Metacognitive Strategies Employed by Australian Award Scholarship (AAS) Awardees from Aceh in Preparing for the IELTS Test

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Article Info	Abstract
	This study investigates how the Australian Award Scholarship (AAS) Awardees in Aceh used metacognitive strategies in preparing for the IELTS test. This research mixed quantitative and qualitative designs to gather the data. In doing so, the researchers collected the data by distributing SILL questionnaires which were adopted from Oxford (1989), observing the class activities, and doing semi-structured interviews. Meanwhile, the participants in this research are those who passed the IELTS test and got an AAS scholarship from 2022 to 2024. It involved 38 awardees which were chosen by using a convenience sampling technique in which the researchers distributed the questionnaires to all of AAS awardees as much as possible. The data from the questionnaire were analysed by using statistical procedures and the data from the interview and observation were analysed by using qualitative data analysis procedures namely data condensation, data analysis and conclusion drawing. The results indicated that students usually used metacognitive strategy (the average of planning, monitoring and evaluating phase is respectively 4.19, 4.19, and 3.94). It was also supported by the observation during the IELST learning activities and the interview result that the participants demonstrated high engagement in planning their study schedules, setting clear goals, and selecting appropriate learning resources. This research highlighted the importance of planning in learning and monitoring the learning progress. It also highlighted the need for an evaluation to determine the success of learning, especially in language test preparation such IELTS test. However, this research has limitations in that it only covered a limited area which limits the generalization of the findings. Therefore, it suggests future research in exploring the effectiveness of metacognitive strategies in broader communities.

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INTRODUCTION

The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is a standardized test to measure English proficiency (Hoang & Hamid, 2017). In Indonesia, an acceptable IELTS score is required not only for university entrance or immigration but also for obtaining sponsorship to study abroad. IELTS test presents unique challenges because it not only measures the students' language skills in English, but also time management and self-emotion control. Unlike another language test, the IELTS test requires more systematic and extensive preparation to acquire the targeted skill in a specific time. Learners have to face the pressure to do their best performance during the test (Vandergrift & Tafaghodtari, 2010).

However, for many students who live in non-English speaking countries, reaching high IELTS scores is not easy. Many students failed to achieve their IELTS targeted scores to get scholarships (Bania, 2024). The same problem is also faced by some students from Aceh who want to reach an Australian Award Scholarship (AAS). Many students failed to achieve scholarships to study abroad due to their limitation in passing the IELTS test minimum 5.0 as required by the AAS. The students from in Indonesia faced difficulties such as a lack of English speaking practice and a lack of practice in answering the IELTS test (Istighfaroh, 2023). As a result, students have limited English skill and it affected their language proficiency scores. These challenges are also cirtical since sufficient IELTS score is a gateway to pursue international scholarship like AAS. This discussion also implies that the issues faced by the students in Aceh are essensial to be address. Addessing those issues will assist both students and educators in Aceh to support Achenese students to pursue their dreams to continue their study to English language countries.

Meanwhile, some students from Aceh successfully passed the IELTS test and got an AAS scholarship. It elicits questions about the learning strategies used by the students in preparing for their IELTS test. The answer could be the references for students and educators who want to achieve the targeted IELTS scores and to award a scholarship to study abroad. In addition, in the education context, especially in difficult circumstances, this helps teachers to solve the problems related to addressing the appropriate learning strategies for students.

This evidence also elicits the question about how the AAS awardees from Aceh managed their learning practice to deal with the previous discussed issued. The base of this research is the theory about metacognitive strategies, which explains how students plan their learning and manage their learning process by themselves. In the context of metacognitive strategies, students modify their learning strategies and think about their strengths and weaknesses in their learning progress (Amin & Mariani, 2021; Oxford, 2016; Zimmerman, 2000). Goh and Taib (2006) claim that the student's awareness of their learning progress is strongly related to the use of metacognitive strategies. It helps them to be self-generated and more autonomous learners. Metacognitive strategies play a vital role in building their language learning process, including their speaking, listening, writing and reading skills (Rahimi & Katal, 2013). For a high-stakes test such as IELTS, where the students should achieve targeted scores in a limited time, the students' reflection and adaption have a powerful impact on their test results.

