

ENGLISH READING COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES USED BY  
STUDENTS FROM FACULTY OF AGRICULTURE AND TECHNOLOGY  
NAKHON PHANOM UNIVERSITY

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### ABSTRACT

The purposes of this research were 1) to study English reading comprehension of the students of Faculty of Agriculture and Technology Nakhon Phanom University 2) to investigate the strategies used by students in English reading comprehension and 3) to analyze which strategy helps students in English reading comprehension. The sample of this research was purposively selected, consisting of 103 students of Faculty of Agriculture and Technology Nakhon Phanom University. The research instruments were English reading comprehension test containing 50 question items and questionnaire. The frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were employed to analyze the data. The findings of this research were as follows:

1. The students' English reading comprehension ability was 45.72 percent of the total score.
2. The strategies which were the most used by the students were compensatory reading strategies 89.13 percent ( $\bar{x} = 3.21$ ), cognitive reading strategies 84.37 percent ( $\bar{x} = 3.11$ ), and metacognitive reading strategies 70.49 percent ( $\bar{x} = 2.26$ ) respectively.
3. There were 12 strategies that can help students in reading comprehension such as finding the main idea, marking or taking note, using background knowledge, using context clues, re-reading, setting goals, making a prediction, summarizing, using text structure, questioning about the text, referencing, using grammatical structure, and reaction to the text, respectively.

**Keywords:** Reading comprehension, reading strategies

### RATIONALE AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Nowadays, English can be defined as international language, which is highly important for all aspects of the global society. The population all over the world is increasingly interested in developing their English skills because they are the important tools to learn and transfer their cultures, innovations and technologies as well as to communicate to each other.

In Thailand, English language is promoted by the government in order to develop Thais' English proficiency for the decades, even though it is used as a foreign language. According to Jareonsettasin (2017), the Education Minister stated that in order to enhance students' educational quality and potential, English using skills are extremely important to reinforce, so that the students will be able to use their language skills for communicating and studying to develop themselves to be confident to speak English fluently and accurately.

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To respond to the government policy, Nakhon Phanom University (2561) has set up the policy to develop English skills to the students by adding more English subjects in the curriculums, providing English learning programme for the students and setting up NPU-Exist Exam for the students, which students need to pass the stand score before graduated.

Faculty of Agriculture and Technology (2561) has considered that English is very important to students in the faculty, therefore the English Proficiency Development Project is set up to help students having chance to practice their English. Moreover, the all the lecturers in the faculty need to use English materials or provide English lecture in classroom to encourage the students to use English in various situations.

Grabe (1991, pp. 375-406) explained that reading skill is considered as the important skill for everybody to acquire the knowledge from all kind of written texts. Mahtab Mohammadi Ghavam et al (2011, pp. 39-44) stated that Reading skill need to be emphasized as a gateway for getting and learning new knowledge. while Harmer (2007, p. 283) described that reading comprehension is the the main sources providing the learner with the essential input. It indicates a very important role in L2 learning process. Currently, reading comprehension has become a major problem for L2 learner, especially in Thailand, most of Thai students are lack of opportunity to read outside the classroom because English is used only for specific circumstances such as studying and working.

Chhouk (2010, p. 1) stated that reading is analytical, interactive, constructive, strategic and integrated, which is necessary when students further their study. University students need good reading skill for acquiring knowledge, researching and learning new information, therefore the reading strategies are the main focus to enhance reading comprehension ability. From the approaches of Chamot (1987), Oxford (1990), Anderson (1999), and Carrell (1989) which reviewed by Tanthanis (2016, pp. 110-112) divided reading strategies into three groups; Cognitive Reading Strategies, Metacognitive Reading Strategies and Compensatory Reading Strategies. In Cognitive Reading Strategies Group, there are eight techniques which are translating, summarizing, referencing, Predicting, finding main idea, questioning about the text, reaction to the text content, and using knowledge of grammatical structure that readers can use to understand the reading passages. For Metacognitive Reading Strategies, the following techniques; self-monitoring, correcting one's own previous understanding, setting goals, and evaluation are the techniques that can be used by the reader for comprehending the passages. Moreover, there are seven techniques such as using background knowledge, using context clues, re-read, read aloud, text structure adjusting reading rate and marking or taking note to remember that the readers can choose from Compensatory Reading Strategies group. In the same way Chhouk (2010, p. 8) reviewed the five strategies that suggested by Stephanie and Anne (2000) expressed the readers should use the following strategies for building on reading foundations, which are making connections, questioning, inferring, and determining, which is consistent with Steve (2003, p. 4) mentioned that reading strategies that the readers should use to comprehend the passage are questioning, predicting, inferring, connecting and evaluating. Overall, It is obvious that there are so many strategies provided to the readers in order to understand the reading passages.

