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## Exploring the Frequency of Reading Strategy Use Among EFL High School: A Case Study in Vietnam

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### Abstract

This study aimed to examine the frequency of reading strategy use among EFL high school students and the relationship between their strategy use and reading comprehension achievement. The research sample consisted of 328 EFL students from four high schools in Central Vietnam. Data collection was carried out using three primary instruments: a questionnaire, follow-up interviews, and two reading comprehension tests. The findings revealed that most participants expressed a generally positive attitude toward the use of reading strategies. However, their actual use of these strategies was found to be limited during the reading process. Moreover, the study identified a significant correlation between the frequency of reading strategy use and students' reading performance: students who employed reading strategies more frequently achieved higher reading scores. Based on these findings, several pedagogical implications were proposed for both EFL students and teachers, aimed at enhancing the teaching and learning of reading skills in EFL contexts.

**Keywords:** correlation, frequency, pre-reading strategies, while-reading strategies, post-reading strategies.

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## **1. Introduction**

Reading is one of the essential components contributing to the success of language learners. Through reading, learners gain increased exposure to the structure of the language, thereby improving their acquisition of vocabulary, grammar, and writing skills (Derakhshan et al., 2025). This premise holds true for foreign language learning, including English. Graesser et al. (2011) asserted that students aiming to learn English efficiently must engage in extensive reading in the target language. However, developing fluent reading skills remains a challenge for EFL/ESL learners, particularly in test-taking scenarios where reading comprehension tasks impose specific constraints.

In Vietnam, despite various trends in educational reform in recent years (Hoa & Thi, 2020), the majority of high school students continue to experience difficulties in comprehending different types of reading passages., and their proficiency in reading comprehension is generally reported as limited due to several factors (Ha Le, 2021). Many students rely heavily on dictionaries during reading comprehension exercises, frequently translating texts from English to Vietnamese before attempting to grasp their full meaning. This common approach leads to inadequate focus on the development of reading skills and impedes their overall reading comprehension performance. Consequently, it becomes crucial to identify the factors influencing EFL/ESL learners' performance in reading comprehension, including the use of reading strategies.

The employment of reading strategies is widely regarded as an effective method for improving reading comprehension, particularly for struggling readers, and helps them become more strategic learners (Meniado, 2016; Tunaz & Tüm, 2019). In other words, reading strategies play a pivotal role in enhancing reading achievement. Numerous studies have demonstrated a positive correlation between the use of reading strategies and reading performance (Cho & Ma, 2020; Par, 2020; Qanwal & Karim, 2014; Rastleghar et al., 2017). These studies highlight the importance of applying appropriate reading strategies to each reading comprehension passage.

Exploring the connection between reading strategies and students' reading comprehension abilities is crucial for helping students improve their English reading skills. While previous research has explored the relationship between certain reading strategies and reading abilities among university students in Vietnam (Nguyen & Phung, 2011; Hieu Manh Do & Huong Le Thu Phan, 2021; Nguyen & Trinh, 2011), there has been no significant investigation of this relationship in the context of high

school EFL learners. This study, therefore, represents the first attempt to address this gap by examining the current situation and proposing meaningful solutions to enhance the quality of English reading instruction in Vietnamese high schools.

To achieve these objectives, the following research questions were formulated:

1. *What is the frequency of reading strategy use among EFL high school students?*
2. *Is there a relationship between EFL students' frequency of reading strategy use and their English reading comprehension abilities?*

## **2. Review of the Literature**

### **2.1. Reading Strategies**

In recent decades, language research has shifted its focus toward the learning process, placing greater emphasis on learners over teachers has made learners the focal point of numerous EFL/ESL studies, particularly regarding their awareness, selection, and application of various skills and strategies to understand, learn, and acquire knowledge (Burgess-Brigham et al., 2020; Oxford & Cohen, 1992). Current literature highlights several key issues in language learning strategy research, such as the relationship between reading proficiency and strategy use, the transfer of L1 reading strategies to L2, and the influence of culture and motivation on reading strategy use. Rajoo and Selvaraj (2020) define reading strategies as "how readers interact with written texts and how these strategies enhance text comprehension, which includes mental plans" (p. 1301). This interaction involves recognizing the purpose of reading, determining which parts of the text to focus on, and resolving comprehension challenges during reading (Block, 1986). Iwai (2011) further emphasized three critical processes in reading strategy use: planning, monitoring, and evaluating. In other words, effective readers use strategies to facilitate comprehension before, during, and after reading.