Previous studies show that metacognitive strategies improve students' language skills. Vandergrift and Tafaghodtari (2010) found that metacognitive strategy in language learning improved students' listening comprehension and helped students in planning, monitoring, and evaluating their listening ability. Bozorgian (2014) also claimed that metacognitive strategies provide a powerful impact on students with low skills because they support students in controlling their learning and help students to find ways to improve their understanding of learning. Meanwhile, Goh and Taib (2006) claimed that reflection training on their learning progress helps the students to identify their challenges in learning and in developing

strategies to deal with the challenges. In doing so, the students could find the solution to their learning difficulties. This idea shows that metacognitive strategies help students build their awareness in the learning process and improve their listening skills.

Furthermore, previous studies also show that metacognitive strategies improved speaking, writing, and vocabulary. Amaliyah and Saleh (2022) found that metacognitive strategy improved students' fluency and confidence to practice their speaking. Panahandeh and Esfandiari (2014) found that the implementation of a planning and monitoring strategy helped EFL students write their argumentative essays more logically and accurately by using a more organized approach to composing and revising the manuscript. In addition, Sari and Sutopo (2018) found that determining the learning objective and self-control in learning improves long-term memory toward the new vocabulary.

However, this research focuses on how metacognitive strategies are used by EFL students in IELTS preparation in Aceh. Preparing IELTS test presents unique challenges because it not only measures the students' language skills in English, but also time management and self-emotion control. Unlike another language test, the IELTS test requires more systematic and extensive preparation to acquire the targeted skill in a specific time. Learners have to face the pressure to do their best performance during the test (Vandergrift & Tafaghodtari, 2010). These problems require the use of metacognitive tools by the students to help them in planning their learning and control their performance. So that they can adapt their learning learning practice based on their learning needs. Exploring these problems provides valuable insight into the best strategies for language test preparation. In addition, this research also provides practical recommendations for students and educators who are struggling with similar language learning test preparation services.

The gap in this research is that the IELTS requires students to have high ability in listening, speaking, writing, and reading ability and they

need more holistic and strategic learning. Even though previous research has investigated the value of metacognitive strategies for individual ability, none of those studies investigated how metacognitive strategies are taught and applied systematically in all component skills in an IELTS test namely listening, reading, writing and speaking. Furthermore, the use of metacognitive activities before, during and after learning was also lack of elaborated by the previous research. Therefore, this research aims to investigate the practice of metacognitive strategies before, during and after learning by using metacognitive strategies in preparing for high-stakes language tests like IELTS.

The decision to focus on the AAS awardees in Aceh is based on their unique experiences in achieving awards despite the limited access to academic resources and a structured language program. All of the participants in this study achieved the minimum IELTS score of 5.0 which is stipulated as the minimum score should be fulfilled by the AAS awardees from Aceh. The participants' achievements imply the appropriate sample of this research because it investigated self-control in learning, learning management, and effective planning in meeting the language learning objectives. As students with limited financial support and limited practices of international languages, their experiences give insight into how students can adapt to such situations by using metacognitive strategies in preparing for their IELTS test.

This research contributes to the existing theory about the use of metacognitive strategy by focusing on high-stakes language tests and language skill abilities. This research expands the focus on the implementation of metacognitive strategies for higher standard test preparation in limited support of financial and language access (Li et al., 2023). It is also supported by other research that monitoring and adaptive strategies are essential to achieve higher language performance (Chen & Yan, 2019; Ringmar, 2021). This research intensively explores how metacognitive learning strategies

support the students' learning autonomy despite external challenges.

METHOD

This study applied a mixed-method research design, which used both quantitative and qualitative methods in collecting and analysing the data. The quantitative data were collected by distributing the questionnaires and observation. Meanwhile, and the qualitative data were collected by doing interviews. The detailed features of the research instruments are elaborated as follows.

1. Observation sheet was used to collect data about the use of metacognitive strategies by AAS awardees in learning IELTS in a course in Aceh. The observation sheets were adapted from (Dayag-Tungpalan, 2023).
2. The questionnaire was adapted from Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL, version 7.0) by Rebecca Oxford (1990). It was a closed-ended questionnaire which contained 27 questions. The questionnaires were distributed to 38 students who got AAS scholarships from 2022 to 2024.
3. Semi-structured interview contains 17 questions related to the language learning strategies used by the participants to improve their English language skills and to achieve their targeted IELTS scores. The results of the interview provide qualitative data about the metacognitive strategies used by the AAS awardees to improve their language performances.

