

Investigating Metacognitive, Affective , and Social strategies on Students' speaking Proficiency

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the levels and impacts of indirect learning strategies—metacognitive, affective, and social—on students' speaking proficiency, based on Rebecca Oxford's theory. The research employs a descriptive qualitative design, utilizing a combination of closed-ended questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and documentation to gather data from 15 third-semester students. The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) is used to assess the levels of strategy use, while interviews provide deeper insights into the strategies' impacts on speaking proficiency. To verify the accuracy of the data, the study also applies triangulation methods. The results reveal that the majority of students exhibit high levels of metacognitive, affective, and social strategy use, which positively correlate with improvements in speaking proficiency. Specifically, students who demonstrated high levels of strategy use showed enhanced pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, confidence, and emotional regulation, leading to better speaking outcomes. In contrast, students with lower levels of strategy use faced challenges in speaking proficiency, particularly due to anxiety and low self-confidence.

Keyword: *social strategies; affective strategies; metacognitive strategies; speaking proficiency,*

Introduction

There are five essential skills that will be crucial in 2030: networking security, personal communication, UX design, digital marketing, and technology adaptation. Among these five skills, communication is particularly important, and speaking is a key component that must be well-developed (Gelen & Tozluoglu, 2021). Communication is a primary requirement in the face of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, making it essential for students to cultivate strong communication skills (James et al., 2019).

Speaking is often used as an indicator of language learners' success in mastering English. Therefore, individuals who are competent in speaking are generally considered proficient in English (Anita et al., 2023). In reality, speaking is a complex and challenging skill to master because it involves not only vocabulary, but also pronunciation and grammar (Kehing & Yunus, 2021). English majors often perceive speaking as a difficult skill, which leads to several factors affecting their confidence, such as shyness, doubt, and fear of making mistakes while communicating (Ofiaz, 2019). This issue is highlighted in the researchers' investigation of the election interviews for the English Students' Association at UIN SMH Banten. The findings show that 39% of students are fluent in communication, while 61% are less fluent. According to these students, their lack of confidence, insufficient vocabulary, and failure to utilize appropriate learning strategies are contributing factors. Hence, one of the key characteristics that

significantly influence students' achievement is their learning strategies (Ayed Al-Khaza'le, 2019).

Learning strategies adopted by students are highly varied depending on their different behaviors (Anggarista & Wahyudin, 2022). A language learning strategy refers to specific actions that students undertake to enhance their learning, foster autonomy, and improve their language skills, ultimately making the learning process more enjoyable and effective (Adan & Hashim, 2021). These strategies are essential for improving speaking proficiency, as they encourage active and independent engagement with language learning. The use of metacognitive, affective, and social strategies has been shown to help students enhance their speaking abilities by promoting self-awareness, emotional regulation, and social interaction in learning contexts (Rebecca L. Oxford, 1990).

Some research on the growing importance of learning strategies in English has been conducted by many researchers. Taheri et al. (2020), Habók & Magyar (2018), and Alqarni (2023) have analyzed language learning strategies. The findings revealed that students used metacognitive strategies first, followed by compensation, cognitive, affective, social, and memory strategies. Most of their studies show that language learning strategies have had a positive impact on students' academic progress. More specific studies have evidenced that students show significant differences in using the overall learning strategies (Iqra Ameer et al., 2023). These findings suggest that more successful language learners tend to use more elaborate strategies (Gavriilidou & Petrogiannis, 2015).

However, current studies mostly focus on direct and indirect strategies based on Rebecca Oxford's theory, which investigates memory, compensation, cognitive, affective, social, and non-cognitive strategies. This indicates that while indirect strategies are gaining attention, research on their effectiveness remains limited, particularly in terms of their impact on speaking proficiency. Therefore, the authors are interested in conducting further research that differs from previous studies. This study will focus on investigating the level of use and the impact of indirect strategies—specifically metacognitive, affective, and social strategies—on speaking proficiency. These three strategies are particularly suitable for application to student speaking proficiency through activities such as discussions with peers and teachers, presentations inside and outside the classroom, and communication learning in the community. In order to achieve the objectives of this research, the following two research questions have been formulated:

1. What are the levels of students' proficiency in metacognitive, affective, and social strategies as applied to speaking?
2. What are the impacts of metacognitive, affective, and social strategies on students' speaking proficiency?

