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**The Use and Effects of Explicit Reading
Strategies in the EFL Classrooms of Upper-
Secondary School**

*Användningen och effekterna av explicita lässtrategier i EFL-
klassrummen på gymnasienivå*

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Preface

Before showcasing our project, a sincere thank you goes to our supervisor Sindija Franzetti, for her continuous encouragement and guidance throughout this project.

While the following paper results from cooperation, the work has been somewhat divided. As Angelica Bercic has been focusing on the introduction and the first research question, Petter Gleisner has been focusing on aims, methods, and research for the second research question. As a result, what is presented below is made from continuous dialogue and comments between ourselves.

We hereby certify that all parts of this essay reflect the equal participation of both signatories below:

The parts we refer to are as follows:

- Planning
- Research question selection
- Article searches and decisions pertaining to the outline of the essay
- Presentation of findings, discussion, and conclusion

Authenticated by:

Angelica Bercic



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Abstract

The study aims to investigate the impact of reading strategies within the EFL educational context. It emphasises their implementation within the educational context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in upper-secondary schools, addressing the current decline of adolescents' reading comprehension in English. The study relies on peer-reviewed articles as the basis of the methodology, acquired through systematic searches in three databases: Education Research Complete (ERC), Education Research Information Centre (ERIC), SwePUB, and Libsearch. Several research articles were found through these databases, presenting differing perspectives and theories for the study. The study results reveal a discrepancy between teachers' tacit awareness and explicit instruction of reading strategies, leading to the infrequent teaching of these strategies. When reading strategies were employed, the most common strategy was discussing with peers. The applied strategies positively impacted reading comprehension and motivation for further reading. The study later discusses the impact of teaching and using reading strategies on students' reading comprehension and their preparedness for higher education. While examining and comparing the results, further research is warranted to determine which reading strategies are most beneficial for reading comprehension regarding the effectiveness of implementing explicit instructions to enhance students' reading comprehension and motivation in a rapidly changing educational environment. The project concludes by providing reflections and guidance for implementing reading strategies, highlighting the need for explicit instruction of reading strategies tailored to students' extramural and professional/academic interests.

Keywords: Teaching reading strategies, reading strategies, reading comprehension, EFL, upper-secondary school, Swedish, Sweden

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	5
2. Aim and Research Question	8
3. Method	9
4. Results	11
4.1 Pre-Reading Strategies	11
4.2 During-Reading Strategies	14
4.3 Post-Reading Strategies	15
5. Discussion	17
5.1 Implicit and Explicit Awareness of Reading Strategies	17
5.2 The Effects of Using Reading Strategies	18
6. Conclusion	22
References	24
Appendix	26

1. Introduction

English has evolved into a global lingua franca due to its widespread usage worldwide (Crystal, 2012), leading to many countries adopting it into their society, teaching and using it frequently. In Sweden, English is recognised as a foreign language (EFL), and its use is vital in communicating with other countries as well as within the country. As English expands due to the digitalisation of the world, being among the most used languages on the internet worldwide, the language becomes evermore essential in everyone's life. According to Internetstiftelsen (2023), 96% of the Swedish population uses the Internet. Furthermore, Swedish children and adolescents aged 8 to 19 use the Internet daily for everything from social media to online games, mainly in English. When looking at the educational context of Sweden, English as a foreign language (EFL) is introduced as early as kindergarten and is consistently taught until upper-secondary school (Skolverket, 2022) to keep up the pace of English integration. As a result, there is a noticeable shift in attitudes towards English, especially within the educational system. The same occurrence can be seen in upper-secondary students who often perceive English as a second language (ESL), usually preferring it over their native language (Norrman, 2016), indicating a growing disposition towards it.

Due to English's expanding usage and approval in extramural activities, it has been proven resourceful in English education. According to Sundqvist (2009), students in Sweden generally engage with English daily, which has shown an improvement in their English oral and vocabulary proficiency. Brevik & Hellekjær (2018) and Löwenadler (2023) express similar improvement in students in upper-secondary school, where students now have better English language skills than in their first language. However, it has been shown that the language skills are limited to the students' usage of extramural media, showcasing the discrepancy between media and English language proficiency (Sundqvist, 2009; Brevik & Hellekjær, 2018). According to Sundqvist (2009) and Internetstiftelsen (2023), students in Sweden generally engage with English through the Internet, such as videos and video games, while the time spent on reading is infinitesimal in comparison. Consequently, the students do not improve their literacy skills as social media usage or online games do not correlate with better language comprehension (Hellekjær, 2008), despite the overall improvement in English skills.

