

Reading Strategies for EFL Learners in Remote and Resource-Limited Contexts: A Literature Review of Challenges and Practices

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Trisa Wendari

STAI Umar Bin Khattab Ujung
Gading, West Pasaman, West
Sumatra, Indonesia

trisa.windari445@gmail.com

Abstrak

Pemahaman membaca masih menjadi tantangan bagi banyak pembelajar EFL, khususnya dalam konteks terpencil dan memiliki keterbatasan sumber daya, di mana akses terhadap bahan pembelajaran, guru yang berkualifikasi, teknologi, dan paparan bahasa Inggris secara rutin mungkin terbatas. Penelitian ini mengkaji literatur yang ada mengenai strategi membaca dalam pembelajaran EFL, dengan fokus khusus pada bagaimana strategi tersebut dapat diterapkan dalam konteks pendidikan di daerah terpencil. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan studi kepustakaan, berbagai penelitian yang relevan ditelaah dan dibandingkan untuk mengidentifikasi pola-pola yang berulang terkait penggunaan strategi membaca, hambatan kontekstual, dukungan guru, perbedaan kemampuan peserta didik, dan pemanfaatan teknologi. Penelitian ini menggunakan studi kepustakaan untuk mengumpulkan data. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa strategi membaca kognitif dan metakognitif dapat mendukung pemahaman membaca, tetapi efektivitasnya bervariasi bergantung pada kemampuan peserta didik serta kondisi ketika strategi tersebut diajarkan dan dipraktikkan. Pembelajar di daerah terpencil menghadapi hambatan linguistik, pembelajaran, teknologi, dan keterbatasan sumber daya, tetapi mereka juga mengembangkan cara mereka sendiri dalam mengatasi kesulitan membaca. Kajian ini juga menekankan pentingnya bimbingan guru secara eksplisit, latihan secara bertahap, penyesuaian dengan konteks, dan pemanfaatan teknologi yang tepat dalam mengembangkan kemampuan membaca strategis dan kemandirian belajar peserta didik. Secara keseluruhan, pembelajaran strategi membaca yang efektif dalam konteks EFL di daerah terpencil tidak selalu bergantung pada sumber daya yang canggih, tetapi pada strategi yang praktis, mudah diakses, serta responsif terhadap kebutuhan dan kondisi belajar peserta didik yang sebenarnya.

Kata Kunci:

Strategi Membaca, EFL, Pembelajar Di Daerah Terpencil, Konteks Dengan Keterbatasan Sumber Daya.

Abstract

Reading comprehension remains a challenge for many EFL learners, particularly in remote and resource-limited contexts where access to learning materials, qualified teachers, technology, and regular English exposure may be limited. This study reviews existing literature on reading strategies in EFL classrooms, with a particular focus on how such strategies can be applied in remote educational settings. Using a library research approach, relevant studies were reviewed and compared to identify recurring patterns related to reading strategy use, contextual barriers, teacher support, learner differences, and the use of technology. This study used library research to collect the data. The findings show that cognitive and metacognitive reading strategies can support reading comprehension, but their effectiveness varies according to learners' abilities and the conditions in which strategies are taught and practiced. Remote learners face linguistic, instructional, technological, and resource-related barriers, yet they also develop their own ways of managing reading difficulties. The review further highlights the importance of explicit teacher guidance, gradual practice, contextual adaptation, and appropriate use of technology in developing strategic reading and learner autonomy. Overall, effective reading strategy instruction in remote EFL contexts does not necessarily depend on sophisticated resources, but on strategies that are practical, accessible, and responsive to learners' actual needs and learning conditions.

Keyword:

Reading Strategies, EFL, Remote Learners, Resource-Limited Contexts.

