CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This chapter is the introduction, covering the background, research questions, research purposes, research scope, research significance, conceptual framework, hypothesis, and previous studies.

A. Background

Reading is one of the essential skills for EFL students as it is considered the most important aspect for students to develop their comprehension. In addition, reading involves several activities such as understanding and remembering ideas, identifying and selectively attending to important information, monitoring comprehension and learning, synthesizing information, and critically evaluating a text in an academic context (Dianti, 2021). That means the students can understand the meaning of the text accurately and can interpret the meaning of the text. On the other hand, reading strategies are needed for successful reading. However, according to Shehu (2015), numerous factors influence reading performance, which can be classified into internal and external categories. Internal factors include motivation and interest, while external factors involve aspects such as the quality of reading materials, the role of the teacher, and the use of strategies. These factors are interrelated and contribute significantly to reading success.

For many students, reading is perceived as a challenging activity due to low motivation, frequent encounters with unfamiliar vocabulary, and the difficulty level of reading materials, all of which can reduce their enthusiasm (Febtisari & Fitrawati, 2017). Putri et al. (2021) found that low reading motivation is associated with weak literal and inferential comprehension skills, negatively affecting students' academic achievement. This can lead to low self-esteem, poor motivation, limited vocabulary, a lack of prior knowledge activation, and inadequate inferential thinking and reading strategies.

Based on the PISA 2022 results, Indonesia's average reading literacy score was 366, significantly below the OECD average of 476, placing Indonesia at rank 69 out of 81 countries (OECD, 2023). Unfortunately, around 76% of Indonesian students performed below Level 2, which indicates they struggle to identify key

ideas, make inferences, or connect information within or across texts. While this data reflects the performance of 15-year-old students, it signals persistent issues that may continue into higher education if not properly addressed.

Therefore, it is necessary to identify and implement effective learning strategies that support reading development. Appropriate reading strategies not only promote comprehension but also empower students to become independent and proficient readers. Reading strategies should include clearly defined steps and relevant skills adapted to learners' needs. McNamara (2009) emphasized that reading strategies are essential for comprehension and overcoming reading difficulties. Oxford and Nyikos (2011) categorized language learning strategies into three types: cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective.

The strategy utilized in this study is a metacognitive strategy. Metacognitive strategy refers to learners' ability to plan, monitor, and evaluate their own learning processes (Iswadi et al., 2017). These strategies involve setting goals before engaging in a task, being aware of one's comprehension and performance during the task, and reflecting on outcomes after the task is completed. Despite the well-established role of metacognitive strategies, recent studies reveal that students at various educational levels continue to experience difficulties in reading comprehension. These difficulties are often caused by the implementation of limited teaching practices that encourage metacognitive development (García, 2015). Consequently, many students struggle with making inferences, which are central to deeper comprehension. As León (2003) cited, successful inferencing depends on the application of cognitive and metacognitive strategies to generate new meanings from existing textual information.

In this study, the researcher argues that metacognitive strategies are relevant for improving students' reading comprehension, particularly in inferential reading comprehension. Although previous research has explored general metacognitive strategies or the broader concept of metacognition in reading contexts (Martelletti et al., 2023; Inciarte-González, 2024), research specifically focusing on metacognitive reading strategies as a distinct construct has not been conducted. Moreover, most of the existing literature concentrates on school-level learners, so

there is a gap in understanding how university-level EFL students apply metacognitive reading strategies in academic reading contexts. This highlights a research gap concerning how EFL university students apply metacognitive reading strategies to understand implied or inferential information in texts. Therefore, this study aims to examine EFL students' frequency of using metacognitive reading strategies among second-semester EFL students at the university level, specifically while reading inferentially in academic reading classes, and analyze how these strategies correlate with their inferential reading comprehension skills. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights into the use of in-depth reading strategies and processes in a college EFL environment.

B. Research Questions

There are two research questions regarding the problem mentioned in the background as follows:

1. To what extent do EFL students' frequency of using metacognitive reading strategies?
2. To what extent are EFL students' inferential reading skills?
3. What is the correlation between EFL students' frequency of using metacognitive reading strategies and their inferential reading skills?

C. Research Purposes

Based on the research questions above, the researcher aims :

1. To examine the EFL students' frequency of using metacognitive reading strategies.
2. To identify the extent of EFL students' inferential reading skills.
3. To discover the correlation between EFL students' frequency of using metacognitive reading strategies and their inferential reading skills.

D. Research Scope

This study aims to examine the EFL students' frequency of using metacognitive reading strategies and to investigate the correlation between these strategies and their reading inferential skills. This research focuses on second-semester students currently enrolled in an interpretive reading class at the English Education

Department of UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung. The sample limited to 51 students selected through random sampling from the total population of second-semester students.