According to The Swedish National Curriculum (Skolverket, 2022), upper-secondary students must be able to understand and interpret different types of English texts, such as reports, manuals and simple academic texts. When students encounter issues due to insufficient language skills, they must develop and apply strategies to facilitate understanding. To gain comprehension, the reader needs to know at least 98% of the words used in the text, demonstrating the need for vocabulary and reading strategies (Bergström et al., 2021). In other words, reading strategies and vocabulary must be taught in the upper-secondary classroom to improve students' reading comprehension in English. The concern is that teachers' implicit knowledge of strategies to improve reading comprehension is not explicitly taught to students, which can affect what strategies the students use, if any (Brevik, 2014). Therefore, it can be an invaluable tool for teachers to explicitly teach different strategies that students can adapt to their personal needs (Brevik, 2014; Papadima-Sophocleous, 2009).

As upper-secondary schools aim to prepare students for their future professions or education, they should naturally equip them with much-needed skills and some form of confidence in how to wield these skills. However, Eriksson's (2023) research shows that students in their last two years of upper-secondary education perceived their preparedness to read and consume academic English texts as minimal. Her research showed that 24% of upper-secondary students reported difficulty reading fact-based English texts assigned in school. This demonstrates how upper-secondary schools inadequately prepare students to take on English texts in higher education. Consequently, 32% of first-year university students felt unprepared to read English texts when they started their studies. The results correlate with Hellekjær (2008), who further proves how unprepared students are for taking on English academic texts, where EFL students scored below the minimum required score, as they lacked the skill to read efficiently in a set amount of allocated time.

A number of approaches have been proposed to improve reading comprehension. For example, Al-Issa (2006) believes motivation can be vital to comprehension and can be gained by letting teachers choose relatable reading material for the ESL classroom. Another example to combat the continuous decline in reading comprehension is to have students read more literature along with the use of reading strategies (Hellekjær, 2008; Papadima-Sophocleous, 2009; Cikoso, 2012; Cikoso & Madikiza, 2014; Brevik, 2014). However, to use these

strategies, students must possess and gain proficiency in the various reading strategies to handle texts of varying difficulties, as stated by The Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket, 2022). The issue with implementing these strategies is when educators do not explicitly explain them, which misleads the students on how to read the text (Zipoli, 2017; Brevik, 2014). Further, educators may know how and what to teach students regarding reading strategies but struggle to do so explicitly in their instructional design. As a result, educators may need assistance teaching their tacit or implied knowledge of different reading strategies (Brevik 2014), further showcasing the need to teach educators and students reading strategies explicitly.

Therefore, to address the decline in reading comprehension, teachers could benefit from being more metacognitively aware of how to best include explicit reading strategies in their future instructional designs and employ motivational aspects in their reading. By raising awareness of the importance of reading strategies and students' potential for improved reading comprehension, teachers can understand the vital keys when teaching reading strategies in English. However, the understanding of reading strategies and their potential vary significantly. Thus, it is challenging to investigate what and how our found research articles argue for explicit instruction and the different effects when using reading comprehension strategies.

2. Aim and Research Questions

This paper aims to explore the use of reading strategies and their effects on upper-secondary education. To address the vast subject, we will focus on contextualising our findings within the context of Swedish EFL education. Given that a significant portion of educators teaching reading comprehension rely on their tacit knowledge (Brevik, 2014), we want to identify reading comprehension strategies that could help educators and students reach favourable student outcomes.

Our research questions are as follows:

- What reading strategies are explicitly taught in EFL classrooms in upper-secondary schools?
- Which reading strategies can be taught to develop EFL students' reading comprehension?

3. Method

This section provides an overview of our methodical curation process to gather sources for this project. It outlines the databases we employed, what inclusions and exclusions were made, and the applied keywords. In order to curate relevant and peer-reviewed studies and articles for this paper, we have used the following four databases: Education Research Complete (ERC), Education Research Information Centre (ERIC), SwePUB, and Libsearch.