For students of Faculty of Agriculture and Technology, Nakhon Phanom University Reading comprehension is a necessary skill that students need to master. Unfortunately, from the posttest of English proficiency project's score of 120 students in 2016 showed that the students' score is very diversified; the scores of 65 students were lower than the 50 percent of the total score whilst 35 students' scores were between 50-65 percent and 20 students' scores were higher than 65 percent (Thapankaew, 2016: 9-11). In 2017, Academic and Research Affair of Faculty of Agriculture and Technology reported that the students' scores from English Proficiency Test 2017 showed that the English reading comprehension scores of 35 students were between 45-50 percent, 47 students's scores were between 35-40 percent and 28 students's score were below 35 percent of the total score (Academic and Research Affair, 2017). This report revealed that the students' reading comprehension scored

kept decreasing lower and lower every year which is very worried and need to be mastered immediately. It is related to Kaya, (2015, p. 37) stated that reading is a part of daily lives. It is performed both for pleasure and information. Reading skills are important for the individuals since they foster comprehension in reading. If the students do not have knowledge of reading skills, they cannot be expected to be successful readers. Thus, they cannot achieve the level of comprehension required to pass exams in their own departments. For this reason, reading skills should be taught in universities for the students to be able to cope with comprehension problems. It is coherent with Finocchiaro, (1974) who stated that students who have good reading ability will progress in their careers and their further studies and the ability in English reading comprehension is a must because students need reading comprehension to be able to continually increase their knowledge. From those reasons and problems, it is very important to focus on developing English reading comprehension ability. In order to help the students to improve their reading comprehension, the researcher is interested in finding out what level of the students' English reading comprehension ability is, which strategies the students tend to use for reading comprehension and which strategies help students to improve their English reading comprehension ability.

### PURPOSES OF THE STUDY

The purposes of the research are as follows:

1. To study the level of English reading comprehension ability of the students from Faculty of Agriculture and Technology Nakhon Phanom University,
2. To investigate the reading strategies on English reading comprehension used by students from Faculty of Agriculture and Technology Nakhon Phanom University,
3. to analyze which strategies help students to improve their English reading comprehension ability.

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Based on the related literature review, the researcher had selected the strategies to use in this research are shown in the figure below.