This study adopts the framework proposed by Alenezi (2021) for data collection and analysis, exploring the impact of reading strategies on reading comprehension. Alenezi (2021) synthesized and categorized these strategies into three distinct types: pre-reading strategies, while-reading strategies, and post-reading strategies. This categorization, though popularized by Alenezi, has been widely utilized in educational and language teaching literature (Grabe & Stoller, 2011; Nuttall, 1982; Rumelhart, 1980). The framework divides reading strategies into three stages—pre-

reading, while-reading, and post-reading—based on cognitive theories of reading and instructional design principles, suggesting different stages of engagement with a text.

## **2.2. Previous Studies**

Various studies have explored different aspects of reading strategies employed by EFL students. Findings from these studies suggest that the use of reading strategies varies depending on learning contexts and students' English proficiency levels. Further details pertaining to these studies will be outlined in the subsequent sections.

Regarding the use of pre-reading strategies, Rashid and Rabani (2021) investigated the impact of activating prior knowledge on reading comprehension among ELLs in secondary schools. Their quasi-experimental study included a control group and an experimental group that used schema activation techniques before reading. Pre-tests and post-tests were administered to assess students' comprehension levels. The findings indicated that students who activated prior knowledge through group discussions and brainstorming sessions before reading showed significantly improved comprehension scores compared to the control group. This suggests that connecting new information to existing knowledge facilitates deeper understanding. Li and Razali (2020) examined the use of visual aids to activate students' background knowledge before engaging with reading texts. Employing a mixed-methods approach, their study combined quantitative assessments of reading performance with qualitative interviews to explore students' perceptions. Results showed that visual aids, such as concept maps and pictures, significantly enhanced comprehension by making abstract concepts more tangible. Students reported increased confidence in predicting text content, which led to higher engagement levels. Alharbi (2021) studied the effect of setting clear reading purposes on students' focus and comprehension skills. Using a descriptive research method, the study collected data through classroom observations and student surveys. The findings revealed that when learners were given specific reading goals—such as identifying main ideas, finding supporting details, or summarizing key points—they were more attentive and better organized in processing text information. The study concluded that purpose-setting is vital in guiding readers' cognitive processes during reading. Meanwhile, Nguyen and Pham (2022) explored the impact of prediction strategies on reading comprehension among ELL students at the tertiary level. This experimental study required students to make predictions about text content based on titles and introductory paragraphs. Results indicated that students who used prediction strategies performed significantly better on comprehension tests than those who did

not. The researchers concluded that prediction encourages active reading and better prepares learners to engage effectively with the text.

Several studies have explored the impacts of while-reading strategies on EFL students' reading abilities. Mohammadi and Ahmadi (2020) examined the effectiveness of skimming and scanning techniques in improving reading speed and comprehension among high school ELLs. Their controlled experiment compared two groups: one trained in skimming and scanning techniques and the other using traditional reading approaches. The findings revealed that students practicing these strategies were not only faster at locating specific information but also more adept at understanding the general ideas of the texts. The study recommended incorporating skimming and scanning into daily reading practices to enhance reading fluency and accuracy. Suri and Narayan (2021) investigated the influence of digital platforms on the use of skimming and scanning strategies. Using a case study approach, they analyzed students' online reading tasks involving interactive texts. Data were collected through screen recordings and think-aloud protocols to examine how students navigated digital texts. The study found that the non-linear structure of online content necessitates a modified approach to skimming and scanning, presenting both challenges and opportunities for developing new reading strategies.

Another research conducted by Zhang and Yang (2022) analyzed the role of visualization techniques in improving comprehension among middle school students learning English as a second language. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study combined quantitative comprehension tests with qualitative interviews. Students who employed visualization techniques, such as creating mental images or drawing illustrations based on text descriptions, showed significant improvement in understanding and recalling information. The authors concluded that visualization helps bridge the gap between language and meaning, particularly for descriptive and narrative texts. Ali and Javed (2022) explored the benefits of self-questioning strategies in enhancing ELL students' comprehension skills. Their quasi-experimental study involved a focus group that practiced generating questions while reading. Results indicated that students who actively engaged in questioning demonstrated better critical thinking skills and deeper comprehension compared to those who did not. The study emphasized that self-questioning enables learners to identify key ideas and clarify misunderstandings in real-time.

