

Identifying students' challenges and strategies to produce English-speaking utterances

Qonita^{✉1}, Girindra Putri Dewi Saraswati¹

¹Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia

Article Info

Article History:
Received on 25 June
2025
Approved on 2
August 2025
Published on 17
August 2025

*Keywords: Speaking
challenges; learning
strategies; language
learning strategies;
strategy inventory for
language learning*

Abstract

Previous research has examined English-speaking challenges, but rarely has it linked them to specific strategies based on Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). This study addresses that gap by identifying students' challenges and strategies to produce English-speaking utterances, especially among English education students in Universitas Negeri Semarang, where speaking is still a common yet underdeveloped skill. The researcher employed qualitative research, and the participants of this study were 22 students in the sixth semester of the English education study program at Universitas Negeri Semarang. The data were gathered through questionnaires and interviews, then analyzed using qualitative methods. The findings revealed that although over 80% of the students reported frequently using English in interaction on campus, many still encountered significant challenges. The most prevalent challenges faced by students in speaking include anxiety, fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence, lack of vocabulary, and lack of grammar, which significantly affected students' fluency and accuracy. The finding shows that, memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies were commonly used to address vocabulary and lack of grammar. Metacognitive and affective strategies helped manage anxiety and hesitation, while social strategies supported speaking development. The findings imply that promoting specific strategic awareness can improve speaking proficiency and confidence. Teachers are encouraged to integrate explicit strategy training into speaking instruction, create low-anxiety environments, and encourage collaborative learning. Future research should explore how individual learner differences affect the effectiveness of these strategies in various contexts and over longer periods of language learning.

[✉]Correspondence Address:
B3 Building FBS Unnes
Sekaran, Gunungpati, Semarang, 50229
E-mail: qonita05@students.unnes.ac.id

INTRODUCTION

Mastering English speaking skills enhances students' academic performance through class discussions, presentations, and oral examinations, while also preparing them for future professional environments where effective communication is essential. As stated by Rao (2019), the modern world demands communication skills from learners, and English teachers must prepare ELLs with the necessary speaking abilities to perform effectively in real-life situations. Despite years of study in formal educational, many students still struggle with speaking skills due to various linguistic, psychological, and socio-cultural barriers (Gan, 2012). Ork et al. (2024) identified common difficulties in speaking English, particularly those caused by linguistic factors such as limited vocabulary, lack of grammar knowledge, and poor pronunciation. According to Horwitz et al. (1986), anxiety is the feeling of anxiety involves feelings of tension, nervousness, and worry, which can inhibit students from speaking due to fear of making mistakes. Syafitri et al. (2023) stated that make a person afraid of making mistakes such as fear of being mocked by friends and reluctance to start doing it because they are unsure of their abilities. As stated by Afifah et al. (2024) self-confidence also has an impact on students' speaking abilities by increasing their confidence and motivation, which enables them to take on both easy and difficult speaking. Students also often experience difficulties due to a lack of vocabulary as Syafitri et al. (2023) stated, people with limited vocabulary struggle to produce language, convey ideas, understand conversations, and express themselves clearly. The lack of grammar also influenced students to speak English as Syafitri et al. (2023) explained, frequent grammatical errors often result from first language interference, which disrupts focus and makes English speech sound unnatural.

Haidara (2016) revealed that students have good levels in English grammar and vocabulary but are not confident while speaking, negatively affected by psychological factors such as fear of making mistakes, shyness, hesitation, and lack of confidence. Similarly, Heriansyah (2012) found that many English Department students at Syiah Kuala University struggle with speaking due to pronunciation difficulties, limited vocabulary, fear of mistakes, shyness, discomfort, and anxiety about being judged. Marzulina et al. (2021) highlighted challenges in teaching EFL learners, including students' lack of motivation, low language competence, poor pronunciation, overcrowded classrooms, and inadequate facilities. Students experience difficulties in oral presentations due to anxiety, lack of confidence, blankness, grammatical errors, code-switching, and reliance on reading texts (Rohman & Pane, 2023). Lawtie (2004) emphasized that speaking difficulties are often influenced by emotional state speech is clearer when individuals feel confident and relaxed than when anxious or lacking confidence.

Identifying students' challenges and strategies is important because it enables teachers to design more supportive and targeted speaking activities. Research by Nakatani (2010) has shown that when students' individual learning strategies are recognized and encouraged, they are more likely to develop confidence in speaking English. Learning strategies play a significant role in the learning process, especially in improving English language skills. These strategies refer to specific methods, techniques, or approaches used to acquire, retain, retrieve, and apply knowledge or skills more effectively. According to an early definition by Weinstein and Mayer (1983), learning strategies are behaviors and thoughts in which learners engage to influence their encoding process. The important aspect of learning strategies directly related to language acquisition is the application of language learning strategies. Oxford (1990) defined language learning strategies as specific thoughts, behaviors, or techniques that learners consciously use to help understand, learn, or produce a new language more effectively. These strategies are essential for active learning and self-directed efforts, which are crucial in developing communicative competence. Hardan (2013) further explained that language learning strategies can be viewed from three aspects: behaviors (e.g., how students approach learning a second language), cognitive theory (strategic knowledge of language learning), and affective factors (motivation, attitude, etc). Oxford (1990) also defined language learning strategies as specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations.

Based on earlier research into learning strategies, Oxford (1990) developed learning strategies namely Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL).

