



## Exploring Students' Difficulties in Interpretative Reading and Strategy: Among English Education Students at IAIN Curup

Aisyah Tri Rizki

[aisyahtririzki7@gmail.com](mailto:aisyahtririzki7@gmail.com)

IAIN Curup

**Abstract:** This study investigates the difficulties faced by English Education students at IAIN Curup in interpretative reading and examines the reading strategies they employ to overcome those challenges. Using a qualitative approach with Miles and Huberman's interactive model comprising data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, the data were collected through semi-structured interviews with five participants. The findings reveal that students consistently struggle with understanding implied meanings, limited vocabulary, complex sentence structures, and pronunciation difficulties, all of which are further compounded by their awareness of English as a foreign language. In response to these challenges, students employ various strategies such as rereading, contextual guessing, deep reading, and AI-assisted translation. However, their strategy use tends to be reactive and inconsistent rather than planned and metacognitive. The strategies are often ineffective due to low motivation, limited metacognitive awareness, and over-reliance on AI tools, which reduces opportunities for developing independent comprehension skills. This study recommends explicit reading strategy instruction, particularly inference-making and comprehension monitoring, alongside vocabulary development programs and the guided integration of technology in EFL reading classrooms.

**Keywords:** Interpretative Reading, EFL Learners, Reading Difficulties, Reading Strategies, Metacognitive Awareness

### Introduction

The importance of English reading comprehension is that when you are comprehending, you learn something new. In the academic field, specifically university students have to read lots of English texts, like textbooks, academic articles, etc. In this case, reading comprehension plays a big part in helping students to gain knowledge. Among the levels of reading comprehension, interpretative reading seems to be the most important part because this level helps the students to gain deeper meaning, not just understanding of literal meaning, but also beyond literal meaning (Assiri & Siddiqui, 2020). Thus, the students have to find hidden meaning by doing other thinking, such as inferring or understanding implications. Interpretative reading is more difficult for EFL learners because they do not have many opportunities to use the English language (Hezam et al., 2022). Students often get stuck in reading the implicit meaning, especially if students get a text contains uncommon words or a complex structure (Allehyani, 2025). Therefore, interpretative reading needs not only linguistic but also cognitive knowledge. In this study, interpretative reading is defined as learners' capability of comprehending implicit meaning, inferring, and interpreting implicit ideas stated in a text, whereas the strategies are defined as the techniques learners use to overcome or facilitate their comprehension, like predicting meaning, locating the main idea, and relating one part of the text to other parts of it.

Although interpretative reading is important, most of the EFL learners face a big problem. The initial findings show that students at IAIN Curup encounter significant challenges in comprehending the implicit meaning and also in deciphering unfamiliar vocabulary and complex sentence structures. Students themselves admit that even though they have been introduced to

various reading strategies (skimming, scanning, rereading, guessing meaning from context, and the utilization of AI or translation tools), the applications are not as effective as they are expected to be. For example, the participants state that using an AI translator or pronunciation tool is not that useful for their learning because 'it feels boring', whereas some others confess their lack of certainty in finding the implicit meaning, even though they have tried to apply prediction. Besides, most students prefer translating without processing them into higher-level thoughts and interpretations. These phenomena suggest that there is a lack in applying a relevant strategy effectively during an interpretative reading of a text.

Some studies have already been conducted regarding the readers' problems when reading, and also the use of reading strategies by EFL learners. Numerous studies suggest that many EFL readers experience problems when dealing with vocabulary, sentence structure, and text interpretation. For example, according to Satriani (2018), vocabulary and sentence structure knowledge greatly influence reading comprehension. It is supported by the findings of Anwar et al. (2025), who claim that inadequate linguistic competence and a low level of comprehension lead the students to have trouble in interpreting texts. Supporting this idea, Evenddy et al. (2021) have revealed the students' problems with meaning beyond the surface level of a text.