The focus on post-reading strategies has also drawn significant attention from

researchers. Lee and Lee (2020) examined the effectiveness of summarizing as a post-reading strategy in improving ELLs' academic reading comprehension. Using a longitudinal design, they tracked students' progress over a semester as they practiced summarizing various types of academic texts. Findings revealed that students who regularly summarized readings were better at identifying main ideas, organizing their thoughts, and retaining information. Summarization was particularly effective in helping students articulate their understanding of the texts. Meanwhile, Rahman and Ali (2021) investigated the role of reflective practices in post-reading activities among adult ELLs. Their qualitative study used in-depth interviews and reflective journals to analyze how students connected reading experiences to their personal lives and broader social issues. Findings showed that reflective practices led to higher engagement and a deeper understanding of the text's themes and implications. Students reported that relating material to personal experiences helped them internalize new vocabulary and language structures. Recently, Chien and Wang (2023) explored the development of critical thinking skills through evaluation and analysis of texts in ELT classrooms. Using classroom observations and student self-assessment surveys, they measured the impact of these strategies. Results demonstrated that when students critiqued authors' arguments and analyzed text structures, they developed a more sophisticated understanding of language use and rhetorical techniques. The authors suggested that incorporating these strategies into ELT curricula could significantly enhance learners' analytical and argumentative skills.

In short, the review of recent literature on reading strategies in ELT indicates a strong focus on enhancing comprehension and engagement through structured reading activities. Studies like those by Rashid and Rabani (2021), Nguyen and Pham (2022), and Mohammadi and Ahmadi (2020) have highlighted the critical role of pre-reading and while-reading strategies in preparing students for effective interaction with texts. Post-reading strategies, as explored by Lee and Lee (2020) and Chien and Wang (2023), have proven essential for consolidating knowledge and fostering critical thinking. These findings suggest a need for continued research into the integration of digital tools and culturally relevant texts in teaching reading strategies, with an emphasis on adapting these strategies to the evolving needs of 21st-century learners. Future studies should also explore the long-term effects of these strategies on different proficiency levels and in various educational contexts.

In Vietnam, several studies have examined university students' use of reading strategies. Nguyen Thi Minh Ngoc and Nguyen Thuy Nga (2020) and Nguyen Thi

Bich Thuy (2018) found that Vietnamese students were moderate users of reading strategies. More recently, Lam Ky Nhan (2023) explored the reading strategies employed by non-English-major students using Mokhtari and Reichard's (2004) Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS). The findings revealed that global reading strategies were the most frequently used, followed by support and problem-solving strategies. Similarly, Nguyen and Trinh (2011) investigated the use of metacognitive reading strategies and their relationship to reading achievement among Vietnamese learners, reporting that participants favored problem-solving strategies over support strategies.

The relationship between EFL students' use of reading strategies and their reading achievement has garnered significant attention from researchers worldwide. Numerous studies have demonstrated a positive correlation between reading strategy use and reading performance (Cho & Ma, 2020; Par, 2020; Qanwal & Karim, 2014; Rastlegar et al., 2017). However, some studies have reported conflicting results, showing no significant relationship between these variables (Alty & Altay, 2017). Nonetheless, research indicates that learners who utilize metacognitive strategies tend to be more successful in their reading and EFL studies (Rastlegar et al., 2017), and that problem-solving strategies are strong predictors of reading achievement (Cho & Ma, 2020; Ghaith, 2018).

In the Vietnamese context, most studies have focused on the impact of specific reading strategies, particularly metacognitive strategies, on EFL students' reading achievement (Chi Hong Nguyen & Vy Trieu Phung, 2011; Hieu Manh Do & Huong Le Thu Phan, 2021; Nguyen & Trinh, 2011; Thuy Nguyen Thi Bich, 2020). These studies have consistently found a positive correlation between reading strategy use and reading outcomes.

