



# Exploring Students' Strategies in Developing Speaking Skill at the Eleventh Grade of SMA Al-Azhar Mandiri Palu

Retno Ayu Arumdani\*, Ana Kuliahana, Prisna Aswarita Putri

Universitas Islam Negeri Datokarama Palu

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\*Correspondence: Retno Ayu Arumdani

Email: [retnoayuarum99@gmail.com](mailto:retnoayuarum99@gmail.com)

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**Abstract:** The aim of this research was to describe the strategies used by the eleventh-grade student of SMA Al-Azhar Mandiri Palu and the challenges faced by the students in developing speaking skill. This research used a descriptive qualitative approach with five participants selected using purposive sampling technique. Data were collected through interview and document review. Data analysis used were data reduction, data display, and conclusion. The findings revealed that the students employed nearly all types of learning strategies as classified by O'Malley and Chamot. In metacognitive strategy, they utilized self-management, self-monitoring, and self-evaluation. For cognitive strategy, the students applied resourcing, repetition, transfer, keyword method, inferencing, note-taking, and summarizing. Meanwhile, for social-affective strategy, students used asking for clarification, cooperation, and self-talk. This research also revealed various challenges faced by students in developing speaking skill, which are environment challenge, nervousness, fear of judgment, pronunciation and vocabulary difficulty, and lack of confidence. The findings illustrated that learning strategies play an important role in the development of EFL students' speaking skill.

**Keywords:** Speaking Skill, Strategies, Challenges

## Introduction

The ability to speak effectively in English is a crucial skill in the modern world, especially as English serves as a global lingua franca in various fields, including academia, business, and technology (Rao, 2019). These skills not only include the ability to speak fluently, but also include the use of effective communication strategies to convey messages clearly and precisely. In the era of globalization and technological advances, English language skill became one of the essential competencies that had to be possessed by the younger generation, including students at the high school level, as stated in the national curriculum, the *Merdeka Curriculum* (Masita et al, 2024). Nevertheless, many Indonesian high school students still struggle with speaking English fluently. These struggles include limited vocabulary, anxiety during speech, and difficulties in structuring coherent sentences, even after years of instruction. Preliminary observations at SMA Al-Azhar Mandiri Palu indicated that students face similar challenges, although many show strong motivation to develop.

Given that students at the eleventh-grade level have had several years of English learning experience, it is assumed they have developed and applied various learning strategies to overcome challenges. O'Malley and Chamot explain Learning strategies refer to specific cognitive processes or actions that individuals employ to assist in understanding, acquiring, or retaining new information. These strategies, as described by O'Malley and Chamot, fall into metacognitive, cognitive, and social-affective categories. Metacognitive strategies require learners to consciously reflect on and regulate their own learning process, including planning, monitoring, and evaluating their progress. Cognitive strategies focus on how students engage with learning materials, utilize resources, and apply specific techniques to complete tasks. Meanwhile, socio-affective strategies emphasize interaction with others and emotional regulation to support learning (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990).

Several studies have demonstrated that the application of appropriate learning strategies contributes significantly to speaking skill development. (Herlina, Yundayani, & Astuti, 2021) found that the use of technology, can improve students' speaking skill. However, the research did not specifically explore the strategies used by students in their learning process. (Nurkhasanah, 2023) found in her thesis that students who actively use communication strategies tend to have better speaking skills compared to students who do not use these strategies However, the research just focuses more on the communication strategies used by students at home. As previously discussed, studies exploring cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective strategies are still limited, especially from a qualitative perspective

This study aims to explore the strategies used by eleventh-grade students of SMA Al-Azhar Mandiri Palu in developing speaking skill and to identify the challenges faced by students in developing speaking skill. Therefore, this study is titled "Exploring Students' Strategies in Developing Speaking Skill at the Eleventh Grade of SMA Al-Azhar Mandiri Palu.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the understanding of student-centered learning strategies in speaking skill. Practically, this study provides insights for educator and curriculum developer to design language program that are more responsive and appropriate to students' actual learning behavior.

## **Methodology**

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive design. Qualitative research aims to produce descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words and observed behavior (Moleong, 2019). It is commonly used to explore individuals' life stories, experiences, emotions, behaviors, and broader social phenomena (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The participants consisted of five eleventh-grade students from both regular and extension classes at SMA Al-Azhar Mandiri Palu. They were selected through purposive sampling based on permission granted by the school.

