

Teacher Strategies in Teaching English Reading: Exploring Students' Perceptions

Amelia Wanci

Universitas Iqra Buru

amelwanci@gmail.com

Saidna Zulfiqar B. Tahir

Universitas Iqra Buru

saidnazulfiqar@gmail.com

Ibnu Hajar

Universitas Iqra Buru

ibnuhjr423@gmail.com

Corresponding email: amelwanci@gmail.com

Abstract

Reading comprehension is a fundamental component of English language learning; however, many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students continue to experience difficulties in understanding English texts. The effectiveness of reading instruction is therefore closely related to the instructional strategies employed by teachers. This study aimed to investigate the instructional strategies implemented by an English teacher in teaching English reading at MTs Balpetu, South Buru Regency, and to explore students' perceptions of these instructional practices. A qualitative descriptive research design was employed. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with the English teacher and students, and documentation. The data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings revealed that the teacher implemented four complementary instructional strategies: cognitive, social, psychomotor, and affective strategies, with cognitive strategy serving as the dominant instructional approach. Students generally perceived these instructional strategies positively because they enhanced reading comprehension, increased learning motivation, enriched vocabulary acquisition, promoted active classroom participation, and improved learning confidence. The study concludes that integrating multiple instructional strategies creates meaningful learning experiences that support students' reading development in EFL classrooms. These findings provide practical insights for English teachers, particularly in rural secondary schools, regarding the implementation of student-centered instructional strategies that promote effective reading instruction.

Keywords: instructional strategies; reading comprehension; English teacher; students' perception; EFL classroom

A. Introduction

Reading is one of the most fundamental language skills in English language learning because it enables learners to acquire information, expand vocabulary, develop critical thinking, and achieve academic success. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, reading plays an even more significant role because it serves as the primary source of

language input for students who have limited opportunities to communicate in English outside the classroom. Through reading, learners gain exposure to linguistic forms, vocabulary, cultural knowledge, and various text types that support the development of other language skills, including writing, speaking, and listening. Consequently, effective reading instruction has become one of the primary concerns in English language education, particularly in secondary schools where students begin to engage with more complex academic texts (Guthrie et al., 2012; Chen, 2023).

Despite its importance, developing students' reading comprehension remains a persistent challenge in many EFL classrooms. Numerous learners experience difficulties in identifying main ideas, understanding unfamiliar vocabulary, making inferences, and integrating information presented in English texts. These challenges often stem from limited language proficiency, insufficient background knowledge, low reading motivation, and teacher-centered instructional practices that emphasize translation rather than comprehension. As a result, students frequently become passive learners who rely heavily on teachers' explanations instead of constructing meaning independently. Such conditions reduce students' engagement in classroom activities and ultimately affect their reading achievement (Putri et al., 2023; Chen, 2023).

The quality of reading instruction therefore depends not only on students' abilities but also on teachers' instructional decisions. Teachers are expected to select instructional strategies that encourage active participation, critical thinking, and meaningful interaction with reading materials. Instructional strategies function as systematic plans that organize learning objectives, classroom activities, teaching methods, learning resources, and assessment procedures to facilitate students' achievement of learning outcomes. Well-designed instructional strategies create opportunities for learners to activate prior knowledge, collaborate with peers, monitor their own understanding, and apply reading skills in meaningful contexts (Tomlinson, 2017; Su et al., 2023).

Recent developments in English language teaching emphasize that reading should no longer be viewed as a passive decoding process. Instead, reading is understood as an active cognitive activity through which learners construct meaning by connecting textual information with their existing knowledge and experiences. Consequently, teachers are encouraged to employ instructional strategies that support learners' cognitive engagement rather than focusing solely on vocabulary memorization or grammatical explanation.

Strategy-based instruction has been shown to improve reading comprehension because it encourages students to predict, question, summarize, clarify, and evaluate information while reading. Such instructional practices also promote learner autonomy and increase students' confidence in processing English texts independently (Chen, 2023; Su et al., 2023).