In addition, many studies have examined the use of reading strategies; Pramesti (2023) has pointed out that the use of skimming and scanning is helpful to identify the main idea, and Agustin et al. (2023) reported that reading strategies such as skimming and scanning help to enhance reading comprehension. However, this was mostly relevant to surface-level comprehension. And Ismail and Edi (2022) have confirmed that the use of a supportive reading technique is helpful to motivate students' involvement in reading activities.

Although those previous studies are really helpful to understand reading difficulties and strategies among EFL learners, some issues have not been widely examined. Firstly, previous studies mostly focus on general reading or learning strategies without further investigation into how it is associated with specific levels of reading comprehension, such as interpretative reading. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate the relationship between students' difficulties and their reading strategies when understanding an interpretative reading.

Numerous studies have explored reading comprehension difficulties and the reading strategies for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Several previous studies have shown the students' problems regarding vocabulary, sentence structure, and interpreting a text. Besides, other studies have reported that the use of reading strategies like skimming and scanning, and also the use of technology, helps to comprehend the text, but these studies mostly give limited attention to interpretative reading. Despite its importance, most studies investigated general reading difficulties; there are few investigations focusing on interpretative reading, in which students have to reach the implicit meaning. Many students still get stuck in understanding meanings beyond the surface level.

In addition, a large gap in existing literature seems to focus only on the existence of difficulties and strategies, or the strategy use within the overall reading task. Therefore, how students' difficulties of reading interpretation are related to the strategies they have been applying needs further exploration. In short, we do not truly know how students use strategies in real situations and why strategies are not useful to help them achieve a deeper understanding of a text. So, this research intends to fill the gap by investigating students' problems during reading an interpretative reading text by exploring how the students use the strategies when reading an interpretative reading text.

The purpose of this study is to explore the difficulties faced by students in interpreting English texts and to investigate the way English Education students at IAIN Curup use reading strategies to overcome their difficulties in interpreting the texts. Specifically, this study aims to: (1) identify the kind of difficulties students face during interpretative reading, (2) analyze how students employ reading strategies and how these strategies are associated with the difficulties

they face, and (3) analyze why these strategies are not effective in supporting students' reading interpretation with the following research questions:

1. RQ 1: What difficulties do students face in interpretative reading in an EFL classroom?
2. RQ 2: How do students use reading strategies in interpretative reading, and how are these strategies related to the difficulties they experience?
3. RQ 3: Why are the reading strategies used by students not always effective in helping them understand interpretative texts?

## Methods

This study employed the interactive model of qualitative data analysis proposed by Miles and Huberman (2002), which consists of three major steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews with five English Education students at IAIN Curup who were asked about their experiences, difficulties, and strategies in interpretative reading. The findings are organized and presented based on the three research questions.

### Data Reduction

Data reduction refers to the process of selecting, simplifying, focusing, and transforming raw data obtained from semi-structured interviews. In this study, the researcher transcribed all interview responses from five participants and carefully reviewed the transcripts multiple times. Important statements related to students' difficulties in interpretative reading, their reading strategies, and the effectiveness of those strategies were identified and coded.

The researcher categorized the responses into several themes based on the research questions, such as:

1. Students' difficulties in interpretative reading
2. Reading strategies used by students
3. Use of technology in reading comprehension
4. Effectiveness of reading strategies
5. Students' problem-solving actions during reading difficulties

Irrelevant data unrelated to the research focus were excluded during this stage.

### Data Display

After reducing the data, the researcher organized and displayed the findings systematically using thematic tables and narrative descriptions. The data display process aimed to help the researcher identify patterns, similarities, differences, and relationships among participants' responses. The interview transcripts from five participants were grouped into several categories and themes based on the research questions. The researcher then selected representative responses from participants to support each theme.