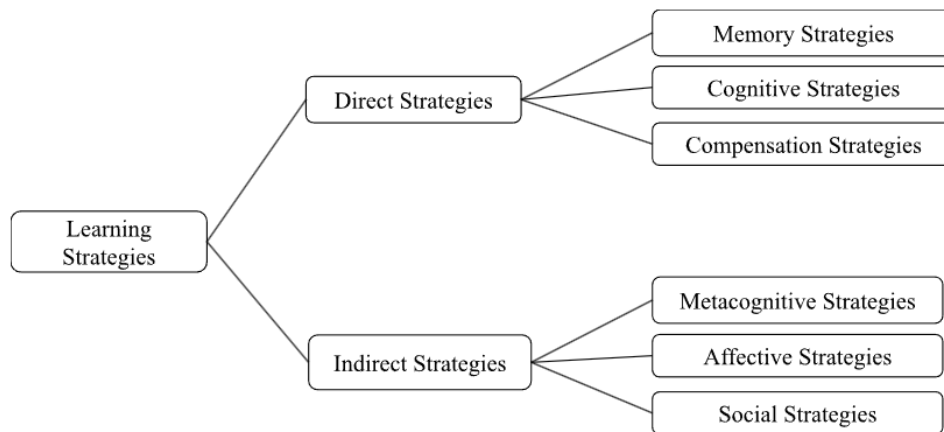


Figure 1. Taxonomy of Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) by Oxford (1990) in Chapter 4, p. 281-300

The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) developed by Oxford (1990) is one of the most widely used and influential instruments for measuring language learning strategies worldwide. It has been applied in diverse EFL and ESL contexts to investigate learners' strategy use across different ages, proficiency levels, and cultural backgrounds (Lee, 2010). Many researchers have used the SILL as a standard tool to collect comparable data on students' learning strategies, making it possible to examine trends and differences in strategy use among learners from various countries (Hong Nam & Leavell, 2006). Chamot (2004) added the SILL has contributed significantly to the field by providing both teachers and researchers with a practical framework for understanding how students approach language learning and how instruction can better support strategic, self-regulated learning.

This strategy is divided into two main categories: direct strategies and indirect strategies, which are subdivided into 6 groups. Direct strategies are subdivided into three groups; memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and compensation strategies, which involve direct mental processing of the language and it used directly with the new language itself. Indirect strategies are subdivided into three groups; metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies, which are strategies that support and manage language learning without directly involving the target language itself, and also contribute to the overall learning process.

Memory strategies is an effective recall during communication. It helps learners store new language information in long-term memory and retrieve it when needed, making it easier to remember vocabulary, grammar, and other language elements. Cognitive strategies involve learners actively engaging with language through mental processes such as repeating new words, guessing meanings, and summarizing material. These conscious techniques support comprehension and usage of the target language. Compensation strategies allow students to communicate effectively despite gaps in knowledge. These consist of guessing intelligently and overcoming limitations in speaking and writing. Metacognitive strategies allow learners to become aware to control their cognition in order to coordinate their own learning process. This strategy enabling students to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning. Affective strategies focus on managing emotions, motivation, and attitudes, recognizing their influence on language acquisition. Learners reduce anxiety, build confidence, and monitor emotional states through methods like self-encouragement or relaxation. Social strategies emphasize learning through interaction with others. It consists of asking questions, cooperating with others, and empathizing with others.

The research conducted by Robah and Anggrisia (2023) explored the challenges and strategies in English speaking that applied learning strategies from Oxford's (1990) taxonomy, including memory, cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. Similarly, Tauchid (2023) examined English speaking strategies among EFL learners using cognitive strategies, affective, social strategies, metacognitive strategies, and compensatory strategies. Zagoto (2025) found that students who employed cognitive, memory, and metacognitive strategies improved their speaking abilities more effectively. Tılfarlıoğlu and Yalçın (2005) also added that successful language learners tend to be more aware and intentional in their strategy use than less successful ones.

Several previous studies have explored the challenges and learning strategies in English language learning. However, most of the previous studies have only highlighted English speaking

challenges without directly linking to the specific strategies students use, or without systematically linking to language learning theories such as Oxford (1990). This indicates a research gap, namely the lack of studies that explicitly link speaking challenges with strategies using SILL theory. Based on this gap, the researcher is interested in raising this topic because many English Education students still face difficulties in speaking skills.

Based on the problems and conditions above that have been carried out by the researcher, this study aims to identify students' challenges and strategies to produce English-speaking utterances, especially in English education students, to provide a deeper understanding of how language learners can overcome their difficulties in speaking English and achieve greater communicative competence. The study will provide benefits regarding strategies to overcome English speaking challenges, especially in English Language Education students. By understanding obstacles experienced by students, teachers are expected to implement effective strategies so that students become more confident and competent, which in turn can improve the quality of speaking learning. In addition, future researchers can use this study as a reference to get an overview of similar research and produce novelty in future research.

METHODS

Research Design

This research was conducted using a qualitative descriptive research design because its aiming to identify, explore and understand students' real experiences of challenges, and strategies in producing English-speaking utterances. According to Moser and Korstjens (2017), qualitative research provides in-depth insights into participants' experiences, behaviors, and perceptions. This aligns with the purpose of this study, which seeks to gain a deep understanding of the challenges faced by students when speaking English and how to overcome these challenges using strategies identified through the SILL framework by Oxford (1990). As Raco (2018) explains, qualitative methods are particularly useful for uncovering the facts of a problem and describing the phenomena in context. Therefore, a qualitative approach is appropriate for answering the research questions and achieving the study's objectives.