The importance of teacher instructional strategies can also be explained through constructivist and sociocultural learning theories. According to Bruner (1960), learning becomes meaningful when learners actively construct knowledge through interaction with learning experiences instead of merely receiving information from teachers. Likewise, Vygotsky (1960) argued that cognitive development occurs through social interaction, where teachers and peers provide scaffolding that enables learners to achieve higher levels of understanding. These theoretical perspectives suggest that successful reading instruction should combine cognitive engagement with meaningful classroom interaction, allowing students to participate actively in constructing knowledge.

Empirical studies have consistently demonstrated the contribution of teacher instructional strategies to students' reading development. Senova (2020) found that teachers who function as facilitators and motivators successfully increase students' interest in reading by implementing interactive classroom activities. Similarly, Putri et al. (2023) reported that reading instruction using children's storybooks encouraged students to participate actively and improved reading comprehension through meaningful classroom interaction. Sonia et al. (2023) also concluded that instructional strategies emphasizing student participation significantly improved learners' reading skills because classroom activities required students to discuss, analyze, and interpret reading materials collaboratively.

More recent evidence further strengthens these findings. Chen (2023) concluded that explicit strategy instruction significantly improves English language learners' reading comprehension by encouraging learners to activate prior knowledge, monitor comprehension, and regulate cognitive processes during reading activities. Likewise, Su et al. (2023), through a systematic review of strategy instruction in English language teaching, argued that instructional strategies integrating cognitive and metacognitive processes consistently improve students' reading performance and classroom engagement. In addition, Monica et al. (2023) demonstrated that schema activation strategies effectively facilitate reading comprehension because learners understand new texts more easily when they connect new information with existing background knowledge. Similarly, Yulita and Napitupulu (2023)

emphasized that metacognitive reading strategies increase learners' awareness of their own reading processes while simultaneously improving comprehension and learning motivation. Collectively, these studies indicate that effective reading instruction requires a combination of cognitive, social, and metacognitive instructional practices that actively involve students throughout the learning process.

Although previous studies have established the effectiveness of various instructional strategies, several research gaps remain. First, many previous studies primarily focused on measuring students' reading achievement or examining the effectiveness of specific instructional techniques. Comparatively fewer studies have investigated how teachers implement multiple instructional strategies during classroom instruction while simultaneously exploring students' perceptions of those strategies. Second, existing studies have predominantly been conducted in urban schools or educational settings with relatively different learning characteristics. Consequently, limited empirical evidence is available regarding instructional practices in rural Islamic junior high schools, where teachers frequently encounter challenges related to students' heterogeneous academic backgrounds, limited learning resources, and varying levels of English proficiency.

Addressing these gaps is important because students' perceptions provide valuable information regarding the practicality and effectiveness of instructional strategies beyond measurable learning outcomes. Positive student perceptions indicate that instructional strategies not only improve academic performance but also increase motivation, classroom participation, and confidence during learning. Understanding these experiences enables teachers to evaluate instructional practices from learners' perspectives and make informed decisions about improving classroom instruction.

Therefore, this study investigates the instructional strategies employed by an English teacher in teaching reading at MTs Balpetu, South Buru Regency, and explores students' perceptions of those instructional strategies. Unlike previous studies that focused mainly on instructional effectiveness or learning outcomes, the present study integrates classroom observation, teacher interviews, student interviews, and documentation to provide a comprehensive understanding of how instructional strategies are implemented in authentic classroom settings. The findings are expected to enrich the literature on English reading instruction in Indonesian EFL contexts while providing practical recommendations for teachers working in schools with similar educational characteristics.

Accordingly, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. What instructional strategies are employed by the English teacher in teaching English reading at MTs Balpetu, South Buru Regency?
2. How do students perceive the instructional strategies implemented during English reading instruction?

B. Methods

1. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design to investigate the instructional strategies implemented by an English teacher in teaching reading and to explore students' perceptions of those instructional practices at MTs Balpetu, South Buru Regency. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study sought to understand instructional practices, participants' experiences, and classroom interactions within their natural educational setting rather than to measure causal relationships between variables. Qualitative research enables researchers to obtain comprehensive descriptions of social phenomena through direct engagement with participants and the contexts in which those phenomena occur (Austin&Sutton, 2014; Flick, 2022).