Data were collected using two techniques: semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews allowed for flexibility in exploring participants' experiences and thoughts regarding their speaking strategies and challenges (Fiantika et al.,

2022). The researcher prepared a nine-question interview guide and documented responses through notes and audio recordings to capture the students' personal and detailed perspectives.

Document analysis involved evaluating printed and electronic documents related to students' speaking development (Bowen, 2009) It can help track how their report grade and other student achievement which has an effect on the development of participants' speaking skill. Data analysis followed the interactive model by Miles and Huberman, which consists of three steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Fattah, 2023). In the reduction stage, essential data were summarized. In the display stage, data were organized in narrative form. Finally, conclusions were drawn based on emerging patterns and verified for consistency.

To ensure data validity, the researcher applied triangulation and enhanced persistence. Triangulation was conducted by comparing data across sources, methods, and time to minimize bias (Fiantika et al., 2022). Persistence was achieved by consistently revisiting and cross-checking data throughout the research process (Sugiyono, 2013).

## Result and Discussion

### A. Students' Strategies in Developing Speaking Skill

#### 1. Metacognitive Strategy

Students at SMA Al-Azhar Mandiri Palu demonstrated the use of three key metacognitive strategies: planning, monitoring, and evaluation.

##### a. Planning

In planning students applied self-management strategy. Students took control of their own learning by setting goals and motivating themselves to speak English more frequently. As S1/KB stated:

*"saya memaksa diriku untuk lebih "ayo" berani berbicara ke orang. Jangan terus malu-malu, karena kalau terus seperti itu yang ada saya tertinggal dengan orang lain".*

Similarly, S4/RR, she said:

*"saya orangnya gampang termotivasi dari orang lain jadi kalau misalnya orang lain bisa saya harus bisa. Jadi bisa setara dengan mereka".*

All the utterance above is connected by the research which states there is a positive and significant correlation between students' motivation in English speaking skill (Diah & Audi, 2020).

##### b. Monitoring

Students do some activities that help them to measure their accuracy in using pronunciation, understanding the interlocutor and increasing vocabulary by doing some activities such as asking the lecturer, looking in the dictionary, and consulting friends.

S1/KB: *"saya akan coba translate atau cari makna dari kalimat yang saya tidak mengerti tersebut".*

S3/BZ: *"saya bakal cari maksud percakapan tadi mungkin di kamus atau ponsel".*

S5/AA: *"saya akan catat yang saya tidak pahami terus nanti saya cari di buku atau lihat di internet".*

The quotes show that there are similarities in the way they monitor themselves when they do not understand what others are saying by increasing their language learning intensity to looking for on the internet and dictionary to develop their speaking skill.

S4/RR showed a different view but still within the corridor of self-monitoring. She had mention that: *“Semisal saya tidak mengerti biasanya saya menyimak dengan cara memperhatikan nadanya mereka waktu bicara”*.

She realized that she did not understand and chose to listen intensively. More so, self-monitoring is a strategy to help students monitor their comprehension about learning English, especially helping to develop their speaking skill

c. Evaluation

It is checking someone progress and outcomes after the task has been completed. The researcher shows the learning outcomes of the participants in the form of report grade.

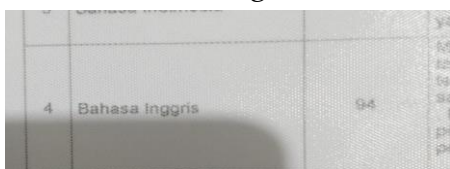


Figure 1. S1/KB Report Grade

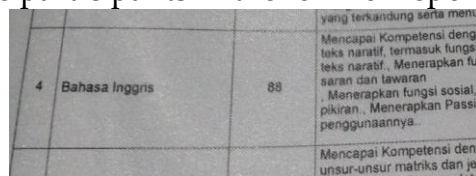


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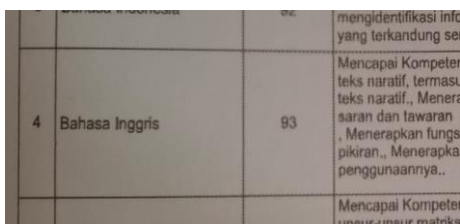