Our search for sources was regulated by a number of exclusion criteria. First, the findings were limited to peer-reviewed and empirical studies to keep our sources to an academic standard of validity. Our initial searches on the databases rendered numerous research articles, so we focused on search matches published between 2000 and 2023. Narrowing the sources down ensured that they were relatively up-to-date, thus forming our first exclusionary criteria. Second, the geographical relevance of the sources played a pivotal role as we tried to focus on research conducted within Sweden or Scandinavia that applies to Swedish EFL education. While we focused on the Scandinavian context, some engaging sources from other parts of the world will be included in this project to be later situated within the context of Swedish education. Third, an exclusion was made regarding the students' age in our found sources. As our primary focus is Swedish upper-secondary education, we excluded most research on ages younger than 15 or older than 20. Lastly, research focused on utilising and enforcing reading comprehension strategies in instructional design will also be included, primarily on educators and students in English in upper-secondary schools.

We utilised several keywords and phrases when scouring the databases for sources (see “Appendix A” for detailed documentation of the sources used). The keywords all relate closely to our chosen area of research; by using keywords like “ESL” (English as a Second Language) or “EFL” (English as a Foreign Language), we acquired sources related to countries that treat English as either a second or foreign language. As mentioned in the introduction, most Nordic countries treat English as a foreign language but hold a high national average level of fluency as the language expands (Crystal, 2012; Norrman, 2016), and is thus relevant to our research even though Sweden identifies English as a foreign language. The keywords “Reading comprehension strategies” and “Reading comprehension skills” relate to our chosen focus: how reading comprehension strategies are taught and

developed in upper-secondary school. Our following line of keywords, “Upper-secondary school/education” and “High school”, relate to our chosen students by age group, preferably between the ages of 15 and 19, due to the chosen educational orientation. Lastly, our last string of keywords regarding countries relates to our chosen geographical area of interest.

As noted in our appendix (see: Appendix), the diverse range of databases employed in our search yielded various sources relating to various countries. SwePub yielded the fewest sources due to its smaller data collection, exclusively housing articles and journals published in Sweden. However, no sources found when searching in their database were deemed helpful to this project, suggesting a lack of Swedish research on the topic. Therefore, no sources in the paper will have been acquired from SwePub. As a result, we depended on ERC, ERIC and Libsearch to render sources. As the outcome resulted in hundreds of articles, we narrowed it down to 10 sources to be the primary usage for our results regarding finding which reading strategies were used.

4. Results

The research yielded a rich overview of various reading strategies. This section aims to help answer our research questions: What reading strategies are explicitly taught in EFL classrooms in upper-secondary schools, and which reading strategies can be taught to develop EFL students' reading comprehension?

In what follows, we will present the results that have been put together into three distinct categories: pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading strategies, in order to provide a comprehensive account of the vast amount of existing strategies. The categories have been inspired by Brevik's (2014) and Cekiso & Madikiza's (2014) work.

Brevik (2014) states in her work that there is a profuse number of existing strategies, far too many to comprehend and for educators to agree on a set number. Thus, Brevik (2014) constructed her own three main categorisations, suggesting a smaller repertoire of strategies with what strategies she found to have been the most relevant. These categories were divided into when the strategies are meant to be applied, before, during or after the reading. Since Brevik (2014) adapted the categorisation for her research, we have adopted the terminology from the work of Cekiso & Madikisa (2014) for simplification, resulting in the classification of pre-, during- and post-reading strategies.

4.1 Pre-Reading Strategies

Pre-reading strategies occur before the reading phase begins to let the reader prepare what they will read to ensure better comprehension. Using Brevik's (2014) categorisation of strategies, pre-reading strategies can be limited to setting purposes, activating prior knowledge, previewing, and predicting the material. Whether they result in guidance to further comprehension or reading motivation to the readers, as implied by Cekiso & Medikiza (2014), will be discussed in the discussion.

Providing a teacher-focused perspective, Brevik (2014) examined the activation of tacit knowledge of 21 upper-secondary educators participating in a teacher professional

development programme and which reading comprehension strategies were used in their instructions. As a result, the findings showed which reading strategies were most employed and how the educators reflected on their usage. The most common strategy used was discussing with peers, which falls under pre-reading strategies: discussions with peers. Furthermore, Brevik's (2014) research found that when interviewing educators, the strategy "discussing with peers" was not explicitly included in any of the educators' instructional designs. However, during later interviews, the educators included instances of having their students discuss amongst themselves, making "discussing with peers" the most frequent strategy. Brevik (2014) implied that this might be either because of the educator's lack of knowledge that discussing with peers is a reading strategy or that educators simply did not include it in their explicit instruction, improvising it during class.