The study adopted a descriptive qualitative approach because its primary objective was to describe how instructional strategies were implemented during English reading lessons and how students perceived these instructional practices based on their learning experiences. Rather than testing predetermined hypotheses, the study emphasized the interpretation of naturally occurring classroom activities supported by multiple sources of qualitative evidence.

2. Research Setting

The study was conducted at MTs Balpetu, located in Kepala Madan District, South Buru Regency, Maluku Province, Indonesia. The school was selected because English reading instruction at this institution reflects the characteristics of rural Islamic junior high schools, where students demonstrate diverse English proficiency levels, and teachers are required to adapt instructional strategies to accommodate heterogeneous learning needs.

Data collection was undertaken during the 2023/2024 academic year, allowing the researcher to observe naturally occurring classroom activities during regular English lessons without modifying the instructional process.

3. Participants

Participants were selected through purposive sampling, as this technique allows researchers to identify individuals who possess relevant knowledge and direct experience related to the research objectives (Flick, 2022).

The study involved one English teacher responsible for teaching reading to eighth-grade students and a group of eighth-grade students who actively participated in classroom learning. The teacher was selected because of direct responsibility for planning and implementing reading instruction, while students were selected because they experienced the instructional strategies investigated in this study.

Table 1. Research Participants

Participants	Role
One English teacher	Implemented reading instruction
Eighth-grade students	Shared learning experiences and perceptions

4. Data Collection

To obtain comprehensive and trustworthy findings, data were collected through classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Employing multiple data collection techniques enabled the researcher to investigate the research phenomenon from different perspectives and strengthened the credibility of the findings through methodological triangulation (Flick, 2022).

Observation

Classroom observation was conducted to identify instructional strategies implemented during English reading lessons. Particular attention was directed toward classroom interaction, teacher explanations, questioning techniques, learning activities, students' participation, and classroom management. The researcher acted as a non-participant observer, documenting naturally occurring classroom events without intervening in the instructional process.

Observation notes were recorded systematically throughout the learning process to identify recurring instructional patterns associated with cognitive, social, psychomotor, and affective teaching strategies.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with both the English teacher and selected students following classroom observations.

Teacher interviews focused on instructional planning, the rationale for selecting particular teaching strategies, classroom implementation, and challenges encountered during reading instruction.

Student interviews explored learning experiences, classroom engagement, perceived benefits of instructional strategies, and difficulties encountered during English reading activities.

The semi-structured interview format provided sufficient flexibility for participants to explain their experiences while ensuring that discussions remained consistent with the research objectives (Flick, 2022).

Documentation

Documentation served as supporting evidence for observational and interview data. Relevant documents included lesson plans, instructional materials, classroom photographs, and other educational records related to English reading instruction.

These documents were used to confirm classroom practices observed during the study and to strengthen the overall credibility of the findings.

5. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2020), consisting of three interconnected stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification.

During data reduction, information obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation was organized, coded, classified, and simplified according to the research objectives. Irrelevant information was excluded while meaningful evidence related to instructional strategies and students' perceptions was retained.

The second stage involved data display, where the researcher organized findings into thematic categories to facilitate interpretation. Information obtained from different sources was compared continuously to identify recurring patterns, similarities, and differences regarding classroom instructional practices.

Finally, conclusion drawing and verification involved interpreting the findings while continuously comparing evidence across observations, interviews, and documentation. This iterative analytical process ensured that conclusions accurately represented participants' experiences and classroom realities.

6. Trustworthiness

To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, this study employed methodological triangulation by integrating evidence obtained from classroom observations, interviews, and documentation. Comparing information derived from multiple sources enabled the researcher to verify the consistency of findings while minimizing potential researcher bias (Flick, 2022).

Furthermore, credibility was strengthened by incorporating perspectives from both the English teacher and students, allowing instructional practices to be examined from multiple viewpoints. This comprehensive approach increased confidence that the findings accurately represented the implementation of instructional strategies in the natural classroom context.

C. Result and Discussion

1. Results

This section presents the findings of the study concerning the instructional strategies employed by the English teacher in teaching English reading at MTs Balpetu, South Buru Regency, and students' perceptions of these instructional strategies. The findings are organized into two major themes corresponding to the research questions: (1) teacher instructional strategies in teaching English reading and (2) students' perceptions of the instructional strategies implemented during classroom learning.