Research Site

This study was carried out in the English Education Program, Faculty Language and Arts, Universitas Negeri Semarang, is an institutions in Indonesia that specifically prepares students to become professional English teachers. This setting was chosen because speaking competence is essential for students who will teach English in the future, making it relevant to explore their real challenges and strategies in producing English-speaking utterances.

Respondents

The respondents of this study were 22 students in the 8th semester of the English Education program in the 2021 Academic Year. The reason the researcher chose this participant was that they have already spent a significant amount of time in the program and have spent time on English language learning experiences, especially in speaking-related courses and practical activities such as microteaching and classroom discussions or presentations. Students who have participated in authentic speaking tasks and teaching practice can reflect more deeply on their own strengths, weaknesses, and coping strategies (Richards & Farrell, 2005). Therefore, involving students with this level of experience ensures that the data collected is rich and relevant for understanding real speaking challenges and strategies, as purposeful participant selection is essential for credible qualitative research (Creswell, 2012).

Research Instruments

In conducting the research, the researcher used two instruments to collect the data, including a closed-ended questionnaire and open-ended interview questions. A closed-ended questions in the form of a questionnaire with 25 questions through Google Forms, which provides students' challenges and clear categories of learning strategies relevant to speaking skills based on (SILL) by Oxford's (1990). In the form of a questionnaire with 25 questions designed using a Likert scale index of strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. This scale was chosen because it provides clear, simple options that are easy for respondents to understand and answer. A 4-point Likert scale was used to avoid a neutral option and make students choose clearly, so the data would be more

accurate and meaningful (Kumar, 2011). The 25 open-ended interview questions also designed to explore students' answers in more detail, as such questions allow for richer and more expressive data in qualitative research (Creswell, 2012).

Data Collection

In this research, the researcher presented a method for collecting data by using the interviews and questionnaires. The questionnaire, distributed via Google Forms to 22 8th semester students, contained 25 statements about speaking challenges and the strategies based on Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), using a 4-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree. After analyzing the questionnaire results, the researcher conducted open-ended interviews with 5 students to explore their answers in depth, asking them to explain their real challenges and strategies in speaking English. Combining both methods provided clear patterns and deeper explanations (Creswell, 2012).

Data analysis

According to Miles et al. (2014), analyzing qualitative research is divided into 3 stages that must be carried out: 1) data condensation, 2) data display, and 3) drawing a conclusion. For data condensation, questionnaire responses were coded as ordinal Likert data Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree (Boone & Boone, 2012). Researchers examined the distribution of responses for each item to identify dominant trends-such as which challenges most students agreed with. For example, when analyzing students' perceptions of speaking anxiety or lack of vocabulary, the mode (most frequent response) and concentration of agreement levels were considered to determine the most prominent issues. Meanwhile, interview answers were transcribed then categorized according to the focus of the study: speaking challenges and language learning strategies. At the data display stage, the questionnaire results from 22 students were presented in table to show the most frequently occurring challenges and strategies, while the interview responses from 5 participants were grouped thematically to highlight similarities and differences in their speaking experiences. To draw conclusions, the researcher summarized the findings from the questionnaire and interview results in answering the research problem.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Based on the data gathered through the questionnaire and interviews, from the 22 respondents in the 6th semester who filled out the questionnaire through google form, it can be explained that the majority of students, as many as 50% or 11 students agreed that they were often communicate in English with their friends in campus, and 31.8% or 7 students even strongly agreed. Meanwhile disagree and strongly disagree have the same percentage at 9.1% or only 4 students. As two of the five students interviewed said that they use English in communication with their friends in campus to help improve their speaking skills. (R1) *"As a student of English education program, i sometimes use English with my friends in class or campus environment. I believe that speaking English regularly can help improve my skills"*, while another (R2) *"I rarely speak English with friends outside of formal settings. I usually only use English during lectures or classes or in campus"*.

However, not all students are used to speaking English with their friends due to several challenges. As stated in an interview, (R1) *"I often face when speaking English are finding the right words and sometimes grammar gets in the way. I also feel shy if I make mistakes"*, (R2) *"My difficulty is making sure my grammar is correct, and sometimes I feel my English vocabulary is lacking"*, (R3) *"I often feel unsure whether the words I use are appropriate or accurate, both in meaning and sentence structure. I also worry if my sentence doesn't follow proper grammar or sounds awkward"*, (R4) *"I face when speaking English are lack of vocabulary and grammatical errors"*, and (R5) *"My biggest challenge is when I forget the vocabulary I want to use"*.