This research was conducted in six weeks during June to July 2024. It involved selecting the periptcants, distributing the questionnaires, observing the participants and conducting interview. A total of 38 AAS awardees were selected as the participants. In Week 1 the researchers distributed the questionniares and only 27 participants completed the questionnaire. Then, in Week 2-4, the researchers observed the participants' IELTS preparation class and filled the observation sheets to capture the metacognitive strategies used by the participants. Finally, in Week 5-6, the researchers collected the data about the participants' insight which covered the

experiences and challeges about using metacogntive strategies in IELTS preparation learning activities.

The data from the questionnaires and observation were analyzed by using the Statistical Packages for the Social Science (SPSS) 2017 version 19. Meanwhile, the data from the interview were analyzed by applying the procedures proposed by Miles et al. (2014) who divided the technique of analysis data into several stages; data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study explores the how metacogntive strategies covering planning, monitoring, and evaluating stretegies were implemented by AAS awadees in IELTS learning activities. The result of how these strategies used by the participants and the way metacognitive strategies improved their IELTS scores were elaborated as follows.

The Use of Metacognitive Strategies During the Planning Phase

This study investigated the metacognitive strategies, covering planning, practising, monitoring and evaluating phases, used by AAS awardees in Aceh to improve their IELTS scores. The use of metacognitive strategies during the planning phase is presented as follows.

Table 1. The use of the planning phase by the AAS awardees

No	Planning strategies	Mean
1.	I am looking for different ways to learn English	4.21
2.	I made a plan to improve my English	4.15
3.	I made targets that I had to achieve when learning English	4.39
4.	I record the mistakes I make, as information to help me improve in my notebook	4.10

No	Planning strategies	Mean
5.	I recorded the mistakes I made, as information to help me improve my IELTS score	4.13
6.	I am looking for friends who can help me improve my IELTS score	4.21
7.	I studied with friends who had the same goal of improving my IELTS score	4.18
8.	I wrote down the IELTS score I wanted to achieve in my notebook	4.23
9.	I pay attention when someone speaks English	4.26
10.	I find out how I can speak English well	4.15
11.	I made a study list so that I have enough time to study English on my cellphone	4.15
12.	I make a study list so that I have enough time to study English in my notebook	4.13
13.	I'm looking for people I can talk to in English	4.21
	Total	54.55
	Mean Total	4.19

The result shows that during the planning phase, the AAS awardees planned their learning strategies by using various methods, with a mean score of 4.21. it means that they highly proactive to find the most effective learning techniques to find the most appropriate way in learning and based on their preferences. Furthermore, they also designed some plans to improve their English skills, with a mean score of 4.15. it indicated that participants decided to design a clear roadmap for their language learning improvement. In addition, the participants also designed the target to be achieved after learning, with a mean score of 4.39. Participants also recorded their mistakes and made it as valuable information to correct their mistakes (mean score of 4.10). This implies that they designed an outcome and monitored their IELTS score improvement over time (mean score of 4.13).

This reflects the participants' self-awareness of their language improvement needs and their high motivation to learn more for their continuous language skill improvement.

Moreover, the participants also sought and studied with friends (mean score of 4.21). They collaborated with their friends to enhance their language skills. They also wrote down their targeted IELTS scores (mean score of 4.18) which implies that they have a goal-oriented mindset. It helps them stay motivated and focused to keep on their target.

Participants also admitted that they paid attention to English conversations around them (mean score of 4.23), which is crucial for improving listening and speaking skills through immersion. They also tried to find ways to speak English well (mean score of 4.26). It means that they made the active effort to enhance their communicative competence. The participants also noted lists to study on their smartphones (mean score of 4.15) and in notebooks (mean score of 4.15). This implies their focus and consistency to build their language competence. Furthermore, the participants also try to seek someone to practice English conversation (mean score of 4.21). Overall, the mean total for planning strategies was 4.19. This value implies that the planning strategies were generally used by participants. It means that the participants generally planned learning for their IELTS preparation test.