Teacher Instructional Strategies in Teaching English Reading

Analysis of classroom observations, interviews, and documentation revealed that the English teacher implemented four instructional strategies during reading lessons: cognitive, social, psychomotor, and affective strategies. These strategies were applied in an integrated

manner throughout the teaching and learning process. However, classroom observations indicated that the cognitive strategy was the most frequently implemented instructional approach because it consistently appeared during lesson introduction, core learning activities, and lesson closure.

The implementation of each strategy is presented below.

Cognitive Strategy

Observation data showed that the teacher initiated reading instruction by greeting students, checking attendance, reviewing previous lessons, and introducing the learning objectives. Before students read the assigned texts, the teacher asked several introductory questions to activate students' background knowledge related to the reading topic. Students were encouraged to recall previous experiences and connect them with the learning materials before reading the text.

During the main learning activities, the teacher guided students to identify the main ideas of the text, answer comprehension questions, interpret unfamiliar vocabulary from context, and explain the content of the reading passages using their own words. Classroom observation also indicated that students were encouraged to express opinions, ask questions, and relate the information presented in the text to their personal experiences.

Interview data confirmed the observation findings. The teacher explained that connecting reading materials with students' daily experiences helped students understand the lesson more easily because they were able to associate new information with familiar situations.

Overall, classroom observation, interviews, and documentation consistently indicated that cognitive strategy became the primary instructional strategy employed during English reading instruction.

Social Strategy

Observation findings showed that the teacher frequently organized classroom interaction through questioning activities, classroom discussions, and collaborative learning. Students were encouraged to discuss reading materials with classmates before presenting their answers to the class. These activities allowed students to exchange ideas, clarify information, and respond to one another during classroom learning.

Interview data further revealed that students considered classroom discussion helpful because they could compare their understanding with that of their peers before answering the teacher's questions.

Psychomotor Strategy

Psychomotor strategy was identified through students' participation in reading practice activities. The teacher instructed students to read English texts aloud, practice pronunciation, answer written exercises, and complete classroom assignments related to the reading materials. Observation data indicated that students actively participated in these practical activities while receiving immediate feedback from the teacher regarding pronunciation and comprehension.

Affective Strategy

Observation and interview findings demonstrated that the teacher continuously provided encouragement and positive reinforcement during classroom instruction. Students who successfully answered questions received praise, while those experiencing difficulties were given additional guidance and motivation. The teacher also created opportunities for all students to participate regardless of their English proficiency levels. These instructional practices contributed to a supportive classroom atmosphere throughout the reading lessons.

Students' Perceptions of Teacher Instructional Strategies

Interview findings revealed that students generally expressed positive perceptions of the instructional strategies implemented during English reading lessons. Students reported that the learning activities were easier to follow, more interactive, and more enjoyable than previous reading lessons. Four major themes emerged from the interview data: improved reading comprehension, increased learning motivation, vocabulary development, and enhanced classroom participation.

Improved Reading Comprehension

Most students stated that the teacher's instructional strategies enabled them to understand English reading texts more easily. They explained that the teacher's explanations, questioning techniques, and discussions helped them identify the main ideas and understand

unfamiliar vocabulary within the texts. Students also reported that connecting reading materials with daily life experiences made the lessons easier to understand.

Increased Learning Motivation

Students indicated that classroom activities became more interesting because they were encouraged to participate actively during reading lessons. They explained that discussions, questioning activities, and teacher encouragement increased their willingness to learn English and reduced their hesitation when answering questions in class.

Vocabulary Development

Several students reported that repeated exposure to English reading texts helped them recognize new vocabulary more easily. They also explained that teacher guidance during reading activities enabled them to understand unfamiliar words from the context of the text rather than relying entirely on dictionary translation.

Classroom Participation and Confidence

Interview findings also indicated that students became more confident in participating during classroom learning. They reported greater willingness to answer questions, express opinions, and read English texts aloud because the teacher consistently provided encouragement and constructive feedback. As a result, students perceived the classroom atmosphere as supportive and conducive to learning English reading.