In a later study, Brevik (2017) further proved the usefulness of discussing with peers when interviewing seven vocational students. The interview group discussed what and how to interpret a visual guide related to their program. Through the discussion among the students, they could better help each other understand the image and construct arguments and reasonings based on previous student statements. Brevik (2017) assessed that students learned to control themselves better and, through collaboration, increased their collective learning gain by letting the students search for clues to interpret the image and discussions best. As the material was directly related to their chosen career path, their interest and enhanced use of reading strategies stemmed from a clear understanding that the material directly impacted their future profession. However, when vocational students faced reading material that lacked connections to their chosen future profession, they expressed boredom and unwillingness to utilise reading comprehension strategies. Brevik (2017) presented the importance of relevancy to the students, thus showing how vital it is for educators to select reading material linked to students' interests. By exploiting the correlations between students' perceived relevance and willingness to use reading strategies effectively, further reading comprehension can be gained.

Compared to Brevik (2017), who found that pupils only used reading strategies when motivated, Cekiso & Madikiza (2014) found that pupils scarcely used pre-reading strategies, if ever. Cekiso & Madikiza (2014) conducted a quantitative study on 192 ESL students at age 15 to investigate which reading strategies the students used. They constructed a questionnaire in a selected school in South Africa and focused on three categories as to which reading

strategies the pupils knew about and used (prior-reading strategies, during-reading strategies, and post-reading strategies). The results showcased a minimal usage of what the authors called ‘critical reading strategies’ for reading comprehension. When looking at the specific categories, pupils only knew about two reading strategies. The pupils indicated they looked for relevant information in the text and what they knew of the subject despite not knowing how to skim the text or use prior knowledge. According to the authors, the implications of not using or learning about pre-reading strategies are severe since they prepare the reader for the text and what they are about to dive into. Pre-reading strategies are also crucial for student motivation, as they will ease the reading flow and help the reader comprehend the text at hand (Cekiso & Madikiza, 2014).

While Cekiso & Madikiza (2014) explained the issues with pupils explicitly not knowing about reading strategies, Hellekjær (2008) found that the pupils mainly discussed with peers, while he advocated for improving explicit reading instruction for English academic reading. He surveyed 217 Norwegian EFL or CLIL (*Content and Language Integrated Learning*) students aged 18-19 considered qualified for higher education. The survey was an academic reading module with different segments from the *International English Language Testing System* (IELTS), a test designed to get approved for higher education in English-speaking countries. Hellekjær’s (2008) results showed that the EFL students had a mean score below the minimum requirement of 25 (21/38) for passing admission, while the CLIL students had a general score of three points more than the minimum (28/38). By closer examination of the EFL students’ tests, the low scores were mainly due to unanswered questions instead of errors, even though they had expanded time for doing the test. Hellekjær (2008) claimed the unanswered questions indicated students’ slow reading and, thus, inability to answer all questions. When looking at specific strategies, students mainly discussed with peers or stopped reading when encountering difficult words or sentences. According to Hellekjær (2008), it is counter-productive to the reading process and comprehension to discuss the reading while in the process, as they would have a harder time grasping the context, leading to longer reading time. By surveying what correlated with the students’ IELTS scores, Hellekjær found that English extracurricular reading correlated positively with the scores while watching English videos and films, which showed a low to no correlation. These results could indicate that the students activated prior knowledge where fluent reading in English could be implemented when difficult words arise, as they often are in academic texts.

Lastly, Lesaux et al. (2014) research affirmed that pupils could benefit mostly from discussing with peers, as it lets them gain insights while sharing ideas. The authors researched how pupils' language and literary skills could develop in English and concluded that discussing with peers was the most helpful reading strategy for increasing these skills. The authors examined 2,082 pupils through a 20-week program (ALIAS) explicitly teaching reading strategies. While many reading strategies were applied, the overall results showed an increased word-level vocabulary and reading comprehension, especially in more demanding texts. Hence, the authors showed that discussing with peers was one of the most implemented strategies after their program, both by teachers and pupils.

