huberman, 2014; Sandelowski, 2000).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that beginner EFL learners experience various reading comprehension difficulties that can be categorized into four major domains: linguistic difficulties, cognitive difficulties, strategic difficulties, and affective factors (Grabe & Zhang, 2022; Cain, 2023). These factors are interconnected and collectively influence learners' ability to comprehend English texts effectively. The results also reveal that learners' reading difficulties are not caused by a single issue but rather by the interaction of multiple challenges that occur simultaneously during the reading process (Hoover, 2024). The analysis of students' responses from reading comprehension tasks and open-ended questionnaires demonstrates that vocabulary limitation and grammatical difficulties are among the most dominant obstacles. However, cognitive issues such as identifying main ideas and understanding implied meaning also significantly affect learners' comprehension (Nation & Coxhead, 2022). In addition, many learners lack effective reading strategies, causing them to rely heavily on word-by-word translation (Putri & Fauziati, 2024). Emotional barriers such as anxiety, confusion, and low confidence further intensify these difficulties (Al-Hassan & Al-Saadi, 2023).

Linguistic Difficulties

Linguistic difficulties emerged as the most frequently reported challenge among the participants. Most students stated that they encountered many unfamiliar words while reading English texts. Vocabulary limitation significantly disrupted comprehension because students were unable to understand key concepts and important information within the text (Nation & Coxhead, 2022). Many participants admitted that they depended heavily on dictionaries or translation applications to understand English passages. However, constantly translating words interrupted the reading process and reduced comprehension efficiency. Instead of focusing on the overall meaning of the text, students concentrated on decoding individual words. As a result, they often lost track of the main ideas and became confused about the relationships between sentences (Rahmawati & Sulisty, 2023). One of the students stated:

"I think English sentences are sometimes easy to understand and sometimes not. I still feel a bit confused regarding the grammar that underpins the sentence itself. Furthermore, sometimes unfamiliar vocabulary can hinder the process of understanding a sentence." (Students 2)

This finding supports the argument proposed by Nation and Coxhead (2022), who state that vocabulary knowledge is one of the strongest predictors of reading comprehension ability. Learners who possess limited vocabulary struggle to process information fluently because too much cognitive effort is spent decoding unfamiliar words (Perfetti & Stafura, 2014). According to the lexical threshold hypothesis, learners need to know approximately 95–98% of the vocabulary in a text to achieve adequate comprehension (Nation & Coxhead, 2022). The participants in this study appeared to fall below this threshold, which explains why they experienced comprehension difficulties.

This finding aligns with previous research emphasizing the importance of grammar knowledge in reading comprehension. Grammar helps readers interpret meaning accurately by showing how words and ideas are connected within sentences. Without sufficient grammatical awareness, learners may misunderstand important information or fail to recognize the author's intended meaning. Another linguistic challenge identified in this study relates to pronunciation and spelling inconsistencies in English. Some students mentioned that English words are often pronounced differently from their written forms, making it difficult to recognize vocabulary during reading. Although reading is primarily a visual activity, pronunciation knowledge still influences word recognition, especially for beginner learners who rely on phonological decoding (Castles et al., 2023). The findings indicate that linguistic difficulties are central to the reading comprehension challenges experienced by beginner EFL learners. Vocabulary limitation, grammatical deficiency, and pronunciation-related confusion collectively interfere with learners' ability to construct meaning from texts. Therefore, improving linguistic competence should become a primary focus of reading instruction for beginner learners (Nation & Coxhead, 2022).

Cognitive Difficulties

In addition to linguistic challenges, participants also experienced significant cognitive difficulties during reading comprehension tasks. Many learners reported difficulty identifying main ideas, understanding implied meaning, and integrating information across paragraphs. These findings suggest that learners struggle not only with language forms but also with higher-order cognitive processes required for comprehension (Kintsch, 1988; Cain, 2023). One of the most common cognitive difficulties involved identifying the main idea of a passage. Several students explained that they could understand certain sentences individually but failed to determine the overall topic or purpose of the text. This problem occurred because learners focused excessively on decoding vocabulary rather than connecting ideas across sentences. The inability to identify main ideas may also indicate limited reading experience and underdeveloped comprehension skills. Skilled readers usually recognize topic sentences, repeated concepts, and organizational patterns within texts. However, beginner learners often lack awareness of these textual features, making it difficult for them to distinguish essential information from supporting details (Grabe & Zhang, 2022). As one of the students narrated that:

“English sentences are sometimes easy to understand, but some of them can also be difficult. However, in my opinion english sentences are easier to understand than listening. Therefore, practicing regularly and learning new vocabulary every day are very important to improve my english skills.” (Students 1)

Some participants also had trouble integrating information across multiple sentences or paragraphs. They could understand isolated parts of the text but failed to connect ideas into a coherent whole. This issue reflects limitations in cognitive processing and comprehension monitoring. Comprehension monitoring refers to readers' ability to evaluate their understanding during reading and recognize when comprehension breaks down (Cain, 2023). Skilled readers actively monitor their comprehension and apply repair strategies when confusion occurs. In contrast, many participants in this study appeared unaware of their comprehension problems until they encountered difficulties answering questions. The findings also indicate that cognitive overload may contribute to comprehension difficulties. Because learners must simultaneously process vocabulary, grammar, and meaning, their cognitive resources become overwhelmed. This situation is particularly common among beginner EFL learners who lack automaticity in word recognition and language processing (Rasinski & Padak, 2023). When cognitive overload occurs, learners may focus exclusively on decoding words while neglecting higher-level comprehension processes. Consequently, they may understand individual sentences but fail to construct overall meaning. The findings suggest that cognitive difficulties significantly affect EFL learners' reading comprehension. These difficulties include problems in identifying main ideas, making inferences, integrating information, monitoring comprehension, and activating background knowledge. Therefore, reading instruction should include activities that develop higher-order comprehension skills in addition to linguistic competence (García & Cain, 2023).

Strategic Difficulties

Another important finding of this study concerns learners' limited use of effective reading strategies. Most participants reported relying heavily on word-by-word translation rather than employing strategic approaches to reading. This indicates that EFL learners lack awareness of how to read efficiently and purposefully (Putri & Fauziati, 2024). Skilled readers typically use strategies such as skimming, scanning, predicting, summarizing, and questioning to facilitate comprehension (Grabe & Zhang, 2022). However, several participants in this study were unfamiliar with these strategies or did not know how to apply them effectively. For example, several students admitted that they read texts slowly because they attempted to translate every unfamiliar word. This approach consumed excessive time and interrupted comprehension flow. Instead of focusing on the overall meaning, learners became preoccupied with vocabulary decoding (Rahman & Hamzah, 2022).

The overreliance on dictionaries also reflects limited strategic competence. Although dictionaries can support vocabulary learning, excessive dictionary use may hinder reading fluency and reduce learners' ability to infer meaning from context (Nation & Coxhead, 2022). Some participants reported that they rarely previewed texts before reading. They did not examine titles, headings, or illustrations to predict content. As a result, they approached texts without clear expectations or goals, making comprehension more difficult. Another strategic weakness involved summarizing. Many learners struggled to summarize texts because they could not identify essential information. This difficulty is closely related to cognitive problems in identifying main ideas and distinguishing important details from less relevant information (Cain, 2023).

“Sometimes I find it difficult to answer questions about the text, especially if there are many difficult words or the questions are tricky.” (Students 5)

Despite these challenges, some learners demonstrated emerging strategic awareness. A few participants mentioned focusing on repeated words, topic sentences, or key phrases to identify important information. Although these strategies were relatively basic, they indicate that some learners are beginning to develop strategic reading behavior. The findings support previous research emphasizing the importance of reading strategy instruction in EFL classrooms (Zhang & Zhang, 2023). Strategy instruction helps learners become more independent and effective readers by teaching them how to approach texts actively and purposefully. Teachers play a crucial role in developing strategic competence among learners. Explicit instruction in skimming, scanning, predicting, inferencing, and summarizing can help learners improve comprehension and reduce dependence on translation (Tran & Dang, 2022).