This finding is supported by previous studies about the importance of goal setting in language learning. For example, Bria and Mbato (2019) and Mahdavi (2014) discovered that students who had clear goals and targets achieved significant improvement in language proficiency compared to those who did not. They offer the idea that well-planned learning activities help students to focus more intensively on critical areas and it improves learning efficiency.

The result also shows that the students proactively seek various ways to improve their language improvement (the mean score of 4.21). This is supported by research by Panahandeh and Esfandiari (2014) which claims that learners

who employed various learning strategies usually had better language skills. It means that using various language learning strategies allows the learners can find the most effective strategies which is fit to their learning styles. It assists students to overcome their learning problems and enhance their language acquisition process.

The result also shows that the student looks for peers to study English together (mean score of 4.21). It implies that the AAS awardees prefer collaborative language learning environments. This finding is in line with previous studies by Alizadeh and Abrisham (2021) and Wihastyanang et al., (2020). It implies that peer collaboration provides immediate feedback, and motivates students to learn as well as serves them with a positive learning atmosphere. These strategies are crucial for language development because they allow learners to practice English speaking skills and to find positive feedback from their environment.

The Use of Metacognitive Strategies During the Practising Phase

In this research, the researchers also investigated the awardee activities during IELTS learning activities. To collect the data, the researchers asked permission to observe the AAS awardees' activities during IELTS learning. In doing so, the researchers made checklists on observation sheets about metacognitive strategies used by the students. The observation results are presented as follows.

Table 2. The observation result of the use of the practising phase by the AAS awardees

No	Meta-cognitive Phases	Activities
1	Planning	- Students prepare their notebooks in the IELST class and write notes if it is necessary.

No	Meta-cognitive Phases	Activities
2	Monito-ring	- Students paid attention to the tutors' speaking. - Students wrote some terminologies to be used based on the context and practised them. - The students practised speaking with their friends and discussed the way of using the correct pronunciation. - Students practised speaking based on the instruction - Students made notes about their new knowledge on that day - Students wrote their weaknesses and practised correcting the mistakes - Students practised speaking in pairs with their friends, recorded it, and then listened to it by themselves to find out their mistakes.
3	Eva-luating	- Students made conclusions about their achievements on that day - Students made notes about the right and the wrong pronunciation - Students made note of new terminologies to make their speaking flow well - Students wrote some tips to speak English fluently and wrote some websites as the references to practice speaking by their own at home.

The observation results show that the participants practised using metacognitive strategies during the IELTS preparation class. It was found that the participants prepared themselves for learning activities. They brought their notebooks to the class. They prepared themselves to take notes if the tutor gave them important information during the lesson. This

preparation implies the students' awareness of their language learning improvement.

Furthermore, the participants also paid attention to the tutor's explanation and sometimes they wrote down new terminologies. They practised using the terminologies and tried to use the terminologies by using them when practising speaking with their peers. The practice of using the terminologies helps the participants to internalize the new vocabulary in relevant contexts by using appropriate pronunciation.

In addition, it was found that the students also monitored their learning progress. It was found that the participants wrote down the important information they got and the mistakes they made along with the corrections made by the tutor. It means that the students tracked their learning progress and actively improved their language skill abilities.

The participants also practised English conversation with their friends and recorded these sessions. Then, they listened to the conversation recording to find their mistakes and then self-evaluated and refined their speaking skills. Hence, the participants could improve their language proficiency.

The least, during the evaluating phase, the participants recorded their learning achievements on that day. They noted their correct and incorrect pronunciations to improve their speaking skills. The participants also wrote tips for speaking English fluently and they wrote down the names of websites as the language learning references for further practice at home.

The observation result during the practising phase also discovered that the participants were actively involved in various learning activities. They prepared their notebooks, paid attention to the tutors' explanations, and practised the new vocabulary given by the tutors. It indicates a high level of learning preparation and strategic learning organization. According to Panahandeh and Esfandiari (2014) the students' proactively use of various ways of learning helps students to find their appropriate learning style and improve their language learning performance.