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INTRODUCTION

Reading is a basic but often difficult skill in EFL learning. Even after years of English instruction, many learners still struggle to understand texts, find key information, deal with unfamiliar vocabulary, and interpret meanings that are not directly stated (Ahmadi et al., 2013). This is because reading comprehension involves several processes at once, including vocabulary, sentence processing, inference, prior knowledge, and

monitoring understanding (Seedanont & Pookcharoen, 2019). Mekuria et al. (2024) found that explicit reading strategy training can improve EFL students' critical reading skills and increase their use of cognitive strategies. This suggests that successful reading depends not only on English knowledge, but also on how learners approach a text and manage comprehension difficulties.

The effectiveness of learning can also be influenced by the educational environment in which instruction takes place. Huang and Brown (2009, as cited in El-Omari, 2016) found that Chinese students in North American universities experienced difficulties when classroom practices differed from those they were accustomed to, particularly in discussion-based teaching, group work, and classroom interaction. Harb and El-Shaarawi (2007, as cited in El-Omari, 2016) similarly found that English speaking competence and classroom participation were related to academic performance, while missed lectures and crowded living conditions were associated with poorer outcomes. Although these studies did not focus specifically on reading, they show that language ability, classroom practices, and learning environments can affect academic achievement. In this context, reading strategies may help learners take a more active role in managing their comprehension.

Huang and Brown (2009, as cited in El-Omari, 2016) found that Chinese students in North American universities struggled when classroom practices differed from those they were familiar with, especially discussion-based teaching, group work, and classroom interaction. Harb and El-Shaarawi (2007, as cited in El-Omari, 2016) similarly linked English speaking competence and classroom participation with academic performance, while missed lectures and crowded living conditions were associated with poorer outcomes. Although these studies did not focus on reading, they show that language ability and the learning environment can shape academic achievement. In this situation, reading strategies may help learners manage comprehension more actively and independently.

Educational support is also important. Helm (2007, as cited in El-Omari, 2016) emphasized the value of qualified and caring teachers, supportive learning environments, manageable class sizes, and adequate resources. These conditions matter in reading instruction because learners need clear strategy instruction, guided practice, and time to develop independence. When such support is limited, opportunities to build effective reading habits may also be reduced. Shan and Abdul Aziz (2022) further noted that rural language education continues to face inadequate facilities, limited funding, and geographical isolation, even though English proficiency remains important for accessing international opportunities.

Research also provides strong support for strategy-based reading instruction. Yapp et al. (2021), in a meta-analysis of 46 L2 reading intervention studies, reported a strong overall effect ($M = 0.91$), although the results varied across strategies and instructional approaches. Ueno et al. (2025) likewise found positive effects on strategy use and reading comprehension, while Kan et al. (2024) highlighted the contribution of metacognitive strategies to English reading ability. These findings suggest that strategic reading can help learners take greater control of comprehension and choose strategies that fit their reading needs. Cordova et al. (2025) further showed that contextual and visual cues can help learners infer unfamiliar meanings and connect information within a text, reinforcing the idea that effective reading involves more than recognizing words; it also requires using available context to construct meaning.

The effectiveness of reading strategies also depends on how often and how well learners practise them. Collaborative learning can give students space to apply strategies through discussion, interaction, and shared interpretation. Al Mahmud and Naushad (2023), in a 14-week intervention with 30 Saudi university EFL students, found that the experimental group performed better in reading skills, particularly skimming, scanning, and questioning. This suggests that strategy instruction can be more meaningful when learners have structured opportunities to practise with others. At the same time, strategic reading involves more than isolated skills; it requires explicit support for cognitive and metacognitive processes so learners can monitor and regulate their comprehension (Kazemi et al., 2013).

However, the evidence is not completely consistent. Al-Raqqad et al. (2019), based on 13 studies, found insufficient evidence to confirm that reading strategies consistently improve EFL reading comprehension or that certain strategies are more effective than others. They also noted their potential to help learners overcome language barriers and become more independent. Iwai (2016) further showed that strategy awareness can be deliberately developed through explicit instruction rather than left to emerge from reading practice alone. This highlights the role of teachers in helping learners understand and use metacognitive strategies.