Table 1. Students' Challenges in Speaking Class

No.	Students' Challenges in Speaking	Percentage of Frequency			
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	Anxiety	27.3% (6 students)	63.6% (14 students)	4.5% (1 student)	4.5% (1 student)

2.	Fear of making mistakes	27.3% (6 students)	54.5% (12 students)	13.6% (3 students)	4.5% (1 student)
3.	Lack of confidence	13.6% (3 students)	50% (11 students)	31.8% (7 students)	4.5% (1 student)
4.	Lack of vocabulary	27.3% (6 students)	40.9% (9 students)	27.3% (6 students)	4.5% (1 student)
5.	Lack of grammar	18.2% (4 students)	45.5% (10 students)	31.8% (7 students)	4.5% (1 student)

Based on the table above, most students' challenges in speaking were anxiety with a total of 63.6% or 14 students, and 27.3% or 6 students chose strongly agree, while 2 students chose disagree, and strongly disagreed with the same percentage at 4.5%. One of the respondents in an interview said, (R1) *"I often feel nervous and anxious when I have to speak English, like class presentations or when the lecturer suddenly asks me a question. Even if I have prepared beforehand, the anxiety still affects how I perform"*. Another challenge found in this study was the fear of making mistakes. A total of 12 students or 54.5% agreed, 27.3% or 6 students strongly agreed, while 13.6% or 3 students disagreed, and only one student strongly disagreed. However, from the interview one student shared, (R1) *"Yes, I sometimes feel afraid of making mistakes or being judged by friends or lecturers, especially when they look serious. It makes me less confident and my speaking becomes less fluent"*. The questionnaire results also showed that lack of self-confidence was another challenge faced by English education students. A total of 50% or 11 students agreed, and 13.6% or 3 students strongly agreed that they often felt unsure of themselves when speaking English. Meanwhile, 31.8% or 7 students disagreed, and only one student strongly disagreed. In the interview, the student also said, *"Sometimes I feel confident, but often I don't. The reason is usually because I haven't practiced enough and I'm afraid of making mistakes"*.

The next challenge that affects students to speak English fluently is a lack of vocabulary. 9 students or 40.9% agreed, while 6 students or 27.3% strongly agreed and disagreed, also only one student strongly disagreed that limited vocabulary made it difficult for them to express their ideas. The students mentioned in the interview, (R1) *"Many times, I find myself at a loss for words when speaking English because I don't know the right vocabulary"*. The last challenge faced by students in this study was the lack of grammar. 45.5% or 10 students agreed, and 18.2% or 4 students strongly agreed that grammar problems made it difficult for students to speak English confidently. Meanwhile, 31.8% or 7 students disagreed, and one student strongly disagreed. As students stated, (R1) *"Yes, grammar affects my fluency when speaking English, it is also the reason for conveying our ideas or thoughts that we want to convey"*.

This study also identifies strategies to produce English speaking utterances, using the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) framework developed by Rebecca Oxford (1990). SILL analyzes how these strategies, from memory and cognitive strategies to compensatory, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies, are used in the learning context to overcome the challenges above.

Table 2. Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)

No.	Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)	Percentage of Frequency			
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	Memory strategy	50% (11 students)	40.9% (9 students)	9.1% (2 students)	-
2.	Cognitive strategy	63.6% (14 students)	31.8% (7 students)	4.5% (1 student)	-
3.	Compensation strategy	54.5% (12 students)	40.9% (9 students)	4.5% (1 student)	-
4.	Metacognitive strategy	36.4% (8 students)	54.5% (12 students)	9.1% (2 students)	-
5.	Affective strategy	22.7% (5 students)	63.6% (14 students)	13.6% (3 students)	-
6.	Social strategy	40.9% (9 students)	54.5% (12 students)	4.5% (1 student)	-

From 22 students showed that 2 students disagreed while 11 students or 50% strongly agreed, and 9 students or 40.9% agreed that they used memory strategies such as grouping vocabulary,

visualizing images, and recalling learned words. In interviews, some students elaborated on these responses, with stated by participants, (R1) *"I have a special way of remembering words by making associations with words I am already familiar with"*. Another strategy is cognitive strategies as classified in Oxford's (1990). According to the questionnaire, only one student disagreed while 63.6% or 14 students agreed, and 31.8% or 7 students strongly agreed that often repeat English words or sentences to improve the fluency. The students affirmed this in an interview by stating, (R1) *"To improve my speaking fluency, I read English texts aloud to get used to hearing myself speak English. I also try to make my own sentences using new vocabulary and repeat them several times until they sound natural"*. The results of the study indicate in compensation strategy, 54.5% or 12 students strongly agreed and 40.9% or 9 students agreed that they used guessing, synonyms, and gestures when they lack vocabulary, while only one student disagreed. One student supported this in the interview by stating, (R1) *"If I don't know the right word, I usually use other similar words or gestures to help the listener understand"*.

From the data analysis from questionnaires through Google Forms, it was found that 54.5% or 12 students agreed, 36.4% or 8 students strongly agreed, while two students disagreed that they use metacognitive strategy in language learning to make practice plan or learn to speak. One of the interviewed participants said, (R1) *"Yes, I have a study plan to improve my English speaking to try practice regularly. I also try to reflect on my skills and set targets to improve my skills"*. Affective strategies also appeared frequently with the results, 63.6% or 14 students agreed, 22.7% or 5 students strongly agreed, while 13.6% or 3 students disagreed that they try to control their nervousness before speaking. Two students shared, (R1) *"When I feel nervous before speaking, I usually take a deep breath and try to calm myself"*, and (R2) *"When I feel nervous, I take deep breaths and try to think positive things to calm down"*. The last strategy in English language learning is social strategy. From the data collected, 54.5% or 12 students agreed, 40.9% or 9 students strongly agreed, and only one student disagreed with practice speaking English with others. One student shared, (R1) *"Yes, I have asked friends or lecturers to correct my mistakes when speaking English. I try to find opportunities to speak English with others, whether friends, lecturers, or native speakers and I believe that speaking with others can help improve my skills"*.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that despite being enrolled in an English education, many students still exhibit hesitation in using English for daily communication. The psychological barriers such as anxiety, fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence, lack of vocabulary and lack of grammar make them uncomfortable in communication situations. As a result, they tend to avoid using English outside of class or in informal peer interactions. This habit limits their opportunities to practice, which further reinforces their insecurities and slows down their speaking development.