Summary of Findings

The findings indicate that the English teacher implemented four instructional strategies—cognitive, social, psychomotor, and affective strategies—with cognitive strategy serving as the dominant instructional approach. Students generally expressed positive perceptions of these instructional practices, reporting improvements in reading comprehension, learning motivation, vocabulary acquisition, classroom participation, and confidence during English reading lessons. These findings provide the basis for the discussion presented in the following section.

2. Discussion

This study investigated the instructional strategies employed by the English teacher in teaching English reading at MTs Balpetu, South Buru Regency, and explored students' perceptions of those strategies. The findings indicate that the teacher integrated four instructional strategies—cognitive, social, psychomotor, and affective strategies—during classroom instruction, with cognitive strategy emerging as the dominant approach. Furthermore, students perceived these instructional strategies positively because they facilitated reading comprehension, increased learning motivation, enriched vocabulary acquisition, and promoted active classroom participation. These findings demonstrate that effective reading instruction is achieved through the purposeful integration of multiple instructional strategies rather than reliance on a single teaching approach.

Cognitive Strategy as the Primary Instructional Strategy

One of the principal findings of this study is that cognitive strategy became the dominant instructional strategy during English reading lessons. Classroom observations showed that the teacher consistently encouraged students to activate prior knowledge, identify main ideas, answer comprehension questions, and connect reading materials with their personal experiences. Rather than asking students to memorize vocabulary or translate texts mechanically, the teacher guided learners to construct meaning through active engagement with reading materials.

This finding suggests that the teacher deliberately positioned students as active participants in the learning process. Reading instruction was designed not merely to help students decode written texts but to encourage them to interpret information, relate textual content to existing knowledge, and develop meaningful understanding. Such instructional practice reflects a learner-centered approach in which comprehension develops through active cognitive processing rather than passive reception of information.

The finding is consistent with Bruner's (1960) constructivist theory, which argues that learning becomes meaningful when learners actively construct knowledge through interaction with learning experiences. Similarly, Chen (2023) concluded that explicit strategy instruction improves learners' reading comprehension because students become more capable of activating prior knowledge, monitoring comprehension, and regulating their cognitive processes during reading activities. Likewise, Su et al. (2023) reported that strategy-based

instruction enhances learners' engagement and encourages deeper comprehension by promoting purposeful cognitive processing in English language classrooms.

Compared with previous studies, the present research demonstrates that cognitive strategy was not implemented as an isolated instructional technique but was integrated continuously throughout the stages of classroom instruction. This finding indicates that sustained cognitive engagement may be particularly beneficial in rural EFL classrooms where students possess heterogeneous English proficiency levels.

Integration of Social, Psychomotor, and Affective Strategies

Although cognitive strategy emerged as the dominant instructional approach, the findings indicate that reading instruction became effective because the teacher integrated cognitive, social, psychomotor, and affective strategies throughout classroom learning. Each strategy complemented the others and contributed to different aspects of students' learning experiences.

The implementation of the social strategy was reflected in classroom discussions, questioning activities, and collaborative learning. These activities enabled students to exchange ideas, clarify misunderstandings, and construct meaning collectively before presenting their responses. Such classroom interaction encouraged learners to become active contributors rather than passive recipients of information.

This finding supports Vygotsky's (1960) sociocultural theory, which emphasizes that cognitive development occurs through interaction with teachers and peers. The teacher's guidance and collaborative learning activities functioned as instructional scaffolding that enabled students to understand reading materials beyond their individual capabilities.

Psychomotor strategy complemented cognitive learning by providing opportunities for students to practice reading aloud, improve pronunciation, and complete reading exercises. Meanwhile, affective strategy strengthened students' confidence through teacher encouragement, positive reinforcement, and constructive feedback. Together, these strategies created a supportive classroom environment that encouraged active participation throughout the learning process.

The integration of these instructional strategies is also supported by Monica et al. (2023), who demonstrated that schema activation strategies improve reading comprehension by helping learners connect new textual information with their existing background

knowledge. Similarly, Putri et al. (2023) found that interactive classroom activities encourage students to participate actively and contribute positively to reading comprehension. Therefore, the effectiveness of reading instruction observed in this study appears to result from the integration of multiple instructional dimensions rather than from any single instructional technique.