Table 1. Data Display for Research Question 1

| Participant | Main Response                                                                                                                                                        | Initial Code                                                                                                                | Theme                                                                             |
|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| RD          | Difficulty pronouncing new words, limited vocabulary, and understanding implied meanings. Uses AI to read text aloud and repeats pronunciation, but finds it boring. | pronunciation difficulty, limited vocabulary, implied meaning difficulty, AI use, repetition strategy, and learning boredom | Students' Difficulties in Interpretative Reading:<br>The Use of Technology        |
| YAP         | Difficulty with unfamiliar vocabulary and long sentences. Needs to reread several times. Uses AI for comprehension but                                               | unfamiliar vocabulary, sentence complexity,                                                                                 | Students' Difficulties in Interpretative Reading;<br>Students' Reading Strategies |

|            |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                        |
|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|            | sometimes guesses meaning from context.                                                                                                                                                            | rereading strategy, AI use, guessing meaning                                                                                                               |                                                                                                        |
| <b>DLJ</b> | Difficulty with implied meanings and slang words in formal texts. Tries different reading strategies but sometimes forgets to apply them. Uses AI for translation and rereads texts.               | implied meaning, difficulty, slang/formal vocabulary, reading strategies, AI-assisted translation, rereading                                               | Students' Difficulties in Interpretative Reading; Students' Reading Strategies; Use of Technology      |
| <b>LN</b>  | Difficulty with implied meanings, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Prefers guessing meaning, uses AI for comprehension, and searches for similar words.                                              | implied meaning, difficulty, vocabulary difficulty, pronunciation difficulty, guessing meaning, AI use, word searching                                     | Students' Difficulties in Interpretative Reading; Students' Reading Strategies                         |
| <b>RS</b>  | Struggles with vocabulary and implied meanings as a non-native speaker. Uses deep reading and AI for translation, but finds the strategies time-consuming and sometimes stops reading temporarily. | non-native language background, vocabulary difficulty, implied meaning difficulty, deep reading, AI translation, strategy ineffectiveness, temporary delay | Students' Difficulties in Interpretative Reading; Students' Reading Strategies; Strategy Effectiveness |

The table above demonstrates that students consistently experience difficulties related to limited vocabulary, implied meaning comprehension, sentence complexity, and pronunciation. These difficulties are closely interrelated, as unfamiliarity with vocabulary often leads to difficulties in understanding implied meanings. Most participants also reported using AI tools and rereading strategies as primary responses to their reading difficulties.

Table 2. Data Display for Research Question 2

| <b>Participant</b> | <b>Representative Response</b>                                                        | <b>Category</b>                            | <b>Theme</b>                                                                 |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>RD</b>          | Uses AI for reading aloud and a repetition strategy.                                  | Use of Technology: Reading Strategy        | The Use of Technology in Reading Comprehension: Students' Reading Strategies |
| <b>RD</b>          | The strategy feels boring and not very effective.                                     | Strategy Effectiveness                     | The Effectiveness of Reading Strategies                                      |
| <b>YAP</b>         | Uses AI tools for comprehension and sometimes guesses meaning when AI is unavailable. | Use of Technology: Problem-Solving Actions | The Use of Technology: Students' Problem-Solving Actions                     |
| <b>DLJ</b>         | Uses AI for translation, rereads texts, and guesses meaning independently.            | Use of Technology: Reading Strategies      | The Use of Technology: Students' Reading Strategies                          |
| <b>DLJ</b>         | Forgets how to apply reading strategies consistently.                                 | Strategy Effectiveness                     | The Effectiveness of Reading Strategies                                      |

|           |                                                                                          |                                                                |                                                                 |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>LN</b> | Guesses the meaning from context; uses multiple AI tools and searches for similar words. | Reading Strategies; Use of Technology; Problem-Solving Actions | Students' Reading Strategies; Students' Problem-Solving Actions |
| <b>RS</b> | Deep reading strategy requires a long time and full concentration.                       | Strategy Effectiveness                                         | The Effectiveness of Reading Strategies                         |
| <b>RS</b> | Temporarily stops reading and continues later when the text is too difficult.            | Problem-Solving Actions                                        | Students' Problem-Solving Actions During Reading Difficulties   |

The findings displayed in Table 2 indicate that students employ a variety of reading strategies, including rereading, contextual guessing, deep reading, and AI-assisted translation. Most participants recognized technology as a practical support tool in interpretative reading. However, the effectiveness of these strategies varied depending on the students' vocabulary knowledge, concentration levels, and access to technology.