The most common challenges faced by students in speaking English is anxiety. For example, one respondent (R1) admitted to feeling nervous during presentations, especially in front of a class, while another student (R2) described experiencing panic when unexpectedly questioned in class. This aligns with Horwitz et al. (1986), who introduced the concept of Foreign Language Anxiety, is one of the core components that inhibit students' oral participation. This reflects that the pressure to speak in front of others can trigger high levels of anxiety, even to the point of making it difficult to think clearly or convey ideas smoothly. Supporting this, Mulyani (2018) found that one of the symptoms of anxiety such as voice trembling and the use of incomplete sentences often occurs in students' speaking performance when they give a presentation or simply ask questions. The inability to express thoughts freely due to anxiety can also lead to a loss of confidence over time, causing students to develop a negative perception of their speaking ability. As a result, they may become increasingly reluctant to participate in speaking activities, limiting their opportunities for practice and improvement. Many students also worry that they will be judged or laughed at if they make mistakes, which leads them to avoid speaking altogether. This fear of making mistakes discourages students from participating in speaking tasks, as supported by questionnaire data above. Instead of viewing mistakes as part of the learning process, students often perceive them as personal failures that can lead to embarrassment or ridicule. As a result, students stay quiet in class rather than express their opinion in English because afraid of being corrected. Fear of making mistakes can lower students' confidence and reduce their willingness to participate in speaking activities. Ur (1996) said that language learners often feel inhibited in classroom discussions because they fear of making mistakes and worry being judged or criticized by others. Closely related to anxiety and fear of making mistake is the issue of lack of confidence. Confidence also plays a pivotal role in students'

willingness to speak. According to Nakatani (2006), learners' self-confidence is a key factor that influences their use of communication strategies and their readiness to engage in oral interactions. Many respondents indicated lack of confidence that, students doubt their abilities and feel that their English skills are lower than their friends. Lar and Maulina (2021) said students' speaking ability is closely related to their level of confidence. Confident students tend to be able to express their opinions clearly and easily understood by others. This response shows that without confidence, even students who understand the material will struggle to express themselves clearly. This emotional barrier contributes to the vicious cycle of silence, self-doubt, and minimal speaking practice. In addition, when students constantly compare themselves to others, especially in speaking performance, it further lowers their self-esteem and increases the pressure to speak perfectly. This comparison creates a learning environment where students focus more on how they are perceived rather than the process of developing their speaking skills.

Another challenges identified is lack of vocabulary. Students often face difficulty finding the right words when speaking, which can lead to pauses, hesitation, or switching to their first language. This challenge affects students in speaking, showing that vocabulary development is a key factor in improving speaking skills, because without enough vocabulary, students struggle to communicate their thoughts clearly and they spontaneously switch to their mother tongue. August et al. (2005) said that foreign language learners who have limited vocabulary tend to take longer to master new vocabulary, have difficulty in understanding texts, and are less active in oral communication with their peers. This implies that vocabulary size is directly related to the learner's ability to comprehend and produce language, particularly in real-time spoken interaction. Similarly, Nation (2001) emphasizes that a strong vocabulary foundation is essential for effective language use, especially in productive skills such as speaking and writing. Students with a wider range of vocabulary are better able to express complex ideas and sustain conversations without frequent interruptions. The support that views, as some students admitted that their inability to remember or use the right vocabulary made them hesitant to speak in class, especially during discussions or presentations. In addition to lack of vocabulary, another significant challenge faced by students is the lack of grammar. In students' interview, they expressed how excessive focus on sentence structure affects their fluency and naturalness. Students noted they often paused in middle sentence to check their grammar that makes they think twice when they try to speak in English. This show that grammar difficulties can hinder fluency and create fear of making mistakes, which in turn lowers students' willingness to speak. When students are too focused on using correct grammar, they often lose their natural flow in speaking, resulting in pauses, hesitation, and even silence. It could be that students feel uncomfortable while talking, so they tend to end conversations quickly to avoid making errors. Moreover, in Levelt (1989) theory of speech production explains that speaking is a complex cognitive process involving conceptualization, formulation, and articulation. During the formulation phase, students must quickly retrieve grammatical structures and lexical items to express ideas. When grammar knowledge is not automated, students spend more cognitive effort to formulate correct sentences, which interferes with fluency. Instead of speaking naturally, they focus on form, which slows down processing and leads to frequent self-correction or silence. This confirms that lack of grammar affects not only accuracy, but also fluency and cognitive load during speaking.