The data in this study were collected using two primary instruments. The first is the Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS) developed by Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002), which is designed to assess students' awareness and use of metacognitive reading strategies. The SORS measures three key constructs: (a) Global Reading Strategies, (b) Problem-Solving Strategies, and (c) Support Reading Strategies. The instrument consists of 30 items presented on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 ("I never or almost never do this") to 5 ("I always or almost always do this"). Participants are asked to indicate the frequency with which they use each strategy while reading academic texts.

The second instrument is an Inferential Reading Comprehension Test, adapted from a standardized reading comprehension test developed by Phillips (2001). This test includes 25 multiple-choice items specifically designed to measure students' ability to make inferences based on implicit information in a text. This study is limited to second-semester EFL students enrolled in the interpretive reading course. It does not include participants from other academic levels or examine the long-term impact of metacognitive reading strategies beyond their immediate application in academic reading tasks.

This research aims to enhance the understanding of the frequency of using metacognitive reading strategies correlated with inferential skills among second-semester students. Thus, it will inform teaching practices and contribute to reading strategies in language education.

E. Research Significance

Theoretically, this research explores the relationship between EFL students' frequency of using metacognitive reading strategies and their inferential reading skills. The findings of this study may guide the development of more effective reading instruction that integrates metacognitive strategy training, especially for inferential comprehension. Additionally, it is intended that this research will serve as a research source for future studies.

Practically, it can raise students' awareness of their own reading processes and help them become more autonomous and strategic readers. Lastly, incorporating more metacognitive strategies in classrooms may help students adopt more effective strategies or methods, ultimately enhancing their inferential reading skills and overall academic performance.

F. Theoretical Framework

The Metacognition term can be defined as the ability to think of our own thinking processes, which means we are aware and understand how we learn, make decisions, reason, and problem-solve. Flavell (1979) defined metacognition as "knowledge that takes as its object or regulates any aspect of any cognitive endeavor," which means an individual's knowledge about the cognitive process in learning includes knowledge about when and how to use particular strategies for learning or problem-solving. In reading comprehension, this helps students identify what they understand and where they experience confusion. It also encourages them to use strategies such as rereading or slowing down their pace to enhance comprehension (Artelt et al., 2011; Schraw & Moshman, 1995). This theory is used to study how participants assess their own understanding and the strategies they choose when facing difficult texts.

Many studies (Flavell, 1979; Baker & Brown, 1984; Jacob & Paris, 1987; Schraw & Dennison, 1994) have proposed that the metacognition process is divided into two parts: First, Metacognitive Knowledge, which refers to declarative knowledge, procedural knowledge, and conditional knowledge. It means the knowledge about cognitive processes and how to regulate them. Second, Metacognitive Regulation refers to the ability to manage and control one's cognitive activities through planning, monitoring, and evaluating. It refers to a set of activities that help learners control their learning (Schraw & Moshman, 1995). This knowledge can then be used to control and manage our cognitive processes more effectively. They have strategies for finding out or figuring out what to do. These strategies are especially valuable for teaching reading in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts, where time to practice language and reading is often limited.

In the context of reading, metacognitive reading strategies are crucial for enhancing comprehension and learning efficiency. These strategies involve readers' ability to plan how to approach a reading task, monitor their understanding, and evaluate the outcomes of their reading. Anderson (2004) stated that metacognitive reading strategies may include behaviors such as predicting, self-questioning, paraphrasing, summarizing, re-reading to clarify meaning, and retelling. Such behaviors make readers stay actively engaged with the text, detect mistakes in understanding, and apply solutions when difficulties arise. By using metacognitive reading strategies, students become more aware of what makes their language learning meaningful, helping them take control of their learning process.

Meanwhile, inferential reading skills refer to the ability to interpret and understand the information that is not explicitly stated in the text. It requires integrating prior knowledge with information in the text and making logical connections to conclude (Baker & Snow, 2002; Kispal, 2008). When reading, people connect new information to their prior knowledge. Rumelhart (1980) explains that understanding depends on using what we already know, called "schemas." This is the process of using background knowledge to gain meaning and acquire new information from text. For EFL students, not having enough background knowledge about certain subjects or cultures can cause misunderstandings. This theory was used to see how participants' educational and cultural backgrounds influenced their ability to understand unfamiliar academic texts. Bos and Andres (1990, as cited in Aloqaili, 2011) note that schema theory is about the way knowledge is stored in memory and how it shapes the learning of new information. It also helps in examining how readers draw on what they know to understand texts and make inferences.