Table 3. Data Display for Research Question 3

| <b>Participant</b> | <b>Representative Response</b>                                                            | <b>Category</b>         | <b>Theme</b>                                                  |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>RD</b>          | The strategy of using AI for reading aloud feels boring and is not very effective.        | Strategy Effectiveness  | The Effectiveness of Reading Strategies                       |
| <b>YAP</b>         | Cannot always rely on AI in every situation.                                              | Strategy Effectiveness  | The Effectiveness of Reading Strategies                       |
| <b>DLJ</b>         | Sometimes forgets how to apply reading strategies or does not fully understand their use. | Strategy Effectiveness  | The Effectiveness of Reading Strategies                       |
| <b>RS</b>          | Strategies require a long time and full concentration; sometimes feels ineffective.       | Strategy Effectiveness  | The Effectiveness of Reading Strategies                       |
| <b>RS</b>          | Stops reading temporarily and continues later as a coping action.                         | Problem-Solving Actions | Students' Problem-Solving Actions During Reading Difficulties |

Table 3 reveals that the ineffectiveness of reading strategies stems from factors such as learning boredom, inconsistent strategy application, limited access to technology, and the time demands of certain strategies. These findings suggest that strategy effectiveness is not solely determined by the strategy itself, but also by individual students' characteristics such as persistence, vocabulary mastery, and concentration ability.

### **Conclusion Drawing and Verification**

In the final analysis process, all the presented data were analyzed, concluded, verified through multiple interviews, and compared with multiple participants' information. The conclusions obtained were cross-checked by repeated readings of the interview texts and comparison of findings among different participants. Triangulation was used to increase the credibility of the findings.

With respect to Research Question 1, we can see from the findings that interpretative reading can be one of the very difficult skills for EFL learners to deal with, because of issues such

as implicit meaning, unusual vocabulary, and complex structures, as well as pronunciation and the awareness of English being a non-native language. Because the same difficulties happened to all five participants at different levels, it suggests that interpretative reading is a fundamentally hard cognitive task as well as a linguistic task for EFL learners.

For Research Question 2, from the findings, we know that EFL learners utilize different reading strategies in their coping mechanisms. Some of the common strategies are rereading, guessing from context, deep reading, and the use of an AI translation tool. The study of technology can be one of the dominant features in the participants' strategy use. However, from the analysis of strategy use, it can be observed that the students apply strategies relatively spontaneously rather than planned, which shows that students may need to be more systematically instructed about how to use reading strategies.

As for Research Question 3, the results explained why reading strategies were not always helpful. Many students feel that repetition and deep reading strategies take a lot of time and feel boring. Some students even admitted that they have difficulties using the strategy constantly and sometimes even forget how to use the strategy. In addition, the students have a reliance on an AI translator, which has reduced their ability to understand when they cannot use the translator. It seems that effective reading strategies require vocabulary skills, concentration, and practice of skills in language reading.

## **Results And Discussion**

This chapter presents the findings and discussion of the study entitled *Exploring Students' Difficulties in Interpretative Reading and Their Strategies: A Study among English Education Students at IAIN Curup*. The findings were derived from semi-structured interviews involving five participants, analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification.

The results are organized according to the three research questions. Each section presents the themes that emerged from the data analysis, followed by participant quotations and interpretations.

### **Results**

#### ***What difficulties do students face in interpretative reading in an EFL classroom?***

Based on the interview data obtained from five participants, students consistently experienced significant difficulties in interpretative reading across multiple dimensions. The analysis revealed five major themes: difficulties with vocabulary, understanding implied meaning, sentence complexity, pronunciation challenges, and the influence of language background.