These differences are particularly relevant in rural and remote EFL settings, where limited infrastructure, English exposure, and educational resources can affect strategy use. Nelly and Setiamunadi (2024) noted that relatively few studies examine the strategies remote learners themselves use to deal with reading difficulties. In rural Indonesian schools, Mariyam et al. (2025) reported challenges including inadequate infrastructure, limited internet access, shortages of qualified teachers, and weak instructional support. Pahrizal et al. (2025)

also found that rural EFL learners tended to rely more on problem-solving strategies than support strategies when dealing with reading comprehension difficulties.

In remote EFL settings, overcrowded classes, limited materials, and insufficient teacher training can reduce learners' access to instructional support (Poedjiastutie et al., 2021). These conditions can also create linguistic difficulties. Nelly and Setiamunadi (2024) found that Bengkayang students often struggled with vocabulary and responded by using problem-solving strategies such as slow reading and rereading. This suggests that learners' strategy use is partly shaped by the conditions they face, making the remote learning context important when examining strategic reading. Rural learners also cannot be treated as one uniform group. Daniel and Barth (2023), studying 262 Grade 5 and 6 students in a rural school district, identified four reading profiles ranging from severe reading disability to typical reading ability. Their findings support the need for reading instruction that responds to differences in learners' reading and cognitive needs rather than applying the same approach to everyone.

METHODS

This study employs a library research design to examine and describe existing scholarly evidence on reading strategies among EFL learners in remote and resource-limited settings. Rather than collecting primary data, the study draws on previously published research to identify relevant findings and perspectives concerning learners' reading strategy use in geographically isolated educational contexts. The literature was gathered from academic sources available through scholarly databases and research platforms, including Scopus and ResearchGate, as well as relevant publications identified through additional searches. The selected literature was then reviewed and interpreted descriptively to identify recurring findings, contextual factors, and patterns related to reading strategies in remote EFL settings. This approach allows the study to bring together findings from different studies and provide a focused overview of the existing evidence without making statistical or causal claims beyond the scope of the reviewed literature.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study suggest that reading strategies, reading comprehension, and the learning condition in which strategies are used are closely connected. The literature generally shows that cognitive and metacognitive strategies can help EFL learners understand texts more effectively, but their impact is not the same for every learner or in every learning environment. How well these strategies work may depend on the way they are taught, learners' individual characteristics, the support provided by teachers, and the availability of resources that enable students to practice the strategies regularly. This becomes even more relevant in remote and resource-limited settings, where access to qualified teachers, appropriate reading materials, technology, and opportunities for guided practice may be more limited than in better-resourced educational contexts. Taken together, these findings indicate that reading strategy instruction should not be treated merely as a set of techniques that learners are expected to apply. Its effectiveness depends largely on how strategies are introduced, practiced, reinforced, and adapted to the actual conditions and needs of the classroom.

Reading Strategies and Reading Comprehension

The first major finding highlights the role of reading strategies in supporting EFL learners' reading comprehension. Across the reviewed literature, strategic reading approaches appear to help learners become more active and purposeful when working with texts. Rather than simply reading from beginning to end, learners can use strategies before, during, and after reading, such as setting a reading purpose, connecting the text with prior knowledge, identifying key information, inferring unfamiliar vocabulary, monitoring their understanding, summarizing important ideas, and evaluating what they have understood (Ahmadi et al., 2013; Seedanont & Pookcharoen, 2019).