4.2 During-Reading Strategies

Reading strategies can also be applied during reading to find what is relevant to the reader's context and to increase their comprehension of the text. These strategies are meant to be used during reading to help the reader(s) understand the reading material without deviating from the activity. The strategies can be specified according to Brevik's (2014) categorisation within the during-reading strategies, such as skimming/scanning the material, reading the material thoroughly (careful reading), finding the context within the text (contextual reading), and making inferences by choosing the most likely explanation from the text.

Cekiso (2012) conducted a quantitative study regarding the possible effects of explicit reading strategy instructions on students' reading comprehension and strategy awareness, which showed increased usage of during-reading strategies. Cekiso's (2012) study included 60 UK and South African ESL students aged 16-17. The students were divided into two groups (control groups and experimental groups) to compare the effect of the study, where the experimental groups instructed explicit reading strategies. A test was conducted before and after the study to show and compare statistics on students' reading comprehension to see if they benefited from using reading strategies. The results showed that the different groups superficially differed in the pre-test regarding strategies. Cekiso (2012) stated that this could correlate with decreasing language skills, affecting students' academic learning. However, the post-test indicated that the experimental group used more reading strategies after the experiment and achieved a higher score in the post-test compared to the control group. The findings showed that the experimental groups used significantly more reading strategies

before and could comprehend the texts better, despite their poor English comprehension, displaying the drastic effect of reading strategies on their literacy skills. After the experiment, the most used reading strategies were skimming/scanning, contextual reading, and making inferences.

Similarly to Cekiso (2012), Hellekjær (2008) studied pupils' English reading comprehension and usage of reading strategies. When looking at how students used reading strategies during a reading exercise, Hellekjær (2008) found that they did not use them. Therefore, he implores pupils to try guessing the context to gain fluency rather than look up words during the reading process. He argues that when reading fluency is disrupted, the overall concept diminishes for the pupils. Moreover, when comparing good and poor readers, good readers try to find the context within a text, while poor readers usually look for intrasentential meaning. Cekiso (2012) and Hellekjær (2008) have similar results regarding the correlation between using reading strategies and better reading comprehension, even though they had different results on the strategies used.

Whereas Hellekjær (2008) advocates for reading fluency, Papadima-Sophocleus (2009) assessed how students could be further motivated to read literature by implementing different reading strategies. Papadima-Sophocleus (2009) analysed five upper-secondary schools in five European countries (Italy, Lithuania, Sweden, Finland, and Cyprus) and examined how they implemented reading strategies to make students more motivated and, thus, develop their reading comprehension. The taught strategies implied some during-reading strategies, such as careful and contextual reading and letting the students make inferences, as Brevik (2014) categorised. While the results varied between the different reading strategies, the consensus was that students became more confident when approaching literature, which could support motivation for further reading (Papadima-Sophocleus, 2009). By making inferences with peers in groups or class, the students developed reading skills to some degree by becoming more confident, which also affected their motivation. As these results impacted the students, the teachers were also involved by what they implicitly thought their students knew about and how explicit instruction showed otherwise. By acknowledging students' interests and helping them achieve a more methodological approach to reading, Papadima-Sophocleus (2009) found that reading with a specific focus, such as carefully reading and making inferences during reading, enhanced students' motivation and literary skills. Thus, by embracing and

employing mid-reading strategies, educators could help improve their students' motivation and reading ability by engaging further with the text.

4.3 Post-Reading Strategies

Finally, post-reading strategies occur after reading, where the reader can review what they have been reading. Brevik (2014) narrows the strategies to underlining/highlighting, using keywords, visualising (by having graphic organisers), asking questions, and summarising the context.

Brevik (2017) continued her research, following up on her research from 2014, observing how the previously interviewed educators within vocational programmes taught reading comprehension strategies. By observing five educators, Brevik (2017) accounted for an educator in a vocational programme and how they taught post-strategies. When the teacher approached a student with a visualiser, such as a mind map, the pupil could later easily recall what they had learned in the previous lesson. When the student later was interviewed, they seemed motivated to continue searching for additional knowledge in the subject rather than re-working their previous knowledge. However, the visualiser was not the only enforced reading strategy, which displays the post-reading strategy to strengthen the students' motivation to read rather than reading comprehension.

Lastly, Papadima-Sophocleus (2009) implemented pre-, during-, and post-reading strategies in students' reading, seeking to assess whether the implementation helped improve or further motivate students to read. By employing post-reading strategies such as reading logs to their questions and summarising, the students were encouraged to enhance their analytical and critical thinking. Furthermore, these results showed positive outcomes regarding comprehension when the students could use both during-reading strategies and post-reading logs. Consequently, Papadima-Sophocleus (2009) claimed that reading strategies were vital for the students to be more motivated and to understand more demanding texts.