#### ***Theme 1: Vocabulary Difficulties***

One of the most dominant findings was that limited and unfamiliar vocabulary significantly hindered students' interpretative reading ability. All participants reported encountering unfamiliar words that disrupted their comprehension, including slang words that have been normalized into formal academic language.

*RD stated:*

*"I also have a limited vocabulary and difficulty understanding the meaning of English texts."*

*YAP stated:*

*"I still have difficulties understanding unfamiliar vocabulary. When I read long sentences, I usually need to reread them several times."*

*DLJ stated:*

*"I still have difficulties understanding implied meanings in texts, especially when there are slang words that have been normalized into formal language."*

These findings suggest that vocabulary knowledge is a critical foundation for interpretative reading. Students' inability to recognize word meanings, particularly in context-dependent or culturally loaded expressions, significantly impairs their ability to interpret texts beyond the literal level.

*Theme 2: Difficulty Understanding Implied Meaning*

Understanding implied meaning was identified as the most universally challenging aspect of interpretative reading. All five participants explicitly mentioned difficulties in grasping the deeper, inferential meanings of English texts.

*LN stated:*

*"I still experience difficulties in understanding implied meanings, unfamiliar vocabulary, and the pronunciation of new words."*

*RS stated:*

*"I often struggle to understand unfamiliar words or vocabulary, as well as implied meanings in texts."*

*DLJ stated:*

*"I still have difficulties understanding implied meanings in texts, especially when there are slang words that have been normalized into formal language."*

These findings indicate that interpretative reading requires a level of cognitive engagement that goes beyond recognizing individual words. Students must infer authorial intent, cultural context, and underlying messages — skills that require both linguistic competence and extensive reading experience.

*Theme 3: Sentence Complexity*

Long and structurally complex sentences posed additional challenges for students, often requiring multiple readings before comprehension was achieved.

*YAP stated:*

*"When I read long sentences, I usually need to reread them several times, and I still find it hard to understand implied meanings because I am not familiar with some of the vocabulary."*

This finding suggests that sentence-level complexity compounds the difficulty of interpretative reading, as students must simultaneously process grammatical structure and infer meaning — a cognitively demanding task for EFL learners.

*Theme 4: Pronunciation Difficulties*

Although pronunciation is not typically associated with reading comprehension, several participants mentioned it as a related difficulty that affects their ability to process and internalize written texts.

*RD stated:*

*"I still find it difficult to pronounce new words, and I also have a limited vocabulary and difficulty understanding the meaning of English texts."*

This finding indicates that pronunciation difficulties may interfere with phonological processing during reading, particularly for students who subvocalize text as they read. When students cannot mentally pronounce a word, their processing of its meaning and contextual role may be disrupted.

*Theme 5: Language Background*

Students' awareness of English as a foreign language was also identified as a broader contextual factor influencing their reading difficulties.

RS stated:

*"I experience several difficulties because English is not my first language. I often struggle to understand unfamiliar words or vocabulary, as well as implied meanings in texts."*

This finding highlights that for EFL learners, reading difficulties are embedded within a broader context of foreign language acquisition. Students must simultaneously develop linguistic knowledge and reading skills in a language that is not their native tongue, which naturally increases cognitive load.

The findings revealed that students faced multifaceted difficulties in interpretative reading, with implied meaning comprehension and vocabulary limitations being the most dominant challenges. These difficulties were further compounded by sentence complexity, pronunciation issues, and students' awareness of English as a foreign language. Together, these findings suggest that interpretative reading is a cognitively demanding skill that requires targeted instructional support.

***How do students use reading strategies in interpretative reading, and how are these strategies related to the difficulties they experience?***

The findings related to Research Question 2 revealed three broad categories: students' reading strategies, the use of technology, and problem-solving actions during reading difficulties.

*Theme 1: Students' Reading Strategies in Interpretative Reading*

Students employed a variety of reading strategies to cope with comprehension difficulties. Common approaches included rereading, contextual guessing, deep reading, and searching for alternative word meanings.