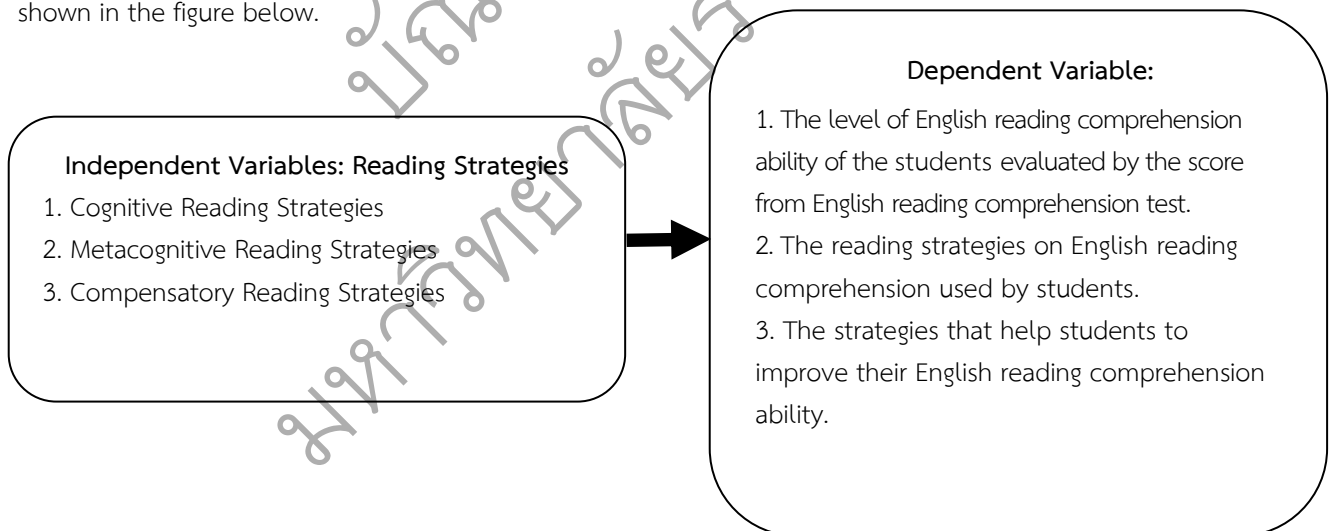


Figure 1 the conceptual framework showing the relationship among variable investigated in this research

## METHODOLOGY

### Population and Sample

The population of this research are 400 students from faculty of Agriculture and Technology, Nakhon Phanom University. The sample of this research was purposively selected, consisting of 103 students who joined English Proficiency Development Project from Faculty of Agriculture and Technology Nakhon Phanom University.

### Research Instruments

The research instruments of this research were English reading comprehension test, questionnaire and structured-interview question. The details of each instrument are as follows;

1. English reading comprehension test was used to measure English reading comprehension ability. The test is consisted of 50 question items. The test format was multiple-choice with four choices. Students had one hour to complete the test. The marking scores per a test item were one point for the correct answer, zero point for incorrect answer, no answer or more than one answers.

2. Questionnaire was a Likert rating scales questionnaire consisting of 19 question items; 8 questions items for cognitive reading strategies, 4 questions items for Metacognitive reading strategies and 7 questions items for compensatory reading strategies. It was used to investigate students' reading strategies while they were doing the test. The questionnaire was created in Thai to give students in order to avoid language barrier. The students were asked to complete the questionnaire immediately after reading comprehension test is over.

### Data Collection

The data was collected both qualitative and quantitative data by using reading comprehension test, questionnaire, and interview. There were 2 steps of data collecting. The details were as follows;

1. The reading comprehension test was given to the sample to do within one hour, in order to measure English reading comprehension ability

2. The sample were provided the questionnaire in order to investigate students' reading strategies while they were doing the test

### Data Analysis

Data from the English reading comprehension ability test were analyzed for percentage, mean and standard deviation in order to test dependent samples hypothesis. The frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation also were employed to analyze the data of the reading strategies on English reading comprehension used by 103 students who joined English Proficiency Development Project from Faculty of Agriculture and Technology Nakhon Phanom University and the strategies that can help students in reading comprehension.

## RESULTS

According to the data collected, the results of this research were as follows;

1. The students' English reading comprehension ability of 103 students from Faculty of Agriculture and Technology was 45.72 percent of the total score ( $\bar{x}$ =22.86). 57.28 percent of the students had the score lower than 50 percent of the scored while 32.03 percent got the score between 50-65 percent and another 10.69 percent got more than 65 percent of the total score as the table 1 showed.

Table 1 The students' English reading comprehension ability Level

Number of Students	Less than 50 percent	Between 50-65 percent	More than 65 percent	% of the total score	$\bar{x}$	S.D.
103 students	59 students 57.28 %	33 students 32.03%	11 students 10.69	45.72	22.86	7.20

2. The strategies which were the most used by the students were compensatory reading strategies 89.13 percent ( $\bar{x} = 3.21$ ), cognitive reading strategies 84.37 percent ( $\bar{x} = 3.11$ ), and metacognitive reading strategies 70.49 percent ( $\bar{x} = 2.26$ ) respectively. According to the details, the most often used strategy is finding main idea 100 percent ( $\bar{x} = 3.79$ ) follow by, marking or taking note to remember 97.67 percent ( $\bar{x} = 3.99$ ), while using background knowledge and using context clues were used 93.01 percent ( $\bar{x} = 3.54$ ) and ( $\bar{x} = 3.43$ ). 92.23 percent of the student also used setting goals ( $\bar{x} = 3.36$ ) and re-reading ( $\bar{x} = 2.98$ ) to comprehend the text and 91.46 percent of the student used translating strategy ( $\bar{x} = 3.44$ ) to understand the text. For other strategies that were not mentioned here are showed on Table 2.