Method

This research employs a descriptive qualitative design aimed at examining individuals or groups within social or interpersonal contexts. The data will be collected from 15 third-semester students in the English Education program at UIN Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten, all of whom have participated in interviews for managerial positions in the English Education Student Association. To collect the data systematically and efficiently, a combination of closed-ended questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and documentation will be utilized (Suharsimi, 2019). The Strategy

Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) version 0.7, developed by Oxford, will be used as the instrument to assess students' levels of metacognitive, affective, and social learning strategies. The SILL consists of 15 items categorized into three strategy types: metacognitive (items 1–5), affective (items 6–10), and social (items 11–15). Responses are rated on a scale from 1 (never) to 5 (always) (Zou & Lertlit, 2022).

Table 1. The Language Learning Strategies Level

Level	Interpretation	Score
High	Always	4.5 – 5.0
	Often	3.4 – 4.4
Medium	Sometimes	2.5 – 3.4
Low	Seldom	1.5 – 2.4
	Never	1.0– 1.4

In addition, semi-structured interviews will serve as a secondary instrument for exploring how students' learning strategies affect their speaking proficiency. Documentation will also be used to support the data's reliability and validity. To ensure the findings are robust, triangulation will integrate multiple data sources and methods, allowing for verification and cross-checking of the results (Abdussamad, 2021). Finally, the data analysis will follow the framework proposed by Miles and Huberman, which involves data reduction, display, and conclusion verification (Sugiyono, 2019).

Results

The following table presents the results of the students' self-reported use of language learning strategies, specifically metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. The data present the mean scores for each strategy, along with the corresponding proficiency levels, categorized as high, medium, and low.

Table 2. The Level of Students' Language Learning Strategies

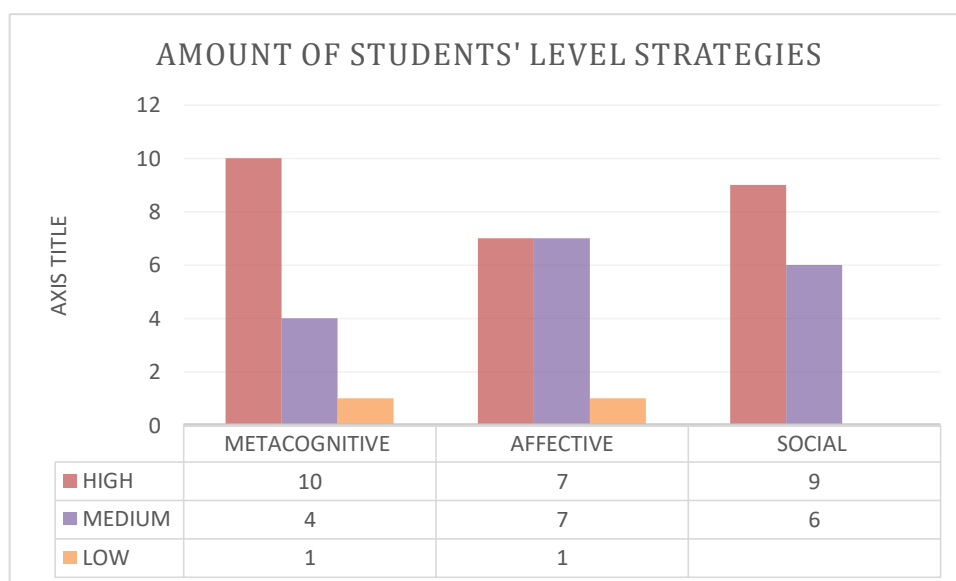
<i>Students</i>	<i>Metacognitive strategies</i>		<i>Affective strategies</i>		<i>Social Strategies</i>	
	Mean	Level	Mean	Level	Mean	Level
<i>S1</i>	3,4	High	3,8	High	2,8	Medium
<i>S2</i>	4,2	High	4	High	4,4	High
<i>S3</i>	3	Medium	2,8	Medium	3,4	High
<i>S4</i>	2,8	Medium	2,8	Medium	3	Medium
<i>S5</i>	3,8	High	3,4	High	4,6	High
<i>S6</i>	3,4	High	3,2	Medium	3,6	High
<i>S7</i>	4	High	3,4	High	4,4	High
<i>S8</i>	4,4	High	4,2	High	4,6	High