5. Discussion

The results indicate that pre-, during-, and post-strategies are being used and taught in EFL classrooms to some extent. Furthermore, the results have presented several sources and authors, all with different takes and perspectives on what and how reading strategies are and should be taught. In this section, we aim to clarify and discuss our findings. Furthermore, we have concluded that the previously presented arguments and perspectives are divided into two categories: Those focused on the explicit reading strategies and the reading strategies' effects on reading.

5.1 Implicit and Explicit Awareness of Reading Strategies

The students preferred using pre-reading strategies, the category most teachers taught. When further looking into which pre-reading strategies were used, discussion with peers was one of the more explicitly taught strategies and the most implicitly used within the classroom (Brevik, 2014; Brevik, 2017; Hellekjær, 2008; Lesaux et. al., 2014).

While Hellekjær (2008) emphasise the critical role of explicitly teaching reading strategies, Brevik (2014) and Cekiso & Madikiza (2014) state that strategies are not explicitly taught within EFL education. Papadima-Sophocleus (2009) argues that teachers might not explicitly educate students on reading strategies because they think the students implicitly know the reading strategies. Even more concerning is that teachers may even lack the knowledge of explicitly teaching reading strategies as they come naturally to them (Brevik, 2014). If teachers cannot explicitly teach reading strategies, students will have a more challenging time facilitating understanding when reading, which can have a negative impact on their future education. The negative reverberation is already an evident issue, as Hellekjær (2008) states that students do not meet the English requirements for higher education, meaning upper-secondary education is failing to prepare them.

In the Swedish National Curriculum (Skolverket, 2022), it is emphasised that upper-secondary students must be able to develop and apply strategies when encountering language skills issues. As shown in the results, most students lack the skills to use reading strategies

since they are not explicitly taught in the classroom (Brevik, 2014; Cekiso & Madikiza, 2014; Hellekjær, 2008). However, while the students were not explicitly taught reading instructions, some used implicit reading strategies without knowing they did. Cekiso & Madikiza (2014) found that students implicitly used reading strategies to look for relevant information (skimming/scanning) and use the knowledge they already knew (prior knowledge) without knowing it was reading strategies.

While Cekiso & Madikiza's (2014) and Hellekjær's (2008) findings affirmed that students may use reading strategies, it is still concerning considering that not every student can apply them and gain further understanding. Zipoli (2017) states that when students are not explicitly taught reading strategies, it can mislead them and cause them to misuse the information in the text, which could have severe consequences on their reading comprehension. Thus, students depend on their tacit knowledge of reading strategies to gain better comprehension when reading, which creates unequal standards as not every student gets the opportunity to develop and apply them.

As a result, students who read more outside of their education can gain further comprehension and deal with more demanding texts for educational purposes (Hellekjær, 2008). However, today's adolescents scarcely read literature as an extramural activity (Sundqvist, 2009), which could be caused by the heavy usage of the Internet and social media (Internetstiftelsen, 2023). So even though English is implemented in students' lives, it is still insufficient to create better reading comprehension. Therefore, as noticed by the results, it is crucial to widen students' array of reading strategies through explicit instruction to develop their reading comprehension.

To summarise, explicit instructions for reading strategies are scarce in the EFL classroom, as the results show that most students do not know how to use them or even have knowledge about reading strategies. The lack of knowledge of reading strategies could correlate with students' current issues with reading comprehension as their reading fluency is poor and slow, as stated by Hellekjær (2008). Compared with the results that students gained reading comprehension with explicit instructions, the argument for explicit instruction is strengthened. The actual effects of utilising reading strategies within education will be discussed below.

5.2 The Effects of Using Reading Strategies

The results indicate that reading strategies are not used or taught sufficiently within the EFL classroom. However, when reading strategies are applied, they show different effects depending on what is used. The results suggest that no matter which reading strategies are employed, they all positively affect reading comprehension and students' motivation to read.

