

# Exploring EFL Students' Metacognitive Strategies in Speaking Class: An Indonesian Context

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**Keywords:** Metacognitive Strategies, Speaking Skills, Indonesian Context, EFL Second Semester Students.

**Abstract:** The study is intended to investigate metacognitive strategies used by English as Foreign Language (EFL) students in their Speaking class in the Indonesian context. Specifically, this study aims at revealing the metacognitive strategies used by the EFL Students and the impacts of using those strategies related to the students' improvement in their speaking ability. The study is a case study in which the data are collected through observations, questionnaires, and documents. It involves fifteen EFL students at the second semester in a State Islamic University in Indonesia. The findings reveal two points. First, using Oxford's (1990) metacognitive strategies categories, the EFL students utilized the strategies of overviewing and linking with their prior knowledge, paying attention, organizing, delaying the speech to focus on listening, identifying the purpose of a language task, seeking practice opportunities, self-monitoring, and self-evaluating during learning speaking class. Second, the speaking scores of the EFL students who applied metacognitive strategies are higher (above 80) than those who did not. These findings indicate that metacognitive strategies help students learn better. Practically, these results contribute a new insight into Teaching English as Foreign Language (TEFL) in Indonesian context in which the metacognitive strategies are a new issue.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Spoken English is used in almost every sector of life. It is stated by Yang (2014), "English is fast becoming the international language of many fields, including politics, business, and education." For some activities in a foreign language classroom, mastering spoken English is needed to support students in understanding what teachers said, to deliver presentations, to finish other tasks, and to interact with new native English friends. Therefore, getting involved in a speaking activity for students in a foreign language class is necessary.

However, for some students, it is not easy to get involved actively in their classrooms. A number of researchers stated that several reasons influenced students to not participate in a speaking activity are related to their anxiety, such as the feeling of being afraid in public and shyness, fear of negative evaluation and speaking inaccurately (Zhiping and Paramasivam, 2013).

To cope with the problems in their speaking, students need to apply the appropriate learning strategies to make their learning speaking easier. It is

stated, "Learners use learning strategies in order to learn something more successfully" (Lee, 2010).

The present study is focused on metacognitive strategies related to English as Foreign Language speaking class at the university level. From several learning strategies developed by the experts, metacognitive strategies are chosen because they help learners to know what to do when they face difficulties (Ratebi and Amirian, 2013). Besides, the strategies help them to arrange and plan their language learning efficiently and effectively (Oxford, 1990).

Specifically, this study attempts to describe a) the types of metacognitive strategies commonly applied by EFL students in their speaking class. Furthermore, this study also tries to reveal b) the impacts of using those strategies related to the students' improvement in their speaking ability.

This study is focused on the metacognitive strategies developed by Rebecca Oxford (1990) to describe how students in a speaking class managed and regulated their learning process in EFL context.

## 2 METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES IN SPEAKING CLASS

The word 'strategy,' comes from Greek term *strategia* meaning generalship or the art of war. It relates to the word *tactics*, which are tools to achieve the success of strategies (Oxford, 1990).

According to Rubin (1975) cited by Griffiths (2004), language learning strategies are "the techniques or devices which a learner may use to acquire knowledge." Moreover, O'Malley and Chamot (1990) cited by Zare (2012) also stated that learning strategies are "special thoughts or deeds that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information."

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Experts classified language learning strategies into different criteria based on their taxonomies of strategies based on their research findings by implementing different methods of data collection (Zare, 2012). For example, Oxford (1990) classified the learning strategies into two broad categories: direct strategies and indirect strategies. Direct strategies help learners to learn target language directly. On the other hand, indirect strategies support and manage language learning without contributing the target language directly.

Specifically, Oxford (1990) categorized metacognitive strategies into three sets: *Centering Learning - Arranging and Planning Learning* and *Evaluating Learning*. These three strategies have eleven branches that can be practiced by students in their learning process: *Overviewing and Linking with Prior Knowledge, Paying Attention, Delaying Speech Production to Focus on Listening, Finding Out about Language Learning, Organizing, Setting Goals and Objectives, Identifying the Purpose of a Language Task, Planning for a Language Task, Seeking Practice Opportunities, Self-Monitoring, and Self-Evaluating*.

## 3 METHODS

This study used qualitative research method in order to explore metacognitive strategies used by students in their speaking class. Specifically, the present study can be said as a case study for two reasons. First, the research site and participants are limited. They were fifteen selected students who can give more information about metacognitive strategies they used in learning speaking. The second reason is its objective that is to "explore and investigate contemporary real-life phenomenon through detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions, and their relationships" (Zainal, 2007:1-2). This study is aimed to investigate how EFL students regulate their learning process in speaking class.