The result also shows that the students also actively looked for friends for learning (mean score of 4.21). According to Alizadeh and Abrisham (2021) and Wihastyanang et al. (2020), the collaboration with peers provides immediate feedback and improves students' motivation. It also creates a positive and supportive learning environment which is crucial for language learning improvement. This strategy enables students to practice their speaking skills and to receive direct feedback from their peers.

The observation result also shows that the students actively practised using English with their peers and recorded their performances. Then, they reviewed their language performance with peers and corrected the errors. Self-monitoring and seeking feedback from peers help them to enhance their language performance and improve their language skills (Habók & Magyar, 2018). By identifying and correcting the errors, ths students can monitor their learning progress and it build their self-autonomous learning habits.

The Use of Metacognitive Strategies During the Monitoring Phase

The use of metacognitive strategies during the monitoring phase is also investigated in this research. The detailed score of the participants' responses for every item is presented in the following table.

Table 3 The use of the monitoring phase by the AAS awardees

	Monitoring strategies	Mean
	After studying IELTS, I evaluate my success in studying that day	4.21
2.	I make a detailed note of my achievements for the day	4.15
3.	After studying, I make conclusions about what I should study next	4.28
4.	After studying IELTS, I compared my abilities before and after studying	4.10

	Monitoring strategies	Mean
5.	I try to answer IELTS questions to test my success in studying	4.21
6.	I made conclusions about the best way to study that I should do when studying	4.21
	Total	33.52
	Mean Total	4.19

This study also investigated the metacognitive strategies during the monitoring phase used by the students. This phase covers monitoring the learning successfully, making detailed notes, comparing the learning results, and testing the abilities by answering the test.

The participants actively evaluated their learning progress to measure the effectiveness of their learning strategies (mean score of 4.21). The evaluation process assisted the participants in making necessary adjustments and keeping on their learning target. The participants also wrote down detailed notes about their achievements with a mean score of 4.15. it helps them to reflect on their learning progress and to identify improvements they need.

Participants also decided the next learning strategies they would make, with a mean score of 4.28. In doing this, they could strategically focus on areas that need improvement.

In addition, the participants also compared their abilities before and after studying (mean score of 4.10). They measured their learning progress and identified the impact of the learning strategies they used on their improvement. Participants also regularly practised answering IELTS practice questions to measure their learning achievement (mean score of 4.21). It also prepares the participants for the actual exam and identifies the areas which need more practice and improvements. In the end, the participants also made a conclusion about the best study strategies they should use (mean score of 4.07). The mean of the total score for the evaluating phase is 4.19. It indicates metacognitive monitoring strategies were usually used by participants. It implies that the

participants had high self-regulated learning to monitor their learning process.

Furthermore, the participants also regularly compared their abilities before and after studying (mean score of 4.10). This monitoring process played a vital role in developing their understanding of their language learning improvement so that they could employ necessary adjustments. This finding is supported by Safari and Fitriati (2016) and Anaktototy (2022) who claimed that making comparisons about the learning achievement before and after learning activities helps learners to improve and adjust their strategies accordingly.

The Use of Metacognitive Strategies During the Evaluation Phase

This research also identified that the student implemented some strategies during the evaluation phase. The following table shows the strategies used by the students during the evaluation phase in learning IELTS.

Table 4 The use of the evaluating phase by the AAS awardees

No	Practicing strategies	Mean
1.	After studying IELTS, I evaluate my success in studying that day	3.94
2.	I make a detailed note of my achievements for the day	3.92
3.	After studying, I make conclusions about what I should study next	4.05
4.	After studying IELTS, I compared my abilities before and after studying	3.89
5.	I try to answer IELTS questions to test my success in studying	3.97
6.	I made conclusions about the best way to study that I should do when studying	3.89
	Total	23.68
	Mean Total	3.94

The participant evaluates their daily learning progress (mean score of 4.21). It implies that they actively measure their abilities. It helps them to track their learning progress. In addition, it also improves their motivation and gives them a sense of satisfaction with what they have achieved. In addition, making detailed notes about their daily achievement were also conducted by the participants (mean score of 3.92). This activity helped the participants to track their daily improvement.

The participants also drew their plans for the next study (mean score of 4.05). It implies that the students proactively evaluate their learning process based on their learning experiences.