<i>S9</i>	2,8	Medium	3	Medium	2,8	Medium
<i>S10</i>	4	High	2,6	Medium	4,2	High
<i>S11</i>	3,8	High	3	Medium	2,8	Medium
<i>S12</i>	2,4	Low	1,8	Low	3,4	High
<i>S13</i>	3,4	High	3,4	High	3,2	Medium
<i>S14</i>	3	Medium	3	Medium	2,6	Medium
<i>S15</i>	4,8	High	4,2	High	5	High

As seen in the table, the students' use of metacognitive strategies shows a wide range, with most students falling into the "high" category. Similarly, affective strategies are predominantly classified as "high," although a few students demonstrate medium or low levels. Social strategies also display a generally high level of use, with some students reporting medium levels. This variation in strategy use highlights the diversity in students' learning approaches and provides a basis for further analysis regarding the impact of these strategies on speaking proficiency.

To provide a clearer visualization of the distribution of students' proficiency levels in metacognitive, affective, and social strategies, the following chart illustrates the number of students in each proficiency level (high, medium, and low) for each strategy. This chart enables a more accessible comparison of the levels across the three strategy categories, making it easier to observe trends and patterns in the data.

Table 3. The chart of Students' level



The chart above indicates that 10 students exhibit high levels of metacognitive strategies, 4 students demonstrate medium levels, and 1 student shows a low level. Regarding affective strategies, the number of students at high and medium levels is identical, with 7 students in each category, while 1 student falls into the low-level category. In contrast, no students demonstrate low-level social strategies. Instead, 9 students show medium-level social strategies, while 6 students exhibit high-level strategies.

In addition to the data obtained from the questionnaire, we conducted semi-structured interviews with five students—two from the high-level category, two from

the medium-level category, and one from the low-level category—to gain deeper insights into the impact of metacognitive, affective, and social strategies on their speaking proficiency. The following section presents the key themes that emerged from the interviews, categorized according to the strategies discussed by the students. These findings provide a more detailed understanding of how each strategy influences their speaking ability and overall language learning process.

Table 4. Interview Results on the Impact of Metacognitive, Affective, and Social Strategies on Speaking Proficiency

Student	Level	Metacognitive	Affective	Social
S2	High	Improved understanding, pronunciation, vocabulary, and speaking grades.	Helped manage anxiety, boost confidence, and overcome fear (90% control over anxiety).	Collaborative discussions with classmates for motivation and learning.
S5	High	Finding effective study environments, improved speaking ability and speaking achievement.	Helped manage emotions, reduce nervousness, and build confidence in front of others.	Group study and collaborative learning for improved speaking skills.
S4	Medium	Medium use, hindering optimal speaking development.	Struggles with managing anxiety, but improvement seen in speaking performance.	Consistent application of social strategies through peer interaction has contributed to improvement.
S9	Medium	Infrequent use, causing slow improvement in speaking, but positive effects on listening and vocabulary.	Struggles to fully control nervousness, but some progress in managing emotions.	Benefits from peer collaboration and discussions, still refining strategies.
S12	Low	Rare use, no significant impact on speaking ability.	Weak, struggles to manage anxiety, affecting fluency and confidence.	Social strategies are most effective for improving speaking, especially through peer collaboration.

Students in the **high** category show more significant improvements in their speaking skills. Those in the **medium** category experience more limited progress, although they report improvements in each strategy. Students in the **low** category state that they have

not yet felt the maximum impact, both in terms of mastering the material and effectively applying the strategies.

Discussion

This study aims to investigate the levels of metacognitive, affective, and social strategies employed by students, as well as explore the impact of these strategies on their speaking proficiency. The data show a significant correlation between the level of strategy use and students' speaking proficiency, with clear differences seen across proficiency levels (high, medium, and low). The following analysis discusses the key findings and their implications.