Table 2 The strategies employed by the students

Items	Strategies	%	$\bar{x}$	S.D.
<b>Cognitive Reading Strategies:</b>		<b>84.37</b>	<b>3.11</b>	<b>1.35</b>
1	I translate word-for-word to understand the text.	91.46	3.44	1.35
2	I often summarize the main idea.	85.24	3.30	1.48
3	I refer the information from the context.	76.70	2.55	1.47
4	I predict about what will come next.	87.57	3.47	1.41
5	I skim the text quickly to find the main idea.	100.00	3.79	1.12
6	I ask the question about the text to myself.	82.14	3.16	1.48
7	I react to the text content.	75.15	2.43	1.17
8	I use knowledge of grammatical structure.	76.70	2.73	1.29
<b>Metacognitive Reading Strategies:</b>		<b>70.49</b>	<b>2.26</b>	<b>1.17</b>
9	I monitor myself to check my understanding.	54.17	1.71	0.99
10	I always correct my own previous understanding.	65.83	1.93	1.08
11	I read at the questions to set the goal.	92.23	3.36	1.40
12	I make a conclusion and evaluate the text I read.	69.71	2.06	1.20
<b>Compensatory Reading Strategies:</b>		<b>89.13</b>	<b>3.21</b>	<b>1.29</b>
13	I link the text to the background knowledge.	93.01	3.54	1.39
14	I always use context clues to understand the text.	93.01	3.43	1.29
15	I re-read the text several times.	92.23	2.98	1.17

Table 2

Items	Strategies	%	$\bar{x}$	S.D.
16	I read aloud to comprehend the text.	77.48	2.71	1.35
17	I pay attention to how the text is organized.	85.24	3.00	1.33
18	I take notes or underline the important points.	97.67	3.99	1.18
19	I read the texts slowly to comprehend them.	85.24	2.85	1.32

3. From the comparison the strategies used by the students from 3 groups can be concluded that the strategies that can help students in reading comprehension were finding the main idea, marking or taking note, using background knowledge, using context clues, re-reading, setting goals, making a prediction, summarizing, using text structure, questioning about the text, referencing, using grammatical structure, and reaction to the text, respectively, as the information showed on Table 3

Table 3 The strategies used by the students from each group

Items	Strategies	Reading score less than 50%			Reading score between 50 – 65 %			Reading score more than 65%			Overall %
		%	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	%	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	%	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	
<b>Cognitive Reading Strategies:</b>		<b>75.08</b>	<b>2.64</b>	<b>1.04</b>	<b>99.05</b>	<b>3.55</b>	<b>0.88</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>4.25</b>	<b>0.25</b>	<b>88.86</b>
1	Translating	100	4.44	0.60	100	2.45	0.51	20	1.00	0.00	73.33
2	Summarizing	74.24	2.69	1.50	100	3.82	0.98	100	5.00	0.00	91.41
3	Referencing	59.32	1.49	0.50	100	3.64	1.03	100	5.00	0.00	86.44
4	Making a prediction	78.31	2.98	1.49	100	3.82	0.98	100	5.00	0.00	92.77
5	Finding main idea	100	3.44	1.19	100	4.00	0.79	100	5.00	0.00	100
6	Questioning about the text	68.81	2.36	1.39	100	4.06	0.75	100	4.73	0.47	89.60
7	Reaction to the text	60.68	1.88	0.81	92.73	2.94	1.17	100	3.82	0.98	84.47
8	Using grammatical structure	59.32	1.86	0.82	100	3.70	0.81	100	4.45	0.52	86.44
<b>Metacognitive Reading Strategies:</b>		<b>49.83</b>	<b>1.63</b>	<b>0.59</b>	<b>97.58</b>	<b>2.67</b>	<b>0.82</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>4.43</b>	<b>0.33</b>	<b>82.47</b>
9	Self-monitoring	20	1.00	0.00	100	2.30	0.47	100	3.73	0.79	73.33
10	Correcting previous understanding	45.76	1.32	0.47	90.30	2.24	0.66	100	4.27	0.79	78.69
11	Setting goals	86.44	2.86	1.40	100	3.70	1.10	100	5.00	0.00	95.48
12	Evaluation	47.12	1.34	0.48	100	2.45	0.75	100	4.73	0.47	82.37
<b>Compensatory Reading Strategies:</b>		<b>87.02</b>	<b>3.12</b>	<b>1.17</b>	<b>96.19</b>	<b>3.39</b>	<b>0.91</b>	<b>79.22</b>	<b>3.48</b>	<b>0.33</b>	<b>87.48</b>
13	Using background knowledge	87.80	2.90	1.35	100	4.21	0.96	100	5.00	0.00	95.93