YAP stated:

*"Sometimes I just try to guess the meaning of the text."*

DLJ stated:

*"I have tried using different reading strategies, but sometimes I still forget how to apply them or do not fully understand their use."*

RS stated:

*"I usually use a deep reading strategy because I need full concentration while reading."*

These findings suggest that students are aware of reading strategies and attempt to apply them, but their use is often inconsistent. The reliance on guessing and rereading indicates that students tend to use simpler, less cognitively demanding strategies rather than more sophisticated metacognitive approaches.

*Theme 2: The Use of Technology in Reading Comprehension*

Technology, particularly AI tools, emerged as a central support mechanism in students' reading activities. All five participants reported using AI tools in some form to assist with comprehension, translation, or pronunciation.

RD stated:

*"I use AI tools to help read the text aloud first and then repeat it, as well as practice pronouncing difficult vocabulary many times."*

DLJ stated:

*"I use AI tools to help translate sentences that I do not understand, and they are very helpful."*

*LN stated:*

*"When the text becomes too difficult, I usually ask for help from AI tools, and they are quite helpful."*

These findings indicate that technology has become an integral part of students' reading strategy repertoire. While AI tools provide immediate assistance, the findings also suggest that students risk developing dependency on technology, which may reduce opportunities for developing independent comprehension skills.

### *Theme 3: Students' Problem-Solving Actions During Reading Difficulties*

When primary strategies proved insufficient, students engaged in additional problem-solving actions such as searching for synonyms, switching between AI tools, or temporarily pausing their reading.

*LN stated:*

*"If I still do not understand, I usually use another AI tool to look for similar words or alternative meanings."*

*RS stated:*

*"When the text feels too difficult, I usually stop reading for a while and continue later."*

These findings demonstrate that students possess adaptive problem-solving behaviors, though these behaviors are predominantly reactive. Rather than having systematic plans for managing reading difficulties, students improvise responses based on the immediate level of difficulty they encounter.

The findings demonstrated that students rely on a combination of reading strategies, technology, and informal problem-solving actions when encountering difficulties in interpretative reading. AI tools were the most consistently used support across all participants. However, the findings also revealed that students' strategy use tends to be reactive and informal, suggesting that they would benefit from more structured instruction in reading strategy selection and application.

### **Why are the reading strategies used by students not always effective in helping them understand interpretative texts?**

The findings related to Research Question 3 revealed that reading strategies are not always effective due to several interconnected factors related to strategy application, motivation, vocabulary limitations, and technology dependency.

### *Theme 1: The Effectiveness of Reading Strategies*

Although students employed various reading strategies, several participants indicated that these strategies were not consistently effective. Reasons included boredom, the time required, inconsistent application, and difficulty understanding when to apply certain strategies.

*RD stated:*

*"However, it is not very effective because it feels boring."*

*DLJ stated:*

*"I have tried using different reading strategies, but sometimes I still forget how to apply them or do not fully understand their use."*

*RS stated:*

*"The strategies sometimes do not feel effective because they require a long time to fully understand the text."*

These findings indicate that strategy effectiveness is not only a function of the strategy itself, but also of learner motivation, consistency, and metacognitive awareness. When students do not understand why a strategy works or how to apply it in different reading contexts, its effectiveness is significantly reduced.

#### *Theme 2: Technology Dependency as a Limiting Factor*

The heavy reliance on AI tools also emerged as a factor that limited the development of independent reading skills. When technology was unavailable, students' comprehension ability was significantly diminished.

*YAP stated:*

*"However, I cannot always rely on AI in every situation. If there is no other way, sometimes I just try to guess the meaning of the text."*

This finding suggests that while AI tools provide valuable immediate support, over-dependence on technology may prevent students from developing the independent cognitive strategies needed for effective interpretative reading without technological assistance.

The findings revealed that reading strategies are not always effective due to multiple factors, including learning boredom, inconsistent application, time demands, and over-dependence on AI tools. These findings suggest that the development of effective interpretative reading skills requires not only strategy knowledge but also sustained motivation, metacognitive awareness, and opportunities for independent practice beyond technological support.