Despite the extensive research on university students' use of reading strategies, there has been limited focus on high school students. Furthermore, most research in Vietnam has concentrated on metacognitive strategies, with less attention paid to other types of strategies, such as pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading strategies. Given these gaps, this study aims to examine the frequency of reading strategy use among high school EFL students and explore the relationship between their strategy use and reading comprehension performance. The findings of this study will contribute to the existing literature and provide valuable recommendations for improving English reading instruction in Vietnamese high schools.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Research Design

The study adopted a mixed-methods research design, integrating both qualitative and quantitative components. This approach was employed to investigate the relationship between the frequency of reading strategy use among EFL high school students and their reading comprehension achievement. By utilizing this design, the study was able to examine the research questions from multiple perspectives, thus facilitating a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena. Data collection involved the use of three distinct instruments: a survey, interviews, and two reading tests. This triangulation of methods provided a more robust and holistic view of the relationship between reading strategies and reading comprehension achievement.

#### 3.2. Participants

A total of 328 non-English major students from four high schools with varying levels of English proficiency were randomly selected to participate in the survey and reading tests. The participants, aged 15 to 17, were drawn from different classes and had between 7 and 10 years of English learning experience, all following the standardized curriculum issued by the Ministry of Education and Training in Vietnam. From this sample, 22 students were randomly chosen for follow-up interviews.

#### 3.3. Research Instruments

##### 3.3.1. Questionnaire

To investigate the students' frequency of using reading strategies, the study utilized a structured, closed-ended questionnaire adapted from Alenezi (2021), which demonstrated high reliability Cronback's  $\alpha = 0.93$ ). The questionnaire consisted of two sections: the first gathered demographic information such as age, gender, and English learning experience, while the second focused on measuring the frequency of reading strategy use. The 30-item questionnaire was divided into three categories: pre-reading strategies, while-reading strategies, and post-reading strategies. A five-point Likert scale was used, ranging from "Always" (5) to "Never" (1). The questionnaire's reliability coefficient was 0.769, indicating high internal consistency among the items.

### 3.3.2. Interview

A semi-structured interview was conducted with 22 participants during the follow-up stage. The interview included five core questions, with additional questions tailored to participants' responses. The purpose was to clarify and expand on the data collected from the questionnaire, providing further evidence regarding the students' use of reading comprehension strategies. Given the students' limited English proficiency, the interviews were conducted in Vietnamese to ensure accuracy. Each interview lasted approximately 10 minutes.

### 3.3.3. Reading tests

To evaluate the students' reading proficiency, two reading tests were administered two weeks apart. These assessment instruments were sourced from the publication titled *KET certification exam practice* (Cambridge, 2003), which is designed to correspond to the A2 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and was deemed appropriate for the participants' proficiency level. Each test contained 30 questions covering various aspects of reading comprehension. The tests were divided into five sections: Part 1 involved matching advertisements to appropriate answers; Part 2 required students to find equivalent information for three characters described in paragraphs; Part 3 presented a reading passage followed by five multiple-choice questions; Part 4 featured a fill-in-the-blank exercise with multiple-choice options; and Part 5 asked students to complete sentences by finding the correct words. To ensure the reliability and validity of these tests, the researchers sought some expert reviews and conducted a pilot study with 10 students in another context. Modifications were made prior to administering the tests to the official participants.

## 3.4. Procedure

The purpose of the study was explained to all participants prior to distributing the questionnaire, which assessed the frequency of reading strategy use among EFL high school students. Following this, the two reading comprehension tests were conducted, two weeks apart, to measure students' reading comprehension abilities. After the tests were collected, each student's scores were individually marked by the teacher, and the average score of the two tests was calculated to represent the student's reading

comprehension achievement. To ensure test integrity, the purpose of the study and a commitment to confidentiality regarding the students' scores were reiterated, preventing any potential for academic dishonesty. Students completed the tests independently and then data from the questionnaire and reading tests were analyzed using SPSS software. Finally, the findings were reported in relation to the research questions.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1. EFL High School Students' Use Frequency of Reading Strategies

To examine the frequency with which high school students employ reading comprehension strategies, the data collected from the survey were analyzed. The results are presented in the following tables. Table 1 displays the means and standard deviations (*SD*) for three categories of reading strategies: pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading strategies.

**Table 1**  
*Comparison of Reading Strategies Groups*

|                            | N   | Mean | SD    |
|----------------------------|-----|------|-------|
| Pre - reading strategies   | 328 | 2.68 | 0.828 |
| While - reading strategies | 328 | 2.66 | 0.775 |
| Post - reading strategies  | 328 | 2.79 | 0.936 |

The data in Table 1 show that the frequency of using various reading strategies is similar across groups, with means ranging from 2.66 to 2.79. This suggests that students rarely or sometimes employ reading strategies when completing comprehension tasks. The subsequent sections provide a more detailed analysis of each strategy group.