Table 3

Items	Strategies	Reading score less than 50%			Reading score between 50 – 65 %			Reading score more than 65%			Overall %
		%	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	%	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	%	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	
14	Using context clues	87.80	2.75	1.18	100	4.12	0.74	100	5.00	0.00	95.93
15	Re-reading	86.44	2.98	1.37	100	3.00	0.97	100	2.91	0.30	95.48
16	Reading aloud	86.44	3.31	1.33	80.61	2.21	0.82	20	1.00	0.00	62.35
17	Using text structure	74.24	2.22	1.15	100	4.00	0.75	100	4.18	0.40	91.41
18	Marking or taking note	100	4.68	0.47	92.73	2.82	1.13	100	3.82	1.17	97.58
19	Adjusting reading rate	86.44	2.98	1.37	100	3.18	0.98	34.55	1.18	0.40	73.66

## CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

According to the purposes of the research, the result was concluded and discussed in the following issues as follows;

### 1. The students' English reading comprehension ability

The students' English reading comprehension ability of 103 students from Faculty of Agriculture and Technology was 45.72 percent of the total score ( $\bar{x}$  = 22.86). This is considered poor, which is consistent with the previous research on the investigation of English reading comprehension ability constructed by Thearntanachock (1999, pp.39-40) with the second-year students at Payap University, Chiangmai Province, Thailand stated that if student' reading comprehension ability did not reach 80 percent of the total score, a long with Jitjinda (2015, pp. 218-228) stated that who develop English reading comprehension ability using SCAFFOLDING activities of Prathomsuksa six students at at Ban Seio School, Nong Khai revealed that students who did not reach 70 percent of the criterion are assumed that they have poor reading comprehension ability. This is also confirmed with Thapankaew (2017, pp. 9-11) who has revealed that in academic year 2017 the students' English reading comprehension ability of students from Faculty of Agriculture and Technology was below 50 percent, and there are more than 50 percent of the students can not reach 50 percent of English reading comprehension test, which can be considered as poor reading comprehension ability. Hence, the result of English reading comprehension ability test was low, English lecture should be aware of developing English reading comprehension ability for the students.

### 2. The strategies used by the students

According to the investigation of English reading comprehension strategies used by the students from faculty of Agriculture and Technology found that the most used strategy were compensatory reading strategies 89.13 percent ( $\bar{x}$  = 3.21), cognitive reading strategies 84.37 percent ( $\bar{x}$  = 3.11), and metacognitive reading strategies 70.49 percent ( $\bar{x}$  = 2.26) respectively. The finding is consistent with Tanthanis (2016, pp. 110-112) who conducted the research about a study on English reading comprehension strategies of First-Year college students of Thammasat University (Lampang Campus) and the finding was first-year college students used the compensatory reading strategy more frequently than any other strategies and the cognitive reading strategy was the least

frequently used strategy. This is also agreed with Anderson (1999) stated that the compensatory reading strategy is the strategy that the reader mostly used to solve the reading problems by using variety of compensatory reading strategy to comprehend the text.