For example, Papadima-Sophocleus (2009) researched how explicit reading strategies could affect students' reading skills and motivation for further reading. Her findings show that when reading strategies are taught, students feel more confident in their language skills and use of various reading strategies. The outcome further correlates with higher student motivation for future readings within and outside education. While Papadima-Sophocleus (2009) focuses on reading strategies for literature, Brevik (2017) applies explicit reading strategies within the students' related educational program. When using relatable texts with the students, they seem further motivated to use the explicitly taught reading strategies, resulting in a better understanding of the text. As these results show a parallel relationship between reading strategies and motivation, finding English texts related to the students' programs and for further education can be imperative to cease the ongoing decline of reading comprehension.

The parallel relationship between reading strategies and motivation is showcased in Brevik's (2017) study when vocational students have to read an English text that they think is irrelevant for them to read or use in the future. While this negatively affects the students' reading comprehension, it must also be noted that vocational programs are not usually meant for further education, making it seem irrelevant for the students to read English academic texts unrelated to their program. By ensuring relatable texts within this group of students, reading comprehension and motivation could be established, resulting in a higher chance for the students to try on other texts in English. As a result, it can be seen that motivation instigates the usage of reading strategies when explicitly taught, ensuring reading comprehension and future motivation to read different types of texts. Considering the students' diverse personal and future professional interests, learners can further develop their confidence and competence in reading, as shown by Cekiso & Madikiza (2014).

While Brevik's (2017) findings show the students' need for relatable text to read, Leseux et al. (2014) find that explicitly teaching reading strategies shows an increased understanding from students when reading more demanding texts. Not only do the students understand the more demanding texts, but they also gain an increased vocabulary that is imperative to master the language. According to Bergström et al. (2021), students need to know 98% of the words to comprehend their reading text thoroughly, suggesting that upper-secondary students must gain a sufficient vocabulary in English to use their reading skills and prepare for higher education. When Cekiso (2012) researched the effects of explicit reading instructions, it showed they were significant for developing reading comprehension in English. While discussing with peers, contextual reading, and making inferences were the most used strategies, almost all strategies improved reading comprehension.

On the other hand, Hellekjær (2008) contends that reading comprehension can rely on reading fluency rather than knowing all the words, as opposed to Bergström et al. (2021). Hellekjær (2008) argues that improving reading fluency can benefit reading comprehension, as the readers can find the context rather than intrasentential meaning. Similarly, Cekiso's (2012) findings show that students could comprehend texts better using reading strategies despite the control group's poor English proficiency, suggesting that students can improve reading comprehension with reading strategies, regardless of their proficiency and vocabulary in the language. Regardless of the different findings, the results advocate that explicit instructions on reading strategies benefit all students and help them develop reading comprehension.

These findings correlate to the EFL classroom of Sweden as The National Curriculum (Skolverket, 2022) for English in upper-secondary school state reading strategies should be employed and developed. As Swedish students are starting to prefer English over their native language (Norrman, 2016), their English reading comprehension must follow the same development by implementing reading strategies. The results indicate that explicit instructions on reading strategies can aid students' language proficiency, literary skills, critical and analytical thinking, and motivation for reading (Papadima-Sophocleus, 2009; Lesaux et al., 2014). As a result, the implemented reading strategies could lead to further literacy skills, preparing the students to engage in further demanding texts in English and aid in the issue regarding upper-secondary students not being or feeling prepared for higher

studies (Hellekjær, 2008; Cekiso, 2012) since the provided texts are of an academic manner. If the students are motivated enough, they could gain the confidence to try reading strategies on the more demanding texts even though they do not know the full context, resulting in, for example, being able to answer more questions during a short period to find the relevant answers as shown by Hellekjær (2008).

In addition, it is crucial for educators to stay up to date with the latest research and best practices in reading instruction and to continuously evaluate and adjust their pedagogical approaches to ensure they are meeting the needs of their students. As shown in the result, students need explicit instruction on reading instruction on reading strategies and how to incorporate them as opposed to what educators believe they think the students already know. By ensuring what the educators believe is obvious within explicit instruction, students who have poorer comprehension can be included and be able to develop further. However, in order to make educators teach about reading strategies, they may need professional guidance to be fully aware of different reading strategies and how they can be incorporated within their education to ensure students' development.

6. Conclusion

Our research aimed to investigate which reading strategies were used within EFL education and how they affected students' reading comprehension. The research shows that reading strategies were scarcely used and even less explicitly taught within the classroom, which might be one reason for poor reading comprehension among students. However, when students were applying reading strategies, it showed an increase in students' reading comprehension, regardless of which reading strategy was used. One of our research questions was which strategies are used in EFL classrooms. Brevik (2014), Hellekjær (2008), and Lesaux et al. (2014) all found that discussing with peers was one of the most used reading strategies, both tacitly and by explicit instruction.