This positive pattern is also reflected in larger-scale research. In their meta-analysis of 46 second-language reading strategy intervention studies, Yapp et al. (2021) reported a mean effect size of 0.91, suggesting a substantial overall effect of strategy-based instruction on second-language reading outcomes. Similarly, Ueno et al. (2025) found positive effects of reading strategy instruction on both learners' strategy use and reading comprehension. Kan et al. (2024) also provided evidence supporting the role of metacognitive reading strategies in developing English reading ability. From another perspective, Kazemi et al. (2013) argued that effective EFL reading instruction should move beyond conventional text-decoding practices and give greater attention to explicit metacognitive strategy training that responds to learners' needs. The importance of learner differences is further reflected in the study by Daniel, J., & Barth, A. (2023), which identified four reading profiles among 262 Grade 5 and 6 students in a rural school district, ranging from severe reading

disability to typical reading ability. Their findings indicate that reading instruction needs to be flexible and responsive to differences in learners' cognitive and reading abilities. In rural contexts, therefore, reading strategies may be more useful when they are adapted to learners' abilities and the conditions in which learning takes place rather than applied in exactly the same way to all students.

At the same time, the literature does not support the idea that reading strategies automatically lead to better comprehension in every context. Al-Raqqad et al. (2019), in their synthesis of 13 studies, found that the available evidence was not sufficient to conclude that reading strategies consistently improve EFL reading comprehension. Their review also pointed to uncertainty regarding whether some strategies are more effective than others. The difference between these findings suggests that reading strategies may not work in the same way for all learners or in all learning contexts. It suggests that the main issue is not simply whether reading strategies are effective, but also how, when, and for whom they are most likely to work.

The differences found across the literature can be better understood by viewing reading strategy instruction as an ongoing process rather than as a fixed intervention. Simply introducing learners to several reading strategies does not necessarily mean that they will be able to use them effectively. Learners need to understand why a particular strategy is useful, recognize when it should be used, and have enough opportunities to practice it with different types of texts. The reviewed evidence therefore suggests that awareness of reading strategies and the ability to apply them need to develop together. For example, a learner may know that predicting or monitoring comprehension is important but still have difficulty applying these strategies when dealing with an unfamiliar or linguistically demanding text.

The findings also suggest that cognitive and metacognitive strategies are closely connected rather than functioning as completely separate parts of reading. Cognitive strategies help learners work directly with information in a text, while metacognitive strategies help them plan, monitor, and evaluate that process. Before reading, learners may set a purpose and predict what the text will discuss. During reading, they may identify key information, infer meanings, reread difficult sections, and check whether they are still following the text. After reading, they can summarize the main ideas and reflect on how well they have understood the text. When these processes work together, learners become more aware not only of the information they are reading but also of how they themselves approach and manage the reading process.

This relationship is particularly important for learners with limited English proficiency. When learners still struggle with vocabulary, sentence structures, or basic comprehension, more demanding strategies such as making inferences or evaluating information may be difficult to use effectively. Reading strategy instruction, therefore, cannot be viewed separately from learners' linguistic development. In practice, learners need an adequate foundation in vocabulary, decoding, and basic comprehension before they can consistently apply more complex strategic processes. This also reinforces the earlier finding that the effectiveness of reading strategies depends not only on the strategies themselves, but also on learners' readiness and the conditions that support their use.

Contextual and Instructional Factors Influencing Reading Strategy Effectiveness

Explicit instruction in reading strategies has been shown to strengthen EFL learners' critical reading abilities and encourage them to use reading strategies more actively (Mekuria et al., 2024). Although the overall literature tends to support strategy-based reading instruction, the reviewed studies indicate that its effectiveness is closely related to the context in which the instruction is provided. Yapp et al. (2021), Ueno et al. (2025), and Kan et al. (2024) provide evidence of the positive potential of strategy instruction, whereas Al-Raqqad et al. (2019) caution against expecting similar outcomes across different learners and learning environments. This variation is important because reading takes place within particular classroom conditions rather than in isolation. Pahrizal et al. (2025), for example, found a positive relationship between the frequent use of metacognitive reading strategies and higher reading comprehension scores, suggesting that learners' ability to monitor and regulate their own reading can contribute directly to better understanding of texts.