The findings of this study demonstrate that students face significant and persistent difficulties in interpretative reading, particularly in understanding implied meanings and unfamiliar vocabulary. These challenges are compounded by sentence complexity, pronunciation difficulties, and the broader challenge of reading in a foreign language. Despite these difficulties, students actively employ various strategies and technological tools to manage their comprehension challenges, indicating a degree of learner agency and resourcefulness.

However, the findings also revealed that students' strategy use tends to be informal, reactive, and inconsistent. The dominant reliance on AI tools as a primary coping mechanism raises important questions about the development of independent reading competence. When technology is unavailable, students' ability to engage in interpretative reading is substantially reduced, suggesting that technology dependency may be masking underlying comprehension weaknesses.

The findings further indicate that reading strategies are not always effective due to motivational, metacognitive, and contextual factors. Students acknowledged that strategies such as deep reading require significant time and concentration, while repetition-based approaches can feel monotonous. These factors reduce strategy adherence and ultimately limit their effectiveness in improving interpretative reading comprehension.

Overall, the findings suggest that improving students' interpretative reading competence requires a multifaceted approach that includes systematic reading strategy instruction, vocabulary development programs, guided and critical use of technology, and the cultivation of metacognitive awareness. Teachers play an essential role in guiding students toward more systematic and independent reading practices that can be sustained beyond technological support.

**Discussion**

This study provides an in-depth overview of the complexity of interpretive reading for English Education students at IAIN Curup. Interpretive reading is not just a basic linguistic activity, but a high-level cognitive process that requires the reader to understand meaning beyond what is written literally. Based on the findings, the main challenges faced by students are multifaceted, ranging from linguistic barriers such as limited vocabulary and complex sentence structures to cognitive barriers in capturing implicit meaning (Jaya, 2025). This phenomenon confirms that interpretive abilities depend heavily on a strong linguistic foundation; Without an adequate understanding of vocabulary, students will have difficulty making inferences or understanding the author's intentions and the cultural context behind a text.

One of the findings that stood out was how vocabulary became a major obstacle in the interpretation process. Students often get stuck on unconventional words or on slang that has been normalized in formal academic texts (Kelderak, 2023). The inability to recognize the meaning of words in a particular context directly paralyzes their ability to understand hidden messages. In addition, the complexity of long and convoluted sentence structures adds to the cognitive burden of students. They often have to reread a sentence many times just to understand its grammatical structure before they can finally try to interpret its meaning (Chinpakdee, 2024; Zheng et al., 2023). This condition is exacerbated by their background as foreign language learners (EFL), where the lack of exposure to English naturally makes interpretive tasks feel much more demanding than for native speakers.

Regarding the strategies used, this study shows an interesting shift with the entry of artificial intelligence (AI) technology. College students consistently use AI tools to translate text, help with pronunciation, and find word matches. While this technology provides an instant solution, there is a great risk of over-dependence. The findings suggest that the use of AI is often only superficial; Students tend to translate texts without processing them into high-level thinking or interpretation (Fanania & Priyatmojo, 2025; Hadi et al., 2025; Hassen, 2025). This creates a paradox where technology that is supposed to help actually hinders the development of self-comprehension skills because students become passive and less cognitively engaged with the text.

In addition to the use of technology, students apply traditional strategies such as deep reading, guessing the meaning of the context, and reading repeatedly. However, the application of these strategies is often reactive and spontaneous, rather than based on systematic metacognitive planning. Many college students admit that strategies such as deep reading or repetition feel boring and too time-consuming, which ultimately lowers their motivation to keep trying (Zhang et al., 2020). Inconsistencies in implementing these strategies are also triggered by a lack of metacognitive awareness; Students sometimes forget how to implement certain strategies or don't understand when it's the right time to use them.