#### 4.1.1. Students' use frequency of pre-reading strategies

The questionnaire included ten items regarding pre-reading strategies, and the results are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2***Students' Use Frequency of Pre-Reading Strategies*

| Statements                                                                      | Mean | SD    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|-------|
| 1. Planning what to do before reading the text                                  | 3.26 | 0.898 |
| 2. Paying attention to the titles and subtitles                                 | 3.23 | 0.968 |
| 3. Focusing on the keywords from the title                                      | 2.77 | 1.110 |
| 4. Brainstorming the possible topics addressed in the text                      | 2.41 | 0.788 |
| 5. Making predictions about the possible content of the text in a general way   | 2.41 | 0.788 |
| 6. Checking if the predictions about the text are correct or not                | 2.41 | 0.788 |
| 7. Predicting the content from the pictures                                     | 2.41 | 0.788 |
| 8. Watching videos about the topic of the text to activate schema               | 2.41 | 0.788 |
| 9. Thinking about the possible vocabulary that could be encountered in the text | 2.72 | 1.040 |
| 10. Talking with other coursemates about the topic of the text                  | 2.81 | 0.970 |
| Average                                                                         | 2.68 | 0.828 |

As illustrated in Table 2, the mean values for all items exceed 2.68, indicating that most students seldom employed pre-reading strategies. Among these, "planning what to do before reading the text" and "paying attention to the titles and subtitles" were the two strategies given relatively more attention by students, with average scores of 3.26 and 3.23, respectively. A closer examination reveals that four students reported never "focusing on the keywords from the title," and nine students indicated that they never "thought about the possible vocabulary that could be encountered in the text." Conversely, some students consistently engaged in these strategies, with seven students always paying attention to the keywords of the lesson and deducing possible words that might appear in the reading passage.

The qualitative data from interviews with 22 students corroborated the quantitative findings, suggesting that students did not frequently utilize pre-reading strategies. The primary reason given was the lack of time, as students tended to focus solely on completing the task at hand. However, certain strategies were occasionally employed, such as identifying key words and predicting content. As one student (Student D) noted, "*Before reading, I thoroughly decode the questions and highlight key information. When I encounter new words, I try to guess their meanings based on context or the part of speech of the words.*"

#### 4.1.2. Students' use frequency of while-reading strategies

Table 3 shows the results for ten statements that assess the frequency of students' use of while-reading strategies.

**Table 3***Students' Use Frequency of While-Reading Strategies*

| Statements                                                                                                       | Mean  | SD     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|--------|
| 1. Understanding the topic sentence in a paragraph                                                               | 2.86  | 0.788  |
| 2. Paying attention to punctuations                                                                              | 2.59  | 0.788  |
| 3. Paying attention to the type of text when reading (like narrative, expository, scientific or reference, etc.) | 1.78  | 1.049  |
| 4. Guessing the meaning of unknown words from the text                                                           | 2.71  | 0.978  |
| 5. Skipping unknown words while reading                                                                          | 3.77  | 1.033  |
| 6. Stopping to check the meaning of unknown words                                                                | 2.59  | 0.892  |
| 7. Using dictionary or google translator to find the meaning of unknown words                                    | 2.59  | 0.651  |
| 8. Using English Grammar knowledge to help in understanding the text                                             | 2.59  | 1.102  |
| 9. Skim the text quickly to understanding the main idea                                                          | 2.59  | 0.957  |
| 10. Scan the text to understand the specific idea in the text                                                    | 2.59  | 1.039  |
| Average                                                                                                          | 2.666 | 0.0686 |