Furthermore, the participants made comparisons about their abilities before and after studying (mean score of 3.89). It helped the participants to know the effectiveness of their study's previous learning strategies. The practice of answering IELTS questions to test study success received an average score of 3.97. The mean for the evaluation phase is 3.94. It implies that it is usually used by the awardees. They actively used evaluation to inform their future learning and goal achievement. Participants made conclusions about what to study next and identified the best study methods. This proactive approach demonstrates a strong connection between evaluation and planning for future success.

During the evaluation phase, the students drew conclusions about what to study next and compared abilities before and after studying (mean score of 3.94). It indicates regular use of the evaluation phase. It implies that self-assessment and reflection are critical for continuous improvement (Chen & Yan, 2019; Ringmar, 2021). It indicates that reflecting on study methods and outcomes helps students to identify the appropriate language learning strategies and areas for improvement.

The participants also claimed that they practised answering IELTS questions regularly to test their language achievements (mean score of 3.97). It implies that the participants frequently tested their understanding and readiness for the IELTS test in real practice. This finding is supported by previous studies' findings (Leibold & Schwarz, 2015; Prasetya et al., 2023; Safari & Fitriati, 2016; Zulaiha et al., 2020) which emphasize that practice tests play essential role in familiarizing learners with real exam formats and acknowledging areas that require more improvements.

The interview result also shows that setting clear goals and drawing clear study plans helps participants to improve their IELTS scores. This finding aligns with the research by Safari & Fitriati (2016) found that students' goal-oriented learning plans enhance motivation and provide a clear roadmap for learners. It enhances students' learning quality and leads to better outcomes.

The participants also claimed that they continuously monitored their learning progress. According to Zimmerman (2020), this activity allows learners to track their progress and helps them to identify their learning weaknesses. In addition, they can adjust their study methods so that they can perform more effective learning activities.

The participants also actively selected the learning materials that fit their learning needs. According to Brown (2006), Kadwa and Alshenqeeti (2020) as well as Septiyanti et al., (2020), the quality of the learning materials significantly contributes to students' language proficiency. They claimed that the high quality of the learning material helps students to achieve high learning achievements. Hence, they suggest learners ensure that they are using effective tools for their language learning to achieve their best scores.

The student's ability to adapt to challenges and to seek feedback also played a crucial role in their language learning successful. According to Ilmiddinovich (2020) and Nawawi (2021), students who are adaptable and open to feedback tend to be able to overcome difficulties and refine their study plans. In doing so, these students can perform better language performance.

Overall, the result of this study supports the previous finding about the effectiveness of

metacognitive strategies in language learning. In this research, the AAS awardees from Aceh showed their comprehensive and structured metacognitive learning strategies in IELTS preparation. They employed various metacognitive strategies during the planning, practising, monitoring, and evaluation phases. These findings imply the evidence about the importance of goal setting, active engagement, self-monitoring, reflection, and adaptability in achieving language proficiency. In other words, by assessing and adjusting their learning methods, the awardees were able to improve their IELTS scores. This shows the critical role of metacognitive strategies in effective language learning.

The result of the questionnaire shows that the participants are actively engaged in metacognitive strategy. The participants' responses imply that regular self-assessment, detailed documentation, strategic planning, and reflective practices play critical roles in helping AAS awardees during IELTS preparation.

The Way Metacognitive Strategies Improve IELTS Scores of Australian Award Scholarship (AAS) Awardees

To find out how the metacognitive strategies improved the students' IELST scores, the researchers interviewed six awardees of AAS from Aceh. The interview result shows that the participants admitted that metacognitive strategies significantly contribute to the improvement of IELTS scores among Australian Award Scholarship (AAS) awardees. The way metacognitive strategies improve the AAS awardees' IELTS scores was elaborated as follows.

Setting Clear Goals and Tailored Study Plans

According to student A, setting clear goals helps the participants to achieve their learning target and manage their learning progress. Student A said," I start learning by assessing my current level... Then, I draw my study plans to focus on those weak areas." This implies that metacognitive strategies cover the strategy of acknowledging the learning weaknesses and

designing future study plans to address the learning problems. This finding supports the previous findings by Zhang et al. (2024) and Zimmerman (2020) that designing plan for study in metacognitive strategies bring positive on language learning outcomes.