Readers must be able to go beyond the literal meaning of words and the underlying ideas and relationships involved, mental effort, and cognitive engagement to bridge the meaning of what is stated and what is implied. At this level, readers move beyond simply recognizing the author's words. They are expected to integrate information from the text, identify relationships between main ideas and supporting details, and use this knowledge to interpret the author's

intended meaning (Vacca et al., 2009). Readers may also reconstruct missing information or expand upon the content (Dole et al., 1991). Such processes place higher cognitive demands on readers, as they must retain certain details in working memory while simultaneously searching for and connecting information across the text.

Inferential skill is challenging for EFL learners because it demands not only language skills but also strong thinking and reasoning abilities. The processes described by Vacca et al. (2009) and Dole et al. (1991) closely correspond to the role of working memory in reading comprehension. According to working memory theory, readers must temporarily hold information in mind while integrating it with new textual input and with knowledge stored in long-term memory (Swanson & O'Connor, 2009; Cain et al., 2004). When readers move beyond the literal meaning of words to identify relationships, construct inferences, and fill in missing information, they are engaging in cognitively demanding tasks that rely on the limited capacity of working memory. This explains why inferential comprehension is more challenging than literal comprehension: it requires not only retaining textual details but also actively manipulating and reorganizing them to create coherent meaning. Therefore, inferential skills play an important role in reading comprehension.

Several studies have shown a significant relationship between metacognitive reading strategies and inferential skill. These strategies help students approach texts more thoughtfully, allowing them to detect subtle cues and infer deeper meaning. For example, the research conducted by Soto et al. (2019) found that students' self-reports of metacognitive strategies, particularly in planning and evaluation, accounted for significant variance in reading comprehension performance on inferential questions. This suggests that students who actively plan their reading activity and evaluate their understanding are better at making inferences while reading. The study by Noviadi (2023) highlighted that components of metacognitive regulation (planning, monitoring, and evaluating) are strong predictors of students' ability to understand and interpret information that is not explicitly stated in the text. These studies concluded the importance of

metacognitive regulation in enhancing inferential reading skills. Teaching and encouraging the use of metacognitive strategies can help students become more proficient in making inferences.

In summary, the conceptual framework of this study emphasizes the importance of metacognitive reading strategies in enhancing inferential skills among EFL students. The table below shows the framework related to reading strategies and reading comprehension.

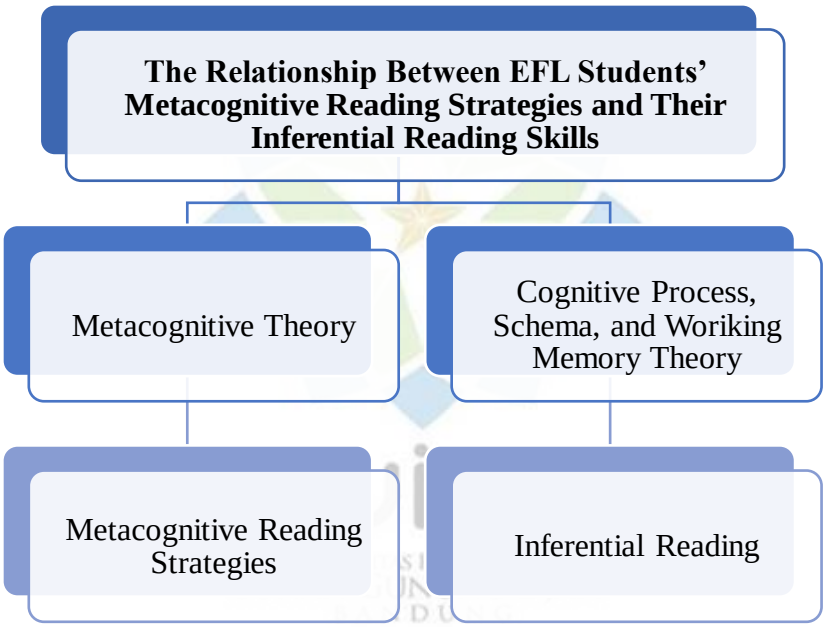

Figure 1.1. Conceptual Framework

G. Hypothesis

A hypothesis is a conjectural statement of the relation between two or more variables (Kerlinger, 1956). It is necessary to lead the research to direct the researcher's thoughts toward a solution for the research problem. In quantitative research, a hypothesis involves making predictions or assumptions about the expected outcomes, particularly regarding the correlation between different variables (Creswell, 2012).