Affective Factors

Affective factors also significantly influenced learners' reading comprehension experiences. Participants of the study reported feelings of anxiety, confusion, frustration, and low confidence when reading English texts (Shao et al., 2022). Reading anxiety was particularly common among students who believed their English proficiency was inadequate. Learners often felt nervous when encountering unfamiliar vocabulary or difficult sentences because they feared misunderstanding the text. This anxiety negatively affected concentration and reduced learners' willingness to engage with reading tasks (Al-Hassan & Al-Saadi, 2023). Some participants stated that they avoided reading English materials outside the classroom because they lacked confidence in their abilities. Low confidence also contributed to passive learning behavior. Learners who doubted their reading abilities were less likely to participate actively in classroom discussions or attempt challenging texts (López & Serrano, 2023). A student insisted that:

Yes, I often find it difficult to answer questions, and it takes a long time to answer them. (Student 7)

Frustration emerged as another important affective factor. Students frequently became frustrated when they spent too much time translating vocabulary without fully understanding the text. Repeated comprehension failures reduced motivation and created negative attitudes toward reading activities. Motivation is closely related to reading comprehension because motivated learners are more likely to practice reading regularly and apply effort during comprehension tasks (Dörnyei, 2007). Conversely, learners with low motivation may avoid reading and demonstrate limited persistence when difficulties arise. The findings indicate that emotional support is essential in reading instruction. Teachers should create supportive classroom environments that encourage risk-taking and reduce fear of making mistakes. Positive feedback, collaborative activities, and appropriately challenging materials may help increase learners' confidence and motivation (Hidayati & Widodo, 2023).

The findings of this study demonstrate that reading comprehension difficulties among beginner EFL learners are multidimensional and interconnected. Linguistic difficulties increase cognitive load, while cognitive overload reduces learners' ability to apply effective strategies. At the same time, repeated comprehension failure contributes to anxiety and low confidence. These findings support interactive models of reading, which emphasize that comprehension involves the interaction of linguistic, cognitive, strategic, and affective factors (Rumelhart, 1977; Grabe & Zhang, 2022). Successful reading comprehension requires learners to integrate vocabulary knowledge, grammar understanding, inferencing skills, strategic competence, and emotional regulation simultaneously (Hoover, 2024). The results also highlight the importance of comprehensive reading instruction. Teachers should not focus exclusively on vocabulary memorization or grammar exercises. Instead, reading instruction should integrate linguistic development, comprehension strategy training, and emotional support (Putri & Fauziati, 2024). By addressing these interconnected factors, educators may help the EFL learners become more confident, strategic, and successful readers (Wulandari & Sari, 2024).

CONCLUSION

This study explored the reading comprehension difficulties experienced by beginner EFL learners and identified the factors contributing to these challenges. The findings revealed that learners encounter multidimensional difficulties involving linguistic, cognitive, strategic, and affective aspects of reading. Among these factors, vocabulary limitation and insufficient grammatical knowledge emerged as the most significant

linguistic barriers affecting learners' ability to comprehend texts effectively. Students also experienced cognitive difficulties, particularly in identifying main ideas, making inferences, and integrating information across paragraphs. In addition, many learners lacked effective reading strategies such as skimming, scanning, and summarizing, causing them to rely heavily on word-by-word translation. Emotional factors, including anxiety, confusion, frustration, and low confidence, further reduced learners' motivation and engagement in reading activities.

The findings indicate that reading comprehension is a complex process requiring the interaction of multiple skills and abilities. Therefore, improving learners' reading comprehension requires comprehensive instructional approaches that address linguistic competence, cognitive development, strategic awareness, and emotional support simultaneously. Teachers should provide explicit vocabulary and grammar instruction, teach reading strategies systematically, and create supportive learning environments that encourage confidence and active participation. Ultimately, understanding learners' reading difficulties is essential for developing effective reading instruction that supports the EFL learners in becoming more independent and successful readers.