The ineffectiveness of the strategies applied is not only caused by the type of strategy itself, but also influenced by internal factors of students, such as low motivation and perseverance in facing challenging texts. When faced with difficulties that are considered too severe, some students choose to stop reading temporarily as a coping mechanism (Kelderak, 2023). This shows that mastering reading strategies alone is not enough without being supported by mental resilience and good focus management. The interconnectedness between vocabulary levels, concentration, and sustainable practice is the main key to the effectiveness of interpretive strategies.

Overall, this discussion emphasised the need for a change in approach to teaching reading in EFL classrooms. Teachers should not assume that students will automatically understand how to make inferences just by reading the text literally. Explicit instruction on reading strategies, especially in terms of inference-making and comprehension monitoring, is indispensable to building student independence. The integration of technologies such as AI must be critically guided to function as a support, not a substitute for students' critical thinking

processes. In addition, strengthening academic vocabulary development programs and increasing metacognitive awareness will help students become more strategic readers and be able to deal with complex texts independently in the future.

## **Conclusion**

This study aimed to investigate the difficulties faced by students in reading interpretatively, how they use reading strategies to cope with their difficulties, and why their reading strategies are not always successful, among English Education students at IAIN Curup. Drawing upon the data collected from semi-structured interviews with five students, which were analyzed by means of Miles and Huberman's interactive model, several conclusions can be drawn in answer to the three research questions presented.

It can be concluded from the findings that students faced quite numerous and varied problems in interpretative reading, particularly in relation to finding implied meaning, learning unfamiliar and limited vocabulary, and difficult sentence construction. Besides that, the difficulties to pronounce as well as students' awareness that English is a foreign language further increase their difficulties in reading interpretatively. The relation between difficulties themselves is evident that a low number of vocabulary would affect students' knowledge of finding implied meaning, and complex sentence construction would also add more cognitive work to students in reading interpretatively. In brief, the finding demonstrates that reading interpretatively is inherently a complex skill that requires readers to simultaneously draw on linguistic knowledge, cognitive processes, and inference-making ability.

It can be inferred from the findings that students do apply varied reading strategies to reduce their problems; these are rereading, guessing meaning from context, reading more intensely, repeating the reading, searching another source for a word's meaning, and finding it on Google. Despite that, the result shows that students' use of reading strategies is reactive rather than conscious and deliberate. In other words, they use reading strategies when they meet reading difficulties, and therefore, they still need to develop more systematic reading strategy use through more explicit metacognitive strategy instructions. The relation between difficulty and strategy is direct, as students simply select the reading strategies for specific reading difficulty encountered; however, this reactive pattern inhibits the growth of independent reading skills.

It can be concluded from the findings that the reasons for not always successful strategy use are the students' low motivation, such as their boring in learning and the tendency to give up learning easily on challenging task such as reading interpretatively; their lack of metacognitive ability, for instance, they might forget or not fully understand how to use a reading strategy; and the inappropriate use of learning technologies; they rely too much on technology, such as artificial intelligence, and become passive instead of actively engaged with the text. Therefore, reading strategies are not always successful, not due to the reading strategy itself, but rather due to motivation, metacognitive level, and context of learning.

Based on the above conclusion, some implications and recommendations are drawn for students, teachers, and further researchers. First, an explicit reading strategy instruction should be developed and delivered at the English Department class, especially reading strategies appropriate for reading interpretatively; these are inference-making and comprehension monitoring. Second, the issue of students' vocabulary knowledge needs to be considered, especially for academic words and context-specific words. Third, learning technology has to be integrated effectively and critically; artificial intelligence should be the tool that supports rather than substitutes students' independent reading strategies. Finally, the metacognitive ability of students needs to be improved to facilitate students' independent comprehension.

Since this study has only five subjects from only one institution and only through the use of semi-structured interviews with a single group of students, its generalization to other groups of English education students might not be valid. Thus, for future research, a larger number of

subjects should be involved with different institutions. Additional sources of information, such as classroom observations or a think-aloud protocol, may also add valuable insight into students' cognitive processes when reading interpretatively.

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