The hypothesis is a testable statement of what the researchers predict will be the study's outcome. This typically involves predicting a possible relationship between

two variables: the independent variable and the dependent variable. In research, the hypotheses are written in two forms: the null and the alternative hypothesis. The hypothesis in this research is formed as follows:

1. Ha (Alternative Hypothesis): There is a correlation between EFL students' frequency of using metacognitive reading strategies and their inferential reading skill
2. H_o (Null Hypothesis): There is no correlation between EFL students' frequency of using metacognitive reading strategies and their inferential reading skill

Formally, a statistical hypothesis-testing problem includes two hypotheses. These hypotheses are the null hypothesis (H_o) and the alternative hypothesis (Ha). Statistical hypothesis testing starts with believing the null hypothesis and seeing if the data provides enough evidence to abandon your belief in H_o in favor of the alternative hypothesis Ha.

H. Previous Study

Several previous studies relevant to the current research topic have been discovered. The first study conducted by Inciarte-González et al. (2024) investigated the contributions of metacognitive strategies to inferential reading comprehension among 5th-grade students in Colombia through a mixed-method, non-experimental field design involving 34 students from low socio-economic backgrounds. Using the *Evaluar para Avanzar* reading test and the Metacognitive Awareness Inventory (MAI), the study assesses students' reading performance and metacognitive skills, revealing the significant role of organization, planning, and monitoring strategies, particularly in generating declarative and macrostructural inferences. While their research offers valuable insights into the role of metacognitive strategies in early reading development, focusing on students' first language, the present study focuses on the frequency of using metacognitive reading strategies to comprehend academic texts, specifically at the inferential level, especially among EFL students. Furthermore, the current research employs a quantitative correlational design to examine the relationship between the two

variables and employs the Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS) as the primary instrument, as it is more specifically designed to measure metacognitive strategies in the context of academic reading.

The second study was conducted by Martelletti et al. (2023), which explored how metacognition supports the sustained development of inferential reading skills in ESL learners. It found that students' metacognitive awareness—especially in planning and evaluation—was significantly correlated with their ability to answer inference-based questions. This supports the notion that metacognition plays a critical role in facilitating deeper comprehension across varying levels of understanding. While this study broadly addresses metacognition as a cognitive framework supporting inferential skills, the present study focuses more specifically on metacognitive reading strategies, which are a subset of metacognition. Despite this narrower focus, both studies share a fundamental concern with the role of metacognitive processes in enhancing reading comprehension—particularly at the inferential level—in language learners.

The third study was conducted by Putri et al. (2021) on Indonesian students, investigated the influence of metacognitive strategies on both literal and inferential comprehension. Their findings demonstrated that participants reported frequent use of the third metacognitive strategy, especially in making inferences. While the context overlaps with the current study (Indonesian EFL learners), their focus was at the middle school level, using a general measure of reading comprehension rather than zooming into specific higher education dynamics. In contrast, the present study involves undergraduate students in a university setting and concentrates on inferential reading skills as the outcome variable. This makes the current research more focused and targeted in examining how metacognitive reading strategies specifically relate to students' ability to comprehend implied or unstated information in academic texts.

In addition, Soto et al. (2019) conducted a systematic literature review analyzing the role of metacognitive strategies in EFL reading over two decades. They emphasized the importance of cultural and educational background differences in shaping how metacognitive strategies are used. Their review

confirms that while metacognitive reading strategies are effective across contexts, learners from different sociocultural environments (like Indonesian university students) may demonstrate unique patterns of strategy use that are underrepresented in existing research. However, Soto et al.'s study is broad in scope and conceptual in nature, focusing on trends and patterns across multiple studies without conducting original field research. In contrast, the present study provides empirical evidence by directly examining Indonesian EFL university students and investigating the specific relationship between the students frequency of using metacognitive reading strategies and inferential reading skills. This focused approach allows for a deeper understanding of how these strategies function in real academic settings among a specific learner population.

Previous studies have provided meaningful insights into the role of metacognitive strategies in supporting reading comprehension—particularly inferential understanding—most of them differ from the current study in terms of participants, focus, instruments, and research design. Inciarte-González et al. (2024) and Putri et al. (2021) examined younger learners and focused more broadly on general comprehension levels, while Martelletti et al. (2023) investigated metacognition as a wider cognitive construct rather than specific reading strategies. Soto et al. (2019), although comprehensive, offered a conceptual review without empirical validation.

In contrast, the present study contributes to the field by empirically investigating the relationship between the frequency of using metacognitive reading strategies and inferential reading skills among Indonesian EFL university students, using a quantitative correlational design and a context-specific instrument (SORS). Unlike previous studies that focused on young learners, general reading comprehension, or conceptual discussions, this study narrows its scope to college students and emphasizes inferential comprehension as a crucial aspect of academic literacy. The findings will provide useful insights for teachers and students, highlighting the importance of teaching metacognitive strategies to improve students' reading skills and academic performance.