References

- Al-Hassan, L., & Al-Saadi, R. (2023). Reading anxiety and comprehension performance among young EFL learners. *International Journal of Early Language Learning*, 5(2), 71–83.
- Bartlett, F. C. (1932). *Remembering: A study in experimental and social psychology*. Cambridge University Press.
- Cain, K. (2023). *Reading development and difficulties: Theoretical perspectives*. Routledge.
- Castles, A., Rastle, K., & Nation, K. (2023). Ending the reading wars: Reading acquisition from novice to expert. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 24(1), 5–52.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2018). *Research methods in education* (8th ed.). Routledge.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2007). *Research methods in applied linguistics*. Oxford University Press.
- García, M., & Cain, K. (2023). Metacognitive awareness and reading comprehension in EFL learners. *Journal of Language Teaching Research*, 11(2), 145–158.
- Goodman, K. S. (1967). Reading: A psycholinguistic guessing game. *Journal of the Reading Specialist*, 6(4), 126–135.
- Gough, P. B., & Tunmer, W. E. (1986). Decoding, reading, and reading disability. *Remedial and Special Education*, 7(1), 6–10. <https://doi.org/10.1177/074193258600700104>
- Grabe, W., & Zhang, C. (2022). *Teaching and researching reading* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Hidayati, M., & Widodo, H. P. (2023). Teaching reading in Indonesian primary schools: Teachers' beliefs and classroom practices. *TEFLIN Journal*, 34(2), 157–174.
- Hoover, W. A. (2024). The simple view of reading and its broad types of reading comprehension. *Reading and Writing*. Advance online publication.
- Kim, S., & Lee, H. (2023). Development of reading comprehension skills in Korean EFL learners. *English Teaching*, 78(1), 67–89.
- Kintsch, W. (1988). The role of knowledge in discourse comprehension: A construction–integration model. *Psychological Review*, 95(2), 163–182.
- Lee, H. (2022). Simple view of second language reading: A meta-analytic review. *Scientific Studies of Reading*. Advance online publication.
- López, A., & Serrano, F. (2023). Reading anxiety and comprehension performance in EFL contexts. *Systemic Functional Linguistics Review*, 5(1), 59–73.

- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (2nd ed.). Sage.
- Mukminin, A., Habibi, A., & Sofwan, M. (2023). Exploring reading comprehension problems among Indonesian EFL learners. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 13(1), 112–124.
- Nation, I. S. P., & Coxhead, A. (2022). *Vocabulary learning in language education*. Cambridge University Press.
- Perfetti, C. A., & Stafura, J. (2014). Word knowledge in a theory of reading comprehension. *Scientific Studies of Reading*, 18(1), 22–37.
- Pratiwi, D., & Suryani, A. (2023). Challenges in teaching reading comprehension in Indonesian elementary schools. *Journal of Basic Education Research*, 7(2), 89–101.
- Putri, L. D., & Fauziati, E. (2024). Reading strategy awareness among Indonesian elementary EFL learners. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 15(2), 276–285.
- Rahman, M., & Hamzah, H. (2022). Academic reading challenges among Malaysian EFL undergraduates. *Malaysian Journal of ELT Research*, 19(1), 27–41.
- Rahmawati, N., & Sulisty, U. (2023). Vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension of Indonesian EFL learners. *Journal of Asia TEFL*, 20(4), 1421–1436.
- Rasinski, T., & Padak, N. (2023). Automaticity deficits and reading fluency. *Literacy Research and Instruction*, 62(1), 1–15.
- Sandelowski, M. (2000). Whatever happened to qualitative description? *Research in Nursing & Health*, 23(4), 334–340.
- Shao, K., Nicholson, L., Kutuk, G., & Lei, F. (2022). Control-value theory and reading anxiety in EFL. *System*, 108, Article 102833.
- Sulisty, U., Mukminin, A., Abdurrahman, & Haryanto, E. (2022). EFL teaching in Indonesian primary schools: Current practices and challenges. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Education*, 42(3), 467–482.
- Tran, T. Q., & Dang, T. T. (2022). Self-regulated learning in EFL reading. *Asian EFL Journal*, 26(3), 112–130.
- Wulandari, S., & Sari, D. (2024). Reading comprehension difficulties of elementary students in EFL classrooms. *Journal of English Education and Linguistics*, 8(1), 14–26.
- Zhang, L. J., & Zhang, D. (2023). Strategy instruction and EFL reading comprehension: A meta-analysis. *System*, 114, Article 102971.
- Zhang, S. (2023). Applying the construction–integration model in reading comprehension research. *Reading Research Quarterly*. Advance online publication.