The influence of the learning environment is also reflected in studies that examine broader educational factors. Huang and Brown (2009), as cited in El-Omari, 2016) point to the role of cultural expectations and classroom practices in shaping students' learning behavior. Similarly, Harb and El-Shaarawi (2007, as cited in El-Omari, 2016) identify language competence, classroom participation, attendance, and living conditions as factors related to academic performance. Helm (2007, as cited in El-Omari, 2016) further emphasizes the importance of teacher quality, supportive teacher-student relationships, manageable classroom conditions, and adequate funding. While these studies do not directly examine reading strategy instruction, they provide a broader educational perspective for understanding why the implementation and outcomes of a particular strategy may vary across learning contexts.

This contextual issue becomes even more apparent in remote EFL settings, where instructional conditions may differ considerably from those in better-resourced classrooms. A reading strategy that can be implemented effectively with abundant reading materials, reliable internet access, trained teachers, and opportunities for small-group instruction may be much harder to apply in classrooms where students have to share limited textbooks and teachers have little time to provide individualized guidance. From this perspective, the challenge is not necessarily that learners in remote areas cannot use reading strategies. Rather, limited access to learning resources and guided practice may reduce their opportunities to encounter, practice, and gradually develop effective strategic reading habits.

This interpretation is further supported by the findings of Cordova et al. (2025) and Awalia (2025). Cordova et al. (2025) found that reading activities adapted to learners' contexts, including the use of memes before, during, and after reading, encouraged students to make inferences, connect visual information with written text, and work out the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary. Although the improvement in reading comprehension was relatively modest, learners reported that the approach made the reading materials easier to engage with and understand. Similarly, Awalia (2025) reported that the cross-culturally adapted SMART-R framework improved students' average reading proficiency scores from 64.2 to 80.1 over two intervention cycles in a rural Indonesian junior high school.

These findings suggest that limited resources do not necessarily make effective reading instruction impossible. Instead, they highlight the importance of adapting strategies and learning materials to the conditions in which learners actually study. When reading activities are connected to learners' experiences and delivered through materials that are familiar and accessible to them, students can still develop meaningful strategic reading behaviours. From this perspective, contextual adaptation should not be regarded as merely an additional element of reading strategy instruction in remote areas. Rather, it can be an important condition that determines whether a strategy is practical, meaningful, and ultimately usable for learners in their particular learning environment.

Reading Strategy Instruction in Remote and Resource-Limited Contexts

The second major finding focuses on the conditions surrounding reading instruction in remote and resource-limited areas. The literature suggests that the challenges faced by rural and remote EFL learners cannot be explained only by differences in individual reading ability. Rather, these challenges are closely related to the broader educational conditions in which English and reading instruction take place.

Mariyam et al. (2025) identified inadequate infrastructure, limited internet connectivity, shortages of qualified teachers, and insufficient supervision and motivational support as major challenges affecting English instruction in rural Indonesian schools. Similarly, Poedjiastutie et al. (2021) reported difficulties related to limited access to textbooks and curriculum guidelines, large class sizes, inadequate teaching media, and limited opportunities for teacher professional development. In a systematic review of English teaching in rural settings, Shan and Aziz (2022) also identified inadequate facilities and infrastructure, limited teaching materials, shortages of qualified teachers, limited exposure to English, and insufficient learner support as recurring challenges. Addressing the urban-rural education gap, therefore, requires sustained collaboration among different stakeholders, active community involvement, and consistent implementation of educational policies (Song, Z, 2023).

These conditions are particularly relevant to reading strategy instruction because strategies cannot develop through explanation alone; learners also need sufficient opportunities to practice them. A teacher may introduce strategies such as prediction, inference, summarizing, or comprehension monitoring, but learners need suitable reading texts and repeated opportunities to apply these strategies before they can become part of their regular reading behavior. When reading materials are limited, teachers may struggle to provide texts with different levels of difficulty or create enough opportunities for repeated practice. Likewise, large class sizes can make it more difficult for teachers to observe individual learners' comprehension processes, identify their difficulties, and provide timely support. In resource-limited settings, therefore, the effectiveness of reading strategy instruction is closely tied to whether the surrounding learning conditions allow learners to practice and develop these strategies consistently.