The table presents the mean and standard deviation (*SD*) values for various reading strategies used by students during their reading process. The overall average mean score of 2.666 indicates that the use of reading strategies was generally infrequent. Specifically, the highest mean score (3.77) corresponds to the strategy of "skipping unknown words while reading," suggesting this was the most commonly employed technique. Conversely, the strategy of "paying attention to the type of text when reading" (mean = 1.78) was the least used, indicating a lack of attention to text types like narrative, expository, or scientific formats. Several strategies, such as "using a dictionary or Google translator," "paying attention to punctuation," and "using English grammar knowledge to aid understanding," all received a consistent mean score of 2.59, reflecting moderate usage. The relatively low standard deviations, ranging from 0.651 to 1.102, suggest some consistency in how students approached these strategies, though certain strategies, such as "guessing the meaning of unknown words" (*SD* = 0.978) and "scanning the text for specific ideas" (*SD* = 1.039), showed slightly more variability in usage. Overall, while students exhibited some reliance on basic strategies like skipping unfamiliar words, more complex or in-depth strategies, such as identifying text types or using grammar knowledge, were less frequently employed.). Interview responses showed slight discrepancies, as presented in Table 4.

**Table 4***Interview Results on While-Reading Strategies*

| Strategy                       | Frequency/ 22 |
|--------------------------------|---------------|
| Identifying keyword            | 16            |
| Translating into mother tongue | 18            |
| Skipping unknown words         | 14            |
| Scanning the text              | 12            |
| Guessing                       | 6             |

Contrary to the survey results, the interview revealed that "translating into the mother tongue" was widely used, even though it was not highly ranked in the questionnaire. Student G stated: *"I mainly rely on translating the text because I haven't found other effective strategies yet."*

#### 4.1.3. Students' use frequency of post-reading strategies

The final section of the questionnaire focused on post-reading strategies. Table 5 presents the results.

**Table 5***Students' Use Frequency of Post-Reading Strategies*

| Statements                                                                                               | Mean | SD    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|-------|
| 1. Re-read the text more than once                                                                       | 2.77 | 1.061 |
| 2. Making notes for the main points in the Text                                                          | 2.77 | 1.061 |
| 3. Evaluate the plan to check whether I achieve my purpose                                               | 2.77 | 0.968 |
| 4. Checking the correct answer to the reading comprehension questions                                    | 2.77 | 1.061 |
| 5. Summarizing the text in one's own words                                                               | 2.77 | 1.061 |
| 6. Making inferences from the text to understand the hidden meaning                                      | 2.77 | 0.968 |
| 7. Discussing with other coursemates about the text                                                      | 3.34 | 1.061 |
| 8. Discussing the topic with others at home                                                              | 3.34 | 1.061 |
| 9. Trying to understanding the whole text alone without help from other                                  | 2.59 | 1.046 |
| 10. Reading other materials (books, articles etc.) related to the text to help in understanding the text | 3.05 | 0.967 |
| Average                                                                                                  | 2.79 | 0.932 |

As can be seen in Table 5, the overall average mean score of 2.79 suggests that, while some strategies were moderately utilized, there was still a relatively infrequent application of comprehensive post-reading strategies. The highest mean scores of 3.34 were observed for "discussing the text with coursemates" and "discussing the

topic with others at home," indicating that students favored interactive approaches when reflecting on reading material. In contrast, strategies such as "re-reading the text more than once," "making notes," "evaluating the plan," "checking answers," "summarizing the text," and "making inferences" all received a uniform mean score of 2.77, showing moderate but consistent use of these techniques. The lowest mean (2.59) was for "trying to understand the whole text alone without help," suggesting a tendency to seek external support when comprehending challenging texts. The standard deviation values, which range from 0.967 to 1.061, reflect moderate variability in strategy usage, with slightly more consistency in strategies like "making inferences" and "evaluating plans" (both  $SD = 0.968$ ). This indicates a somewhat uniform approach among students to more complex cognitive tasks like inferring hidden meanings or self-evaluating.

In conclusion, while students demonstrated a preference for collaborative discussion strategies, more independent, reflective practices such as summarizing and evaluating were less frequently used, though still moderately present in their reading process.

#### 4.2. Relationship between reading strategy use frequency and reading achievement

To explore the relationship between students' use of reading strategies and their reading achievement, two reading tests were administered. The average reading score and the frequency of strategy use are summarized in Table 6.