In conducting this study, the researcher collected the data from observations, questionnaires, and documents. It is in accordance with Fraenkel (2009) that stated, "There are three techniques commonly used by qualitative researchers: observation, interviewing, and document analysis." For analyzing the data, the researcher used four steps of qualitative data analysis such as organizing and preparing the data, reading through all the data, beginning the detailed analysis and interpreting the data like what stated by Creswell (2012).

## 4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The purposes of this study were to describe the kinds of metacognitive strategies commonly applied by students in speaking class and the impacts of using those strategies related to the students' improvement in their speaking ability. The following section is the detailed analysis of the two findings of this study.

### 4.1 Students' Metacognitive Strategies

To know the strategies commonly used by students in their speaking class, the researcher used the data from classroom observation and questionnaires as follows.

Table 1: Data from Observation about Metacognitive Strategies Used by Students in the Classroom.

Strategies used	How the Strategies Applied
Centering Learning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Overviewing Linking and with already known material:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Answering the question given by the lecturer,</li> <li>Developing speaking based on experience.</li> </ul> </li> <li><i>Paying Attention:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using directed attention (concentration) to the lecturer's explanation.</li> <li>Using selective attention to the correct word order, vocabulary, and pronunciation when answering the question from the lecturer.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
Arranging and Planning Learning	<i>Organizing:</i> Having a notebook.

Table 2: Data from Questionnaires about Metacognitive Strategies frequently used by Students.

Strategies Used	Number of Students
<i>Seeking Practice Opportunities</i>	<b>4 Students</b>
<i>Paying Attention</i>	<b>3 Students</b>
<i>Self-monitoring</i>	<b>3 Students</b>
<i>Delaying Speech to focus on Listening</i>	<b>2 Students</b>
<i>Overviewing and Linking with Already Known Material</i>	<b>1 Student</b>
<i>Identifying the Purpose of a Language Task</i>	<b>1 Student</b>
<i>Self-evaluating</i>	<b>1 Student</b>

After analyzing the data from classroom observations and questionnaires, it is revealed that the students reported commonly used eight of the eleven metacognitive strategies developed by Oxford (1990) in their speaking class.

The strategies used are *Overviewing and linking with the already known material*, *Paying attention*, *Organizing*, *Delaying speech to focus on listening*, *Identifying the purpose of a language task*, *Seeking practice opportunities*, *Self-monitoring*, and *Self-evaluating*. Then, the three rarely used strategies are *Finding out about language learning*, *Setting goals*

and *objectives*, and *Planning a language task*. Meanwhile, if all the eleven strategies were applied, the students' speaking proficiency may be higher. As what had been stated by Rahimi & Katal (2012) that metacognitive strategies help students to gain higher achievement and better learning outcome in both face to face and virtual learning environments.

## 4.2 The Impacts of Using Metacognitive Strategies on EFL Students' Speaking Ability

To analyze the impact of applying certain strategies to students' speaking ability, the present study used the data from questionnaires and analyzing the document. The document was students' achievement records in speaking class from several meetings in average.

Table 3: Strategies Used by Students and Their Speaking Achievements.

Students	Strategies Used	Scores
Student 1	<i>Self-monitoring</i>	<b>A</b>
Student 2	<i>Overviewing and linking with already known material</i>	<b>B</b>
Student 3	<i>Paying attention</i>	<b>A</b>
Student 4	<i>Self-monitoring</i>	<b>A</b>
Student 5	<i>Seeking practice opportunities</i>	<b>A</b>
Student 6	<i>Seeking practice opportunities</i>	<b>A</b>
Student 7	<i>Delaying speech to focus on listening</i>	<b>A</b>
Student 8	<i>Delaying speech to focus on listening</i>	<b>A</b>
Student 9	<i>Seeking practice opportunities</i>	<b>A</b>
Student 10	<i>Identifying the purpose of a language task</i>	<b>B</b>
Student 11	<i>Self-evaluating</i>	<b>A</b>
Student 12	<i>Paying attention</i>	<b>A</b>
Student 13	<i>Self-monitoring</i>	<b>A</b>
Student 14	<i>Paying attention</i>	<b>A</b>
Student 15	<i>Seeking practice opportunities</i>	<b>A</b>

The data from Table 3 showed, most students who used metacognitive strategies in their learning got scores A, which means more or at least got 80. There are only two students who got score B or less than 80.

This result is in accordance with Derakhshan et al. (2016) that stated, "Metacognitive strategies enable students to achieve high proficiency in speaking skill

that has the primary goal to make learners able to use English in communication accurately and fluently."

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this study found that from the eleven metacognitive strategies developed by Rebecca Oxford (1990), there are eight metacognitive strategies commonly applied by the students in their speaking class. Later, it also can be concluded that metacognitive strategies can be said as the right strategies need to be applied by learners to enhance their speaking skills since the data about their achievement record in speaking class showed most students with these strategies got the high scores (more than 80).

Therefore, it is essential for students to regulate and manage their learning process by applying metacognitive strategies to achieve the better result in speaking skill and to overcome their difficulties in learning.

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