The issue, therefore, is not simply the lack of educational resources itself, but how limited resources shape the types of reading instruction that are realistically possible. When teachers have restricted access to teaching materials, professional development, or technological support, they may naturally rely on activities that can be carried out with the resources already available. These activities may involve reading a passage, translating its content, identifying specific information, answering comprehension questions, and recalling information from the text. Such practices are not necessarily inappropriate, particularly when they respond to

immediate classroom needs. However, when they become the dominant form of reading instruction, learners may have fewer opportunities to develop higher-level strategic processes such as planning, monitoring, making inferences, evaluating information, and deciding which strategies to use.

Latif et al. (2024) further identified inadequate learning resources, examination-oriented pedagogy, limited opportunities for teacher professional development, overcrowded classrooms, and restricted access to digital resources as interconnected barriers in rural English education. These conditions strengthen the view that reading strategy instruction cannot be considered separately from the instructional environment in which it is implemented. Song, Z. (2023) similarly points to wider disparities in funding, infrastructure, teacher quality, and curriculum as continuing challenges in rural education. Together, these findings suggest that the opportunities learners have to develop strategic reading are influenced not only by the strategies introduced by teachers but also by the broader conditions that support or constrain their implementation.

At the same time, the literature should not present remote classrooms only from the perspective of their limitations. Nelly and Setiamunadi (2024), for instance, found that students in Bengkayang used strategies such as translation, asking questions, and consulting other references when they encountered reading comprehension difficulties. This finding is important because it draws attention to what learners are already doing to manage challenges in reading, rather than focusing only on what their schools lack. It suggests that remote EFL learners are not simply passive recipients of instruction. Even when learning resources are limited, they can actively develop and use their own ways of dealing with unfamiliar texts and comprehension problems. Recognizing these existing practices can provide a useful starting point for developing reading strategy instruction that builds on learners' actual experiences and needs.

Barriers to Strategic Reading among Remote EFL Learners

The reviewed literature points to several interconnected barriers that can limit remote EFL learners' ability to use reading strategies effectively. The first is linguistic. Limited vocabulary, unfamiliar grammatical structures, difficulty identifying main ideas, and weak summarizing skills can affect basic comprehension and make higher-level processes such as inference, evaluation, and critical interpretation more difficult. This challenge is also related to limited exposure to English. Learners in rural and remote areas may have fewer opportunities to access English books, libraries, digital content, and other supplementary materials (Shan & Aziz, 2022; Mariyam et al., 2025). For this reason, strategy instruction needs to be supported by opportunities to strengthen the language knowledge required for strategic reading.

The second barrier is instructional. Large and diverse classes can make it difficult for teachers to monitor individual learners' comprehension and provide timely feedback. Poedjiastutie et al. (2021) and Mariyam et al. (2025) both report teacher-related and classroom-resource constraints in remote Indonesian contexts. Limited professional development may further reduce teachers' opportunities to model metacognitive processes, adapt instruction to different learner needs, and assess how students use reading strategies. The third barrier involves access to learning resources and technology. Limited access to English books, libraries, digital devices, teaching media, and reliable internet can restrict learners' opportunities to practice reading strategies. Romero-Flores et al. (2025) illustrate this issue in rural Peru, where geographical isolation, limited connectivity, inadequate technological infrastructure, and insufficient teacher preparation hindered the integration of educational technology into classroom practice.

These barriers suggest that the value of a reading strategy depends not only on its theoretical effectiveness but also on whether it can realistically be implemented. Technology-dependent strategies may be difficult to sustain with unreliable connectivity, while approaches requiring extensive individual feedback may be challenging in large classes. In remote settings, sustainable strategy instruction may therefore need to rely on accessible resources such as printed texts, teacher-created materials, vocabulary notebooks, peer discussion, repeated reading, and locally relevant texts.