Despite these challenges, the study also identify that students use language learning strategies based on Oxford's (1990) namely Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) to reduce their speaking challenges to produce speaking utterances. Memory strategies support English language education students in overcome lack of vocabulary and grammar through storing or remembering new information such as vocabulary in language learning. Students often use grouping techniques, such as grouping new vocabulary colors, foods, etc, as a way to facilitate memorization. Students also use visualizing images to memorize their new vocabulary and use gestures or facial expressions to help them remember English words. These strategies helped students can more easily remember vocabulary and sentence structures. The high percentage of students who reported using grouping and recall techniques suggests that students are actively engaging with language in strategic ways to improve retention and recall, especially in speaking contexts. This aligns with Chamot and O'Malley (1994), who emphasize the importance of memory strategies in helping learners internalize and retrieve linguistic information, especially in high-pressure speaking situations. Moreover, interview responses further illustrate that students creatively adapt memory strategies that are not only widely used but also personalized according to students' first preferences and learning styles in embarking on foreign language learning, indicating that although Oxford's (1990) framework is still highly

relevant, its implementation can vary greatly depending on the learner's context. As Cohen (2014) argues, strategy use is not only about what is used but how and when it is employed, and learners' ability to personalize these strategies determines their effectiveness in overcoming specific language challenges particularly in the domain of speaking. Cognitive strategies were also commonly used and evident in students' efforts to practice also apply new language forms. Students try to speak using new sentence structures or vocabulary they just learned and construct in their own English sentences before speaking. This self-constructed production enables learners to internalize grammar rules and word usage more effectively. Additionally, students engaged with materials such as videos, movies, or English songs as alternative input sources, aiming to familiarize themselves with natural speech patterns, pronunciation, and contextual use of vocabulary, as shown in the table above. Vandergrift (2003) emphasized that listening to input materials such as music and video enhances learners' ability to decode spoken language, making it easier for them to produce appropriate responses during conversation. The data highlights that English education students using this strategy by translating or creating their own sentences, that can help students understand language structures better. In addition, with repeated practice, students become familiar to speaking and gradually overcome the fear of making mistakes. This is in line with Oxford's (1990) explanation of cognitive strategies in the SILL framework, which include practicing through repetition, analyzing and reasoning, and receiving and sending messages. In essence, cognitive strategies not only support linguistic development but also serve as a bridge toward communicative competence, allowing learners to gain confidence through consistent practice and meaningful engagement with language input. Through this process, students gradually reduce their fear of making mistakes and begin to participate more actively in spoken interactions.

To deal with these grammar related challenges and the lack of vocabulary, English education students used compensation strategies to guess the meaning of words if they don't know the context with the use of hand or body gestures when they cannot find the right English word to maintain conversational flow in order to successfully communicate in the target language. The use of body language, paraphrasing, and contextual guessing found in the questionnaire answers and interviews illustrate that these students who do not know a word can replace it with a synonym or explain its meaning in other words. Oxford (1990) categorized compensation strategy group in her Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), which includes using gestures, making intelligent guesses, and switching to the mother tongue temporarily when necessary to maintain conversation flow. These strategies help learners stay engaged in communication despite gaps in their knowledge. Such compensation strategies also contribute to learners' communicative competence by allowing them to maintain fluency and avoid anxiety in oral interactions. As Tuan and Mai (2015) pointed out, the ability to guess from context and to improvise linguistically helps students feel more confident, reduces hesitation, and encourages participation in class discussions or presentations. Metacognitive strategies were another significant aspect of students' strategy use. This strategy can reduce speaking anxiety and lack of confidence of students.. Some participants stated that they actively plan their learning routines by scheduling time for language practice and prioritizing specific language skills. However, some responses show that although most students demonstrated awareness and application of metacognitive strategies, such as planning, monitoring, and evaluating their learning, there were still several students who did not actively engage in these strategies. This is consistent with Oxford's (1990) SILL, which emphasizes that metacognitive strategies are not only about knowing the learning process but also about actively organizing and managing it. Students who regularly create study plans, seek feedback, and reflect on their progress show high levels of metacognitive involvement, which may lead to more effective language learning. In contrast, students who do not make study plans show a lack of strategic awareness or initiative, which may result in slower progress. The differences in the use of metacognitive strategies suggest that students who systematically engage in planning, monitoring, and evaluating their speaking efforts-such as setting clear goals, reflecting on performance, and adjusting methods-tend to experience marked improvements in fluency and reductions in speaking anxiety, while those who lack such deliberate regulation often remain static despite their efforts. Dangin and Hartati (2022) confirmed this pattern, showing a strong positive relationship between metacognitive strategy awareness and speaking ability among Indonesian university students, indicating that greater metacognitive engagement may predict better oral performance.

Affective strategies were also employed to regulate emotions during speaking tasks. The qualitative of this study, indicates that many learners make conscious efforts to manage their