Students' Positive Perceptions of Teacher Instructional Strategies

Another important finding concerns students' positive perceptions of the instructional strategies implemented during English reading instruction. Interview findings indicate that students considered classroom learning more engaging, interactive, and easier to understand because teachers actively involved them in discussions, questioning activities, and reading practice. Students also reported improvements in reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, classroom participation, and self-confidence.

These findings suggest that instructional strategies influence not only students' academic achievement but also their motivation and willingness to participate in classroom learning. When students perceive learning activities as meaningful and supportive, they become more confident in expressing ideas, answering questions, and engaging with English texts.

The findings are consistent with Senova (2020), who reported that teachers functioning as facilitators and motivators successfully increase students' interest in reading by creating supportive learning environments. Likewise, Sonia et al. (2023) concluded that instructional strategies emphasizing student participation improve reading skills because learners become actively engaged in interpreting and discussing reading materials.

More recent evidence also reinforces these findings. Yulita and Napitupulu (2023) found that metacognitive reading strategies increase students' awareness of their own learning processes while improving reading comprehension and motivation. Similarly, Chen (2023) emphasized that explicit strategy instruction promotes both cognitive achievement and learner engagement during English reading instruction. These findings indicate that effective instructional strategies should simultaneously address students' cognitive and motivational needs.

Pedagogical Implications

The findings of this study have several implications for English language teaching, particularly in Indonesian EFL classrooms. First, English teachers should adopt instructional strategies that actively engage students in constructing meaning rather than relying primarily on translation-based instruction. Activities such as activating prior knowledge, collaborative discussion, guided questioning, and contextual interpretation can encourage students to become more active readers.

Second, teachers should integrate cognitive, social, psychomotor, and affective strategies instead of emphasizing only one aspect of instruction. The present study demonstrates that students benefit from learning environments where cognitive engagement is supported by social interaction, practical learning activities, and positive emotional support.

Finally, the findings provide practical insights for teachers working in rural secondary schools with diverse student backgrounds. Instructional flexibility, continuous teacher encouragement, and meaningful classroom interaction may help address variations in students' English proficiency while promoting more active participation during reading instruction. Future studies may extend this research by investigating the implementation of similar instructional strategies in different educational settings or by combining qualitative and quantitative approaches to examine their impact on students' reading achievement.

D. Conclusion

This study investigated the instructional strategies employed by an English teacher in teaching English reading at MTs Balpetu, South Buru Regency, and examined students' perceptions of these instructional practices. The findings revealed that the teacher implemented four complementary instructional strategies—cognitive, social, psychomotor, and affective strategies—with cognitive strategy emerging as the dominant instructional approach. These strategies were integrated throughout the learning process to facilitate students' comprehension, encourage active classroom participation, and create a supportive learning environment.

The study also found that students perceived the instructional strategies positively. They reported that the learning activities helped them understand reading texts more effectively, expand their vocabulary, increase their motivation to learn English, and develop

greater confidence in participating during classroom instruction. These findings suggest that effective reading instruction depends not only on the selection of appropriate teaching strategies but also on the teacher's ability to integrate cognitive, social, behavioral, and emotional aspects of learning in a balanced manner.

The findings contribute to the growing body of literature on English reading instruction in Indonesian EFL contexts by providing empirical evidence from a rural Islamic junior high school, a setting that has received relatively limited attention in previous studies. The study demonstrates that integrating multiple instructional strategies can create meaningful learning experiences for students with diverse English proficiency levels while promoting greater engagement in reading activities.

Despite these contributions, this study has several limitations. The research was conducted in a single school and involved one English teacher; therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to all educational contexts. In addition, the qualitative design focused on describing instructional practices and students' perceptions rather than measuring the direct effect of instructional strategies on students' reading achievement.

Future research is recommended to investigate the implementation of instructional strategies across different educational contexts and to employ mixed-methods or quantitative approaches to examine their influence on students' reading achievement, motivation, and long-term language development.

Practical implication

English teachers are encouraged to integrate cognitive, social, psychomotor, and affective instructional strategies in reading instruction to create more engaging, meaningful, and student-centered learning environments. Such integration may help improve students' reading comprehension while fostering active participation and positive attitudes toward learning English.

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