Teacher Support and the Development of Strategic Reading

One consistent pattern in the reviewed literature is that learners benefit from guidance as they develop strategic reading skills. Reading strategies do not necessarily develop simply through repeated reading activities. Iwai (2016) shows that learners' awareness of reading strategies can be developed through explicit instruction, highlighting the teacher's role in helping learners recognize and understand the processes involved in reading.

Collaborative learning can also provide a useful space for practicing strategies such as skimming, scanning, and questioning. These strategies require active practice, peer interaction, and shared interpretation rather than explanation alone. This potential was supported by Al Mahmud and Naushad's (2023) 14-week quasi-experimental study with Saudi university EFL students. However, their findings should not be directly

generalized to remote or resource-limited EFL classrooms because the study involved university students in a structured higher-education intervention. The findings therefore demonstrate the potential of collaborative learning for strategy instruction, but not necessarily the same outcomes in different educational conditions. This distinction is important because collaborative activities also require effective classroom management, learner participation, and teacher guidance. In remote contexts, such activities may need to be adjusted according to class size, learners' proficiency levels, available materials, and local classroom practices.

Brevik (2019), based on naturalistic observations of 60 English L2 lessons across seven lower secondary schools, provides further insight into how teacher support can develop strategic reading. The study found that teachers often encouraged learners to use strategies they had already acquired and provided repeated prompts and support based on their needs. As learners became more capable of managing their reading independently, the level of teacher support was gradually reduced. This finding is relevant to learner autonomy because it suggests that independence does not necessarily develop when teachers simply step back. Instead, learners may become more independent when teacher support is gradually adjusted as their ability to manage the reading process increases.

The implication for remote EFL classrooms is quite important. Learner autonomy should not mean asking students to learn on their own simply because teacher and learning resources are limited. That could put even more pressure on learners who already face difficulties. Instead, autonomy can develop gradually through effective teacher support. Teachers can model a strategy, explain its purpose, guide students in using it, let them practice with peers, and then give them more space to make their own decisions. Hasanah et al. (2026) similarly found that metacognitive, cognitive, collaborative, technology-supported, guided, and integrated reading strategies can support comprehension, self-regulation, and learner engagement, especially when combined with explicit instruction and scaffolding. This shows that strategic reading is not just about knowing different techniques, but knowing when, how, and why to use them.

In practice, scaffolding does not always require complicated activities. Teachers can think aloud while predicting a text, show students how to identify key words, demonstrate how to guess an unfamiliar word from context, or explain how to deal with a confusing sentence. Students can then practise these steps with peers before trying them independently. This gradual process is especially useful in remote settings where students may have limited English support outside the classroom. From the researcher's perspective, the main value of reading strategy instruction is not only improving comprehension test scores. More importantly, it can help learners recognize their own reading difficulties and decide what to do when they do not understand a text. This ability can be especially useful for remote learners who may not always have immediate access to teacher support. At the same time, learner autonomy should grow from continued support, not become a replacement for it.

Technology as a Support for Reading Strategy Development

Technology can offer useful support for EFL reading, but its value depends on the context. Digital resources can provide wider access to reading texts, audio materials, vocabulary activities, and opportunities for individual practice. Shan and Abdul Aziz (2022) argue that improving rural EFL education requires better digital and physical infrastructure, targeted teacher training, and stronger parent-teacher communication. Norman (2023) also identified interactive multimedia, progressive reading activities, adaptive learning, teacher development, and context-specific resources as important features of potentially effective educational technology. Major et al. (2021) similarly found positive effects of technology-supported personalized learning in low- and middle-income countries, particularly when activities were adapted to learners' levels.