**Table 6**

*Descriptive Statistics of Reading Strategies and Reading Scores*

|                              | Mean             | SD          | N          |
|------------------------------|------------------|-------------|------------|
| Pre-reading                  | 2.68             | 0.82        | 328        |
| While-reading                | 2.66             | 0.77        | 328        |
| Post-reading                 | 2.79             | 0.93        | 328        |
| <b>Average reading score</b> | <b>20.67/ 30</b> | <b>4.34</b> | <b>328</b> |

A Pearson correlation analysis (Table 7) revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between reading strategy use and reading achievement ( $p < .001$ ). More specifically, pre-reading strategies show a moderate to strong positive correlation with the average reading score (0.783, Sig. 0.000), indicating that students who use pre-reading strategies tend to achieve higher reading comprehension scores. At the

same vein, while-reading strategies also correlate positively with reading scores (0.782, Sig. 0.000), suggesting that the use of strategies during reading has a similarly strong relationship with reading achievement. Finally, post-reading strategies have the strongest correlation with the average reading score (0.804, Sig. 0.000), emphasizing the importance of post-reading activities, such as reviewing and reflecting on the text, in boosting reading comprehension performance.

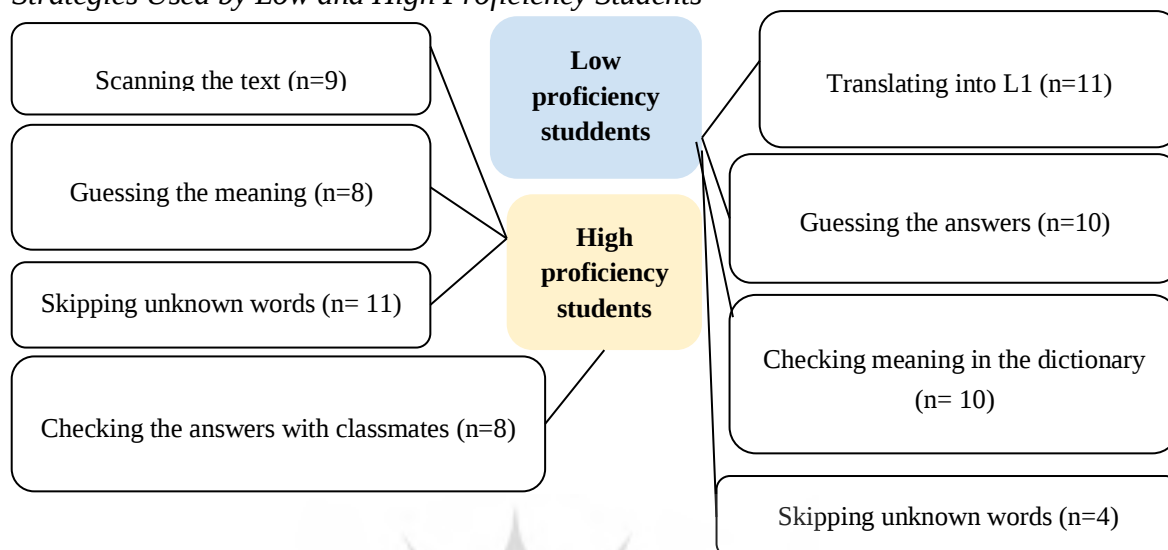
In summary, the data shows significant, strong correlations among pre-, while-, and post-reading strategies, as well as their positive influence on students' overall reading comprehension scores. This underscores the integrated nature of reading strategies and their collective impact on reading achievement.

**Table 7**  
*Correlations Between Reading Strategies and Reading Scores*

|               |                     | Pre<br>Reading | While<br>Reading | Post<br>Reading | Average<br>Reading<br>score |
|---------------|---------------------|----------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| Pre reading   | Pearson Correlation | 1              | 0.947**          | 0.946**         | 0.783**                     |
|               | Sig. (2-tailed)     |                | 0.000            | 0.000           | 0.000                       |
|               | N                   | 328            | 328              | 328             | 328                         |
| While reading | Pearson Correlation | 0.947**        | 1                | 0.957**         | 0.782**                     |
|               | Sig. (2-tailed)     | 0.000          |                  | 0.000           | 0.000                       |
|               | N                   | 328            | 328              | 328             | 328                         |
| Post reading  | Pearson Correlation | 0.946**        | 0.957**          | 1               | 0.804**                     |
|               | Sig. (2-tailed)     | 0.000          | 0.000            | 0.000           | 0.000                       |
|               | N                   | 328            | 328              | 328             | 328                         |

\*\*p < .001

The follow-up interview provided further insights into the relationship between students' English proficiency and their use of reading strategies. The interviewees' responses were analyzed and grouped according to their proficiency levels, as illustrated in Figure 1.