For the compensatory reading strategy, the most frequent used strategy was note taking 97.67 percent, following by using background knowledge and using context clue 93.01 percent and re-reading 92.23, respectively. It is agreed with Boyle (2001, pp. 133-141) who studied the using of note taking strategy to develop comprehension level of the student, the finding found that post using obtained the higher post-comprehension level than pre-comprehension level significantly different at the .01 level. Likewise, Boch & Piolat (2005, pp. 110-111) who found that note taking strategy effected to the French students' comprehension, which is along with Carrell (2007, p. 5) who used note taking strategy to develop listening comprehension ability in America, the result was the note taking strategies significantly helped student to be more comprehensive at the .01 level. Moreover, Jacobs (2008, p. 120) has used note taking strategy to develop English Reading comprehension skill and found that the students who used note taking strategies along with reading got higher score. However, Anderson (1999) claimed that it is imposible for the readers to use only one sentence to understand the text they were reading, so the reader need to use the variety of strategies to help themselves understanding the text. Nevertheless, the frequent used strategies in compensatory reading strategy section in this research is quite different from the findings of Tanthanis (2016, pp. 110-112) which was adjusting reading rate, marking or taking note, and using background knowledge, respectively

For the cognitive reading strategies, which was the second frequent used by the student, the most frequent used strategy was identifying main idea 100 percent, following by translating 91.46 percent, predicting 87.57 percent, summarizing 85.24 percent and questioning 82.14 percent, respectively. It is consistent with Tanthanis (Tanthanis, 2016) which claimed that the translating was the most frequent used strategy. However, the cognitive reading strategies was the least used on that research.

For the metacognitive reading strategies which is the least used strategy, setting the goal was the most used strategy which is different from Tanthanis (Tanthanis, 2016) who found that Self-monitoring was the most frequent used, following by setting goals, correcting previous understanding, and evaluation, respectively. From this section, it clearly showed that most of the students was not familiar to metacognitive reading strategies hence it was the least employed.

### 3. The strategies contributing to reading comprehension

According to the comparison the strategies used by the students between 3 groups can be concluded that the strategies helping students in reading comprehension were finding the main idea, marking or taking note, using background knowledge, using context clues, re-reading, setting goals, making a prediction, summarizing, using text structure, questioning about the text, referencing, using grammatical structure, and reaction to the text, respectively which is coherent with Chhouk (2010, p. 2) found that identifying main idea and summarizing contributed reading comprehension. Similarly to Tanthanis (2016, p. 109) who noted that students used the compensatory reading strategy that consisted of marking or taking note, using background knowledge, using context clues, re-reading strategies more frequently than any other strategies. As well as Suyitno (2015) who studied about Cognitive Strategies Use in Reading Comprehension and its Contributions to Students' Achievement and found that students used various cognitive strategies in understanding text reading. The results of the correlation analysis showed that the use of cognitive strategy has a positive or negative contribution to the results of reading comprehension depending on the accuracy of the selection strategy in accordance with the text he read. According to Sitthiprom, (2012, p. 544) who researched about the development of English reading comprehension ability of grade 11 students using metacognitive strategies stated that the students' English reading comprehension ability after learning with metacognitive

strategies was found significantly higher than before with significance at the .05 level. And the students' attitude towards teaching English reading comprehension using metacognitive strategies was at a good level, however from the finding of this research showed that students rarely used metacognitive reading strategies to contribute their reading comprehension. This can be concluded that metacognitive strategies is a must for the student in order to raise the level of English reading comprehension of the students.

The findings of the research presented the reading strategies used by the students from faculty of Agriculture and Technology, Nakhon Phanom University. The results revealed the reading comprehension ability of the students from students from faculty of Agriculture and Technology, Nakhon Phanom University as well as the most employed strategies used by the students and the strategies that can help students in English reading comprehension. Although the results of the studies were completely shown, the limitation of the study was important to be discussed. The participants of this study were students from faculty of Agriculture and Technology, Nakhon Phanom University. As English is the most widely used for higher education in Thailand, students of other fields of study should be included to investigate reading comprehension strategies and prepare reading strategy instructions. Reading comprehension is the main skill in learning. Students require the master their strategies to help them enhance reading skills.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

1. This research focused on student perceptions of problems in reading comprehension it may not report the true problems that the students encountered, so it is recommended that future research should diagnose the students' reading comprehension problems with the direct assessment.

2. This research was conducted to survey student's reading comprehension ability by using a questionnaire and diagnostic test. Therefore, an in-depth investigation can be done by using interview to determine the area of problems students encountered.

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