Metacognitive Strategies

The findings indicate that the majority of students (S1, S2, S5, S6, S7, S8, S10, S11, S13, and S14) exhibit high levels of metacognitive strategy use, with mean scores above 3.4. These students demonstrate effective engagement in actively monitoring and regulating their learning processes, which is crucial for academic success. The positive impacts of high metacognitive strategy use are evident in their speaking performance, as these students show improvements in pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary, which contribute to achieving high speaking scores. This aligns with previous research, which suggests that metacognitive strategies significantly and powerfully influence students' academic achievement (Gumartifa et al., 2020). Therefore, these strategies of coordinating the learning process assist students in orchestrating their mental abilities so that they can efficiently plan, focus, and appraise their proficiency in speaking.

Students such as S3, S4, S9, and S14, who scored at a medium level, and S12, who scored low on metacognitive strategies, may require additional support to develop self-regulation techniques that can enhance their learning experience. The students with medium and low scores have shown limited improvement in their speaking proficiency. Therefore, these students need to strengthen their use of learning strategies, including planning, monitoring, and evaluating their learning process, which could lead to better language outcomes.

Affective Strategies

The majority of students with high scores in affective strategies (S1, S2, S5, S7, S8, and S15) demonstrate effective management of emotions, which facilitates greater confidence and motivation. This is relevant to previous research: affective effects refer to a wide range of emotional states and psychological encounters that influence the cognition and behavior of a particular person (Chen, 2024). Students with high levels of affective strategies report that these strategies help them control nervousness and maintain a positive attitude towards learning, which significantly improves their speaking proficiency. In contrast, students with medium scores on affective strategies (S3, S4, S6, S9, S10, S11, and S14) report that moderate self-confidence and nervousness affect them. Meanwhile, the student with a low score (S12) experiences the opposite effect, as high self-confidence hinders their speaking proficiency. These findings are consistent with earlier research, which indicates that affective components encompass both positive and negative impacts (Kiruthiga & Christopher, 2022).

For students with lower affective strategy scores, it is essential to incorporate interventions that focus on building emotional resilience and confidence, which may improve their speaking proficiency and help them cope with anxiety. Training in self-

regulation of emotions, such as mindfulness techniques or positive reinforcement, could be effective in enhancing their affective strategy use and overall academic performance.

Social Strategies

Social strategies, which involve interaction and collaboration with peers, also significantly impact student learning. Students with high (S2, S3, S5, S6, S7, S8, S10, S12, and S15) and medium (S1, S4, S9, S11, S13, and S14) levels of social strategy use reported positive experiences related to their learning environments. These students emphasize the importance of peer discussions, collaborative work, and mutual support in enhancing their understanding and skills. This finding aligns with research on collaborative learning, which has shown that social interactions can promote deeper learning and greater engagement (Johnson & Johnson, 1999).

High-level social strategy users tended to benefit most from their learning environments, suggesting that they actively seek help and engage in collaborative activities. These interactions likely provided them with both cognitive and emotional support, which contribute to their overall academic success. However, students with lower social strategy scores may not fully utilize the benefits of peer support, potentially leading to a more isolated learning experience.

Conclusion

The conclusion of this study shows that students' use of social, affective, and metacognitive strategies has a significant impact on their speaking ability. The research findings revealed clear differences in the implementation of the three strategies, which affected both students' academic achievement and emotional health during the learning process. Students who effectively apply metacognitive strategies show improvements in their speaking abilities, especially in terms of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. However, students with medium and low scores may require additional support in developing self-regulation skills to improve their speaking skills.

Affective strategies also prove to be relevant, with high-scoring students being able to manage their emotions well, which in turn increases motivation and self-confidence. On the other hand, low-scoring students are likely to experience difficulties in building self-confidence, which impedes speaking fluency. Students with medium scores suffer from moderate levels of anxiety and self-confidence.

Lastly, the use of social strategies, which involve communication and interaction with others, also plays an important role in supporting students' speaking proficiency. The findings emphasize the importance of integrating various learning strategies to support students' overall speaking development, as well as paying special attention to students with lower levels of anxiety and confidence.

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