Continuous Progress Monitoring and Adjustment

Student C said that continuous monitoring progress is very important in learning progress. She said," I did self-assessment by taking regular IELTS practice tests. It helps me to identify my weakness and to track my learning progress…" It implies that metacognitive strategies play a significant role in helping students to build their self-awareness in learning. The awardees consistently assess themselves by practicing test shows their actively engagement in learning process and it is crucial for language learning development. It is aligns with the idea by Haryono (2023) and Zulaiha et al. (2020) that actively engaging in practice tests and self-assessment demonstrate a strong commitment to understanding strengths and weaknesses and it is crucial for effective self-regulation. It enable learners to track their progress and identify areas for improvement.

Effective Resource Selection

Selecting effective learning sources also plays a significant role in helping student improve their language performance. Based on the participants' statements, they admitted that they selected their learning sources based on their needs. Some AAS participants said that they sought for peers for language practice. Meanwhile, the others said that they relied on materials recommended by previous successful awardees. They said: "I learned IELTS from the material recommended by the previous awardees." It implies that metacognitive strategies used by the participants in learning ILETS cover selecting relevant and effective learning materials. This finding shows the the participants' effort to find valuable resources for their language improvement. It supports the previous idea by Anaktototy (2022) that one of metacognitive strategies is the seeking for valuable learning resources. It will help students

to plan their positive academic journey and they can track their academic journey.

Self-Assessment and Reflection

The participants claimed that self-assessment and reflection played a vital roles in learning IELTS. They admitted that they regularly made self reflection and monitored their learning progress. It implies that they consistently evaluated their language learning progress and tracked their learning achievement. In addition, they also made detailed notes about their weakness so that they knew what areas should be improved. Student D claimed the importance of self-assessment and reflection by saying, "I used practice tests to track my progress... and asked for feedback from my tutor and peers." This statement implies that the strategies used by the participants cover performance evaluation and seeking feedback for improvement. According to Chaetsunnajah & Dewi (2023) and Wijaya and Mbato (2022), self-reflection plays essensial role in improving language proficiency. Learners compare their abilities before and after learning and they find their weekness. By doing so, they can optimize their language learning practice and achieve their language proficieny target.

Adapting to Challenges and Seeking Feedback

The participants also claimed that adapting to challenges and seeking feedback played an important role in improving their IELTS scores. They often asked their tutor and friends to acknowledge further improvements. Student D said, "If I didn't achieve my targeted score... I analyzed my performance and intensified my preparation." Furthermore, Student E also emphasized this by saying "If I didn't achieve my target score, I reviewed my mistakes, sought feedback, and adjusted my study plan."

The participants' statements indicate that recognizing areas for improvement, seeking support, and making necessary adjustments play important parts in metacognitive strategies employed by the participants and play a vital role in their language improvement. This finding support the previous finding about the importance role of evaluation in metacognitive

strategies (Haryono, 2023). In this study, the learners evaluated their own learning progress and they asked other to provide feedback. It enable them to track their weakness and It will help them to design better learning strategies to improve their language proficinecy (Wihastyanang et al., 2020; Yurttas-Kumlu & Yürük, 2023). This also proved the peer feedback plays vital role in learning language by using metacognitive strategies.

CONCLUSION

This study discovers that the use of metacognitive strategies played an essential role in IELTS test preparation for AAS awardees in aceh. The AAS awardees applied metacognitive strategies to overcome their problems related to the limited sources and language learning practices in Aceh. During the planning phase, the participants drew their language learning plans and collaborated with their friends in learning. They also monitored their language learning intensively to measure their language learning progress. Furthermore, during the evaluation phase, they also made some adjustments to their language learning strategies to find their most effective learning strategies. The finding of this study shows evidence of the importance of metacognitive strategies in stake language test preparation like the IELTS test. It helps students to identify the most appropriate learning strategies and their weak areas in learning. It also improved their self-directed learning and autonomous learning. The students can find the best way to improve their language test scores and they can manage their own learning activities based on their needs. However, this study has limitation that the participants of this study are limited to specific group in Aceh. Therefore, the researchers suggest conducting further research to investigate the use of metacognitive strategies in more general groups.

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