Our second research question aimed to examine which reading strategies could develop reading comprehension. The research showed that all implemented reading strategies somewhat benefited students' reading comprehension. However, the reading strategies had to be explicitly taught and used on, to some extent, relatable texts to have a positive effect. Brevik (2014) displayed how upper-secondary educators struggled to teach reading strategies, as their instructional designs lacked clarity in when and what reading strategies should be taught.

Furthermore, research shows that student motivation significantly impacts the use of reading strategies when explicitly taught (Brevik, 2017; Cekiso & Madikiza, 2014; Papadima-Sophocleus, 2009). Using reading material related to students' future professions positively affected student engagement and reading comprehension (Brevik, 2017). Therefore, motivation and reading strategies are valuable aspects for educators to consider ensuring reading comprehension and future development within reading by activating further engagement with relatable texts. However, further research is needed to understand the interplay between motivation and reading comprehension, especially in English.

The project's educational implications may help address and reverse the ongoing decline of adolescents' reading comprehension. By showcasing the correlations between explicitly taught reading strategies and applying student interests to their education, students improved

reading comprehension and motivation for further reading. Our findings show the importance of including reading strategies in educational curricula for policymakers with limited experience or knowledge about dealing with declining reading comprehension.

Therefore, it is crucial to provide early instructions on reading strategies in order to make students feel confident in their English reading. Students may fail to meet the criteria for future studies if they lack the knowledge to use reading strategies, as the Swedish environment is evermore integrated with the English language. As a result, a lack of comprehension of English texts may impede educational progress, making it essential for students to use and master reading strategies to succeed in their education.

Although our findings show the necessity of explicit instructions on reading strategies, Swedish institutions exhibited a seemingly limited interest despite a pressing need for it. As this project aimed to question and research reading strategies and their effects in a Swedish context, we have had to relate foreign studies to our educational system. Our results may possess some limitations regarding relevancy compared to if more research about reading comprehension stemmed from Sweden. Despite the given nature of our sources, all were focused on using English as a foreign language, which is relatable to the Swedish context.

Nevertheless, there is a need for future research on this topic to be conducted within a Swedish context, studying the long-term effects of teaching reading strategies at an early age. As well as its effects on adolescents' preparedness to read and undertake more complex and demanding texts. However, such research requires considerable time to be invested. To conclude, future research related to this project should examine how explicit implementations of reading strategies in upper-secondary education affect students' reading comprehension over a longer period of time.

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Appendix

Date	Data base	Keywords	Limitations	Matches	Chosen articles
2023-11-17	ERC	<p>“ESL” OR “English as a second language” OR “EFL” OR “English as a foreign language”</p> <p>AND “Upper-secondary school” OR “High school” OR “Upper-secondary education”</p> <p>AND “Sweden” OR “Swedish” OR “Norway” OR “Norwegian” OR “Denmark” OR “Danish” OR “Finland” OR “Finnish”.</p>	Peer-reviewed. Published 2000-2023.	10	5
2023-11-17	ERIC	<p>“ESL” OR “English as a second language” OR “EFL” OR “English as a foreign language”</p> <p>AND “Upper-secondary school” OR “High school” OR “Upper-secondary education”</p> <p>AND “Sweden” OR “Swedish” OR “Norway” OR “Norwegian” OR “Denmark” OR “Danish” OR “Finland” OR “Finnish”.</p>	Peer-reviewed. Published 2000-2023.	70	3
2023-11-17	SwePub	<p>“ESL” OR “English as a second language” OR “EFL” OR “English as a foreign language”</p> <p>AND “Upper-secondary school” OR “High school” OR “Upper-secondary education”</p> <p>AND “Sweden” OR “Swedish” OR “Norway” OR “Norwegian” OR “Denmark” OR “Danish” OR “Finland” OR “Finnish”.</p>	Peer-reviewed. Published 2000-2023.	4	0
2023-11-21	Libsearch	<p>“ESL” OR “English as a second language” OR “EFL” OR “English as a foreign language” AND “Reading comprehension” AND “upper-secondary education”</p>	Peer-reviewed. Published 2000-2023.	2	2