However, technology cannot be treated as a universal solution. Romero-Flores et al. (2025) shows that limited connectivity and inadequate infrastructure can restrict the use of digital tools in remote schools, while Norman (2023) emphasizes that the effectiveness of educational technology depends on how it is designed and integrated into teaching. In remote classrooms, simple and accessible options such as offline applications, printed materials, teacher-made worksheets, audio recordings, shared devices, and low-bandwidth resources may sometimes be more practical than sophisticated platforms. The main issue, therefore, is not simply whether technology is available, but whether it fits the learning context. Technology is most useful when it is affordable, sustainable, accessible, aligned with the curriculum, and supported by teachers who know how to use it effectively.

Pedagogical Implications for Developing Learner Autonomy

The reviewed studies point to one clear pedagogical need: reading strategies should be taught explicitly, gradually, and according to the learning context. Teachers cannot assume that students will develop effective strategies just by doing reading activities. They need to explain the purpose of a strategy, show how it works,

guide students in practice, and slowly give them more responsibility. For example, teachers can ask students to predict a text from its title, identify key words while reading, work out unfamiliar words from context, and summarize the main idea afterwards. These activities are simple enough for low-resource classrooms while still supporting both cognitive and metacognitive reading skills.

Differentiation also matters because students in the same remote classroom may have different vocabulary levels, reading abilities, motivation, and learning backgrounds. Teachers can respond by introducing important vocabulary, using shorter texts when needed, adding pictures or oral explanations, and gradually increasing text difficulty. This shows that effective strategy instruction does not always depend on expensive technology or abundant materials. More importantly, it depends on how well teachers understand their learners and adjust instruction to their needs.

Collaborative activities can also support strategic reading, but they need some structure. Huang and Brown (2009, as cited in El-Omari, 2016) noted that some learners may feel uncomfortable with discussion, group work, or classroom practices that differ from what they are used to. This is especially relevant to activities such as reciprocal teaching and peer discussion, where students are expected to explain ideas, ask questions, and compare interpretations. Teachers can therefore provide clear roles, sentence prompts, and examples of how discussion should work instead of immediately leaving students to manage the activity themselves.

In the end, learner autonomy is not simply about working without a teacher. It means being able to set a reading purpose, choose a strategy, monitor understanding, recognize difficulties, and adjust the way of reading when necessary. Brevik (2019) highlights the importance of continued support in developing this kind of independence. Therefore, reading strategies are more likely to become useful when they are integrated into regular reading lessons and practised consistently rather than treated as a short-term activity.

CONCLUSION

This review shows that reading strategies can support EFL learners' reading comprehension, but their effectiveness cannot be separated from the conditions in which they are taught and practiced. Cognitive and metacognitive strategies can help learners become more active and aware readers, yet their benefits may vary depending on learners' language abilities, teacher support, classroom conditions, and access to learning resources. This becomes more important in remote and resource-limited contexts, where limited materials, technology, teacher development, and opportunities for practice can make strategic reading more difficult to develop.

At the same time, the findings show that resource limitations do not mean that effective reading instruction is impossible. The findings from Nelly and Setiamunadi (2024), Cordova et al. (2025), and Awalia (2025) show that learners in resource-limited contexts can and do develop ways of managing reading difficulties when appropriate support is available. Teachers can adapt strategies to learners' abilities, available materials, and local contexts. Simple activities such as prediction, vocabulary work, inference, repeated reading, peer discussion, and teacher modelling can still provide meaningful opportunities to develop strategic reading. Technology can also contribute, but it works best as a support rather than a replacement for teachers, particularly in areas where connectivity and digital access remain limited.

Overall, the review suggests that successful reading strategy instruction in remote EFL contexts is less about using sophisticated techniques and more about making strategies understandable, practicable, and relevant to learners. Teacher guidance remains important, especially when learners are first developing strategic reading, while support can gradually be reduced as learners become more capable of monitoring and managing their own reading. In this sense, learner autonomy should be seen as a gradual outcome of sustained instruction and practice, not as something learners are simply expected to achieve on their own. For remote EFL learners, this balance between strategy instruction, contextual adaptation, teacher support, and gradual independence appears to be the most important direction emerging from the reviewed literature.

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