**Figure 1***Strategies Used by Low and High Proficiency Students*

Low proficiency students predominantly employed basic strategies. The most common strategies among this group were: Translating in L1 (native language), used by 11 students, which indicates reliance on their first language to understand the reading material; Guessing the answers, a strategy employed by 10 students, reflecting a tendency to make assumptions without full comprehension.

High proficiency students, on the other hand, made use of more advanced reading strategies, such as: Scanning the text, used by 9 students, to quickly identify key information; Guessing the meaning of unknown words from context, reported by 8 students, showing a more strategic approach to tackling unfamiliar vocabulary; Checking answers with classmates, another common strategy (N=8), suggesting a collaborative approach to verifying understanding.

Interestingly, both low and high proficiency students reported skipping unknown words. However, the rationale behind this strategy differed between the two groups: Higher proficiency students skipped unknown words to save time and employed guessing the meaning from context to enhance their understanding of the text. In contrast, lower proficiency students skipped these words and guessed the answers randomly, indicating a less strategic approach and a more passive reading behavior.

### **5. Discussion and Pedagogical Implications**

This study focused on two primary aspects: (1) students' perceptions regarding the frequency of their use of reading comprehension strategies when reading English texts, and (2) the relationship between students' reading comprehension abilities and the frequency of their strategy use.

The findings revealed that high school students did not frequently employ reading strategies. Instead, they occasionally used some common strategies, such as "planning before reading," "translating into the first language (L1)," "skipping unknown words," and "discussing with others after reading." Previous research has underscored the significant role of reading strategies in improving comprehension (Nguyen & Phung, 2011; Hieu Manh Do & Huong Le Thu Phan, 2021). However, the majority of interviewees in this study reported that they did not effectively utilize these strategies in their reading process. A pedagogical implication of these findings is the need for English teachers to provide explicit training in strategy use, ranging from basic strategies to more advanced ones, in order to accommodate students of varying proficiency levels.

Another notable finding is that although some strategies were employed more frequently than others, they remained at a basic cognitive level, indicating that students did not apply more advanced strategies to enhance their reading comprehension skills. As noted by Hieu Manh Do and Huong Le Thu Phan (2021), novice English learners typically rely on rudimentary strategies, whereas more proficient learners tend to use more critical, complex strategies. Despite having studied English for more than five years, the participants in this study continued to rely on basic strategies, such as translation and skipping unfamiliar words. This may be attributed to the fact that students in rural areas have fewer opportunities to invest in and improve their English proficiency compared to their urban counterparts. Consequently, their use of reading strategies—whether pre-reading, during reading, or post-reading—is limited. Additionally, access to resources that facilitate reading comprehension practice is scarce in rural areas. This underscores the need for greater investment in educational resources and materials.

The other key objective of the study was to examine the correlation between the frequency of reading strategy use and students' reading scores. The statistical analysis indicated that the use of reading strategies had a significant impact on test performance, the finding is consistent with previous studies (Cho & Ma, 2020;

Ghaith, 2018; Nguyen & Phung, 2011; Hieu Manh Do & Huong Le Thu Phan, 2021; Nguyen & Trinh, 2011; Rastlegar et al., 2017) but inconsistent with Alty & Altay (2017). Accordingly, while strategic reading plays an important role in reading success, it should not be viewed as the sole determinant. Other factors, such as vocabulary size and familiarity with the topic, also contribute to reading performance. Therefore, the correlation between strategy use and reading scores should be interpreted with caution. It is recommended that curriculum designers, educators, and EFL teachers incorporate strategy instruction and practice into teaching programs to raise students' awareness of key factors that influence reading comprehension, rather than merely focusing on techniques for answering questions without fully understanding the content.

In conclusion, this study explored the frequency of reading strategy use among high school students in Central Vietnam. The results indicated a low frequency of use across pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading strategies. Furthermore, the study identified a strong correlation between strategy use frequency and reading scores among EFL students. Despite the limitations associated with a small sample size and the constraints of the research tools employed, the findings significantly enhance the understanding the use of reading strategies within the Vietnamese context. These results provide valuable insights for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers and educators, assisting them in improving the effectiveness of their reading instruction. Future research should be undertaken to generalize these findings to diverse contexts.

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