emotions, motivation, and attitudes in language learning components of affective strategies can reduce anxiety, fear of making mistakes and lack of confidence. Students responses from the interview indicate that most learners are not only aware of their emotional states, but also use strategies to regulate these emotions, especially anxiety, which is usually associated with the task of speaking in a second language. The repetition of techniques such as deep breathing and positive thinking shows that these affective strategies are internalized and practiced regularly by many students, in line with Oxford's (1990) view that affective strategies help students reduce anxiety, control their emotional responses, and building a positive attitude towards speech errors. Mora and Arnold (2000) also added, who emphasize that emotions such as fear, shyness, and low self-confidence significantly affect language learning success, especially in speaking performance where learners are under social pressure. They argue that emotional factors are often underestimated in language teaching, even though they can be a barrier or a support for learners. In response to this challenge, Mora and Arnold (2000) recommend the use of affective strategies such as relaxation techniques, positive visualization, and constructive mindset development, which can empower learners to take risks, accept mistakes as part of the learning process, and gradually build communicative confidence. This suggests that the use of personalized affective strategies is shaped by students' personalities and attitudes towards language learning. Thus, when learners are prepared with emotional management techniques, they are more likely to overcome the challenges and be able to produce speaking utterances. The last strategy in English language learning by Rebecca Oxford (1990) in SILL is social strategy that can reduce students' challenges including fear of making mistakes and lack of confidence. From interview and questionnaire in findings, students asking peers or instructors for help, participating in group discussions, and using speaking opportunities in class to practice. Some learners seek out opportunities to communicate in English with peers, or even native speakers, as they believe that such interactions are crucial to improving fluency and self-confidence. By getting used to speaking in groups or native speakers, students become more comfortable and confident. In addition, students' willingness to ask for correction demonstrates a growth-oriented attitude and a desire to improve. This is line with Vygotsky (1978), the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) emphasizes that learners can reach higher levels of language proficiency when they engage in social strategies, such as asking for clarification, participating in group discussions, cooperative learning, peer interaction, and guided dialogue as these serve as scaffolds that bridge their current abilities and potential development. Similarly, Gass and Selinker (1995) argue that interaction provides students with opportunities to understand input and output, negotiation of meaning, and feedback - elements that are crucial in second language development. This theoretical perspective asserts that social strategies, such as asking questions, seeking clarification, and cooperating with others, foster a dynamic and supportive environment where students feel encouraged to take linguistic risks and develop their communicative competence. Therefore, that social strategies play an important role in the language learning process by encouraging interaction, cooperation, and communication. Through the consistent use of social strategies, students not only practice the target language but also build meaningful learning experiences that are based on social interaction.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of data collected through questionnaires and interviews with 22 sixth semester English education students, this study has successfully identified the challenges faced by the students and strategies in producing English utterances. The findings reveal that psychological factors such as anxiety, fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence, as well as linguistic factors such as lack of vocabulary and lack of grammar continue to be major obstacles to effective oral communication. These challenges often cause students to avoid speaking English outside the formal classroom environment, which in turn reduces their opportunities for practice and hinders their language development. The most commonly reported issue is anxiety, with a high percentage of students admitting to being nervous during presentations and spontaneous interactions in class. This was followed by fear of making mistakes and fear of making mistake indicating that many students still see mistakes as a source of embarrassment rather than as an opportunity to improve.

Despite these challenges, the students in this study use strategic in their learning process by applying strategies in Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). These include memory strategies for vocabulary retention, cognitive strategies for practicing language input, compensatory strategies for managing gaps in vocabulary or grammar, metacognitive

strategies for planning and monitoring progress, affective strategies for regulating emotional responses, and social strategies for encouraging peer and instructor interaction. The combination of these strategies not only helps learners overcome their weaknesses, but also encourages more proactive and self-regulated learning behaviors. This suggests that although challenges in speaking remain, students are not passive recipients of instruction; they actively find ways to improve their speaking performance, especially through consistent engagement with strategic learning. Practically, these show the importance for teachers to not only teach the language component, but also explicitly introduce and support the use of learning strategies, especially those that can increase self-confidence, reduce anxiety, and encourage social interaction. Language teachers should create a supportive classroom environment where students feel safe to take risks, make mistakes, and reflect on their progress. For future research, further investigations involving larger and more diverse samples may increase the generalizability of these findings. In addition, for future research examining the effectiveness of specific strategies over time would provide deeper insights into how strategy use evolves and contributes to the development of speaking ability. Overall, this study reaffirms that a balanced focus on psychological readiness and strategic competence is essential to empower students to become more confident and effective to produce English speaking utterances.

FUNDING STATEMENT

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not for profit sectors.

REFERENCES

- Afifah, M., Ningrum, A. S. B., Wahyuni, S., & Syaifulloh, B. (2024). Self-efficacy, anxiety, and emotional intelligence: Do they contribute to speaking performance? *Journal of Languages and Language Teaching*, 12(2), 793–806. <https://doi.org/10.33394/joltt.v12i2.10798>
- August, D., Carlo, M., Dressler, C., & Snow, C. (2005). The critical role of vocabulary development for English language learners. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice*, 20(1), 50–57. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5826.2005.00120.x>
- Boone, H. N., & Boone, D. A. (2012). Analyzing likert data. *Journal of Extension*, 50(2). <https://doi.org/10.34068/joe.50.02.48>.
- Chamot, A. U., & O'Malley, J. M. (1994). The CALLA handbook: Implementing the cognitive academic language learning approach. *Addison Wesley Publishing Company*.
- Chamot, A. U. (2004). Issues in language learning strategy research and teaching. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 1(1), 14–26.
- Cohen, A. D. (2014). *Strategies in learning and using a second language* (2nd ed.). *Routledge*.
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). *Pearson Education*.
- Dangin, D., & Hartati, E. (2022). Students' metacognitive strategies awareness and speaking ability: A correlational study. *IJLECR (International Journal of Language Education and Cultural Review)*, 8(1), 34–40. <https://doi.org/10.21009/IJLECR.081.05>
- Gan, Z. (2012). Understanding L2 speaking problems: Implications for ESL curriculum development in a teacher training institution in Hong Kong. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 37(1), 43–59. <https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2012v37n1.4>
- Gass, S. M., & Selinker, L. (1995). Second language acquisition: An introductory course. *Language*, 71(3), 576. <https://doi.org/10.2307/416225>.
- Haidara, Y. (2016). Psychological factor affecting English speaking performance for the English learners in Indonesia. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 4(7), 1501–1505. <https://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2016.040701>
- Hardan, A. A. (2013). Language learning strategies: A general overview. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 106, 1712–1726. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.12.194>
- Heriansyah, H. (2012). Speaking problems faced by the English Department students of Syiah Kuala University. *Lingua Didaktika: Jurnal Bahasa dan Pembelajaran Bahasa*, 6(1), 37–44. <https://doi.org/10.24036/ld.v6i1.7398>
- Hong Nam, K., & Leavell, A. G. (2006). Language learning strategy use of ESL students in an intensive English learning context. *System*, 34(3), 399–415. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2006.02.002>

- Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., & Cope, J. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal*, 70(2), 125–132. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.1986.tb05256.x>
- Kumar, R. (2011). Research methodology: A step-by-step guide for beginners (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Lar, M. A. A., & Maulina, M. (2021). Students' self-confidence in speaking for a live presentation: A literature review. *Klasikal: Journal of Education, Language Teaching and Science*, 3(3), 88–95. <https://doi.org/10.52208/klasikal.v3i3.111>
- Lawtie, F. (2004). Teaching speaking skills 2: Overcoming classroom problems. *TE Editor*.
- Lee, K. R. (2010). The impact of language learning strategies on English proficiency among Korean university students. *English Language Teaching*, 3(1), 68–81. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v3n1p68>
- Levelt, W. J. M. (1989). Speaking: From intention to articulation. *The MIT Press*.
- Marzulina, L., Harto, K., Erlina, D., Holandyah, M., Desvitasari, D., Arnilawati, A., Fridiyanto, F., & Mukminin, A. (2021). Challenges in teaching English for EFL learners at Pesantren: Teachers' voices. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 11(12), 1581–1589. <https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1112.04>
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Mora, C. F., & Arnold, J. (2000). Affect in language learning. *TESOL Quarterly*, 34(4), 790–791. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3587794>
- Moser, A., & Korstjens, I. (2017). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 1: Introduction. *European Journal of General Practice*, 23(1), 271–273. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13814788.2017.1375093>
- Mulyani, S. (2018). Investigating factors causing students' anxiety in speaking English. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, 7(4), 99–105. <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.7n.4p.99>
- Nakatani, Y. (2006). Developing an oral communication strategy inventory. *The Modern Language Journal*, 90(2), 151–168. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2006.00390.x>
- Nakatani, Y. (2010). Identifying strategies that facilitate EFL learners' oral communication: A classroom study using multiple data collection procedures. *The Modern Language Journal*, 94(1), 116–136. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2009.00987.x>
- Nation, I. S. P. (2001). Learning vocabulary in another language. *Cambridge University Press*. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139524759>
- Ork, Y., Chin, P., Ban, T., & Em, S. (2024). Factors causing students' challenges in learning English speaking skills: A review. *Cambodian Journal of Educational and Social Sciences (CJESS)*, 1(1), 26–36. <https://doi.org/10.69496/cjess.v1i1.6>
- Oxford, R. L. (1990). Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know. *Newbury House*.
- Raco, J. R. (2018). Metode penelitian kualitatif: Jenis, karakteristik dan keunggulannya. *PT Gramedia Widiasarana Indonesia*.
- Rao, P. S. (2019). The importance of speaking skills in English classrooms. *Alford Council of International English & Literature Journal (ACIELJ)*, 2(2), 6–18.
- Richards, J. C., & Farrell, T. S. C. (2005). Professional development for language teachers: Strategies for teacher learning. *Cambridge University Press*.
- Robah, A., & Anggrisia, N. F. (2023). Exploring challenges and strategies in English speaking among Indonesian university students: A case study of AKM University. *Englisia: Journal of Language, Education, and Humanities*, 11(1), 55–74. <https://doi.org/10.22373/ej.v11i1.19156>
- Rohman, A., & Pane, W. S. (2023). Students' perspective on challenges in English oral presentation: A case study. *Inquest Journal*, 1(02), 72–77. <https://doi.org/10.53622/ij.v1i02.176>
- Syafitri, N., Amiruddin, E. P., & Vinalia, T. (2023). An analysis of factors causing anxiety in speaking English at SMP Negeri 2 Baubau. *English Education Journal*, 9(2), 126–134. <https://doi.org/10.55340/e2j.v9i2.1409>
- Tauchid, A. (2023). English speaking strategies by EFL learners to enhance self-efficacy. *Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidik Indonesia*, 2(2), 48–61. <https://doi.org/10.56916/jipi.v2i2.663>
- Tilfarlıoğlu, F., & Yalçın, E. (2005). An analysis of the relationship between the use of grammar learning strategies and student achievement at English preparatory classes. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 1(2), 155–169.

- Tuan, N. H., & Mai, T. N. (2015). Factors affecting students' speaking performance at Le Thanh Hien High School. *Asian Journal of Educational Research*, 3(2), 8–23.
- Ur, P. (1996). A course in language teaching: Practice and theory. *Cambridge University Press*.
- Vandergrift, L. (2003). Orchestrating strategy use: Toward a model of the skilled second language listener. *Language Learning*, 53(3), 463–496. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9922.00232>
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes. *Harvard University Press*.
- Weinstein, C. E., & Mayer, R. E. (1983). The teaching of learning strategies. *Innovation Abstracts*, 5(32), 1–2.
- Zagoto, R. C. A. (2025). Analysis of learning strategies in speaking English at the tenth grade students of SMA Negeri 1 Maniamolo. *Research on English Language Education*, 7(1), 62–73. <https://doi.org/10.57094/relation.v7i1.2637>