Figure 3. S3/BZ Report Grade

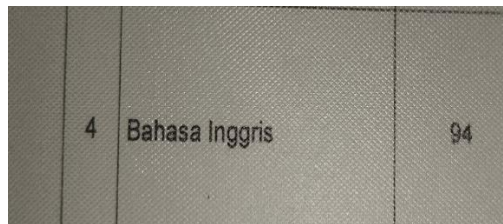


Figure 4. S4/RR Report Grade

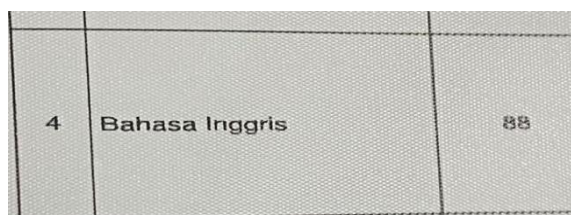


Figure 5. S5/AA Report Grade

it can be seen that report grade can be used as a basis for students to reflect/evaluate on the learning process and result they have undergone particularly in developing speaking skill. Research shows the main purpose of self-reflection is to encourage students to provide internal feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of their responses to task (Yan & Carless, 2021). This was corroborated by the English teacher (ET/SD), who stated:

*...tujuan akhir dari pelajaran bahasa Inggris adalah berkomunikasi dalam bahasa Inggris secara lancar... karena at the end of the day, presentasi mereka harus melalui spoken language.*

## 2. Cognitive Strategy

Cognitive strategies are interaction with material that has been learned, manipulation of material both mentally and physically, or applying a technique to perform learning task. Students at the eleventh grade employed various strategies;

### a. Resourcing

From the research findings, it can be showed all the students applied the resourcing cognitive type of strategy in helps them to develop the speaking skill. They effectively use various language materials, such as books, journal and social media platforms (YouTube, TikTok, and Twitter) to support their language learning process.

S1/KB: *"Youtube, tiktok sih ka"*

S2/MR: *"Buku ada, jurnal dan sosial media paling banyak shi ka"*

S3/BZ: *"kadang saya itu baca buku..."*

S4/RR: *"sejauh ini kalau bahasa inggris ada buku" beberapa yang saya baca, twitter ada (Social-Media), biasa juga saya baca jurnal bgitu juga ka untuk pembelajaran."*

S5/AA: *"Sosial media sih kaa banyak bantu"*

### b. Repetition

It is imitating a language model, including over practice and silent rehearsal. As said by S5/AA: *"Biasa ditulis terus di hafal sih vocabularynya"*. S5/AA also used the strategy of talking in front of a mirror to develop her speaking skill. She further said:

*"kalau saya biasanya berbicara di depan cermin"*.

With S2/MR statement who said:

*"biasa saya latih buat bicara depan cermin anggap kaya bicara ke orang lain seolah-olah kita public speaking di depan banyak orang"*.

This strategy is a form of repetition that is done orally. (Pale & Kamlasi, 2021) highlight that the mirror talking strategy has proven effective in improving students' speaking skill, especially in the aspects of self-confidence and pronunciation.

### c. Transfer

Using linguistic knowledge or skills that have been previously mastered to aid comprehension or expression. S4/RR used this strategy when she participated in storytelling activity, she said:

*karna saya sering cerita kepada teman-teman jadi saya menggunakan metodeku cerita dengan nada berbahasa indonesia tapi makan lama semakin saya tahu bagaimana pronunciation in English jadi saya bisa begitu berbahasa inggris.*

The informant used Indonesian language skill (intonation/narration) and transferred them into English. The experience of storytelling in the mother tongue is utilized as a basis for developing speaking skill in English, and over time, she adapts to English pronunciation and structure.

#### d. Keyword Method

Student employed keyword method by pronouncing the English word using Indonesian phonetic cues which involves recalling a second language word by identifying a similar-sounding word in the first language. As stated by S4/RR: *"biar diingat itu biasa pronunciatation dulu pakai bahasa Indonesia jadi saya tahu ohhh begitu pronuncenya"*.

#### e. Inferencing

It applies existing knowledge to interpret unfamiliar items, predict outcomes, or supply missing information. As said by S4/RR:

*biasanya kalau begitu saya dengar kata-katanya dengan seksama biar saya tau mungkin ada satu kata kunci yang saya paham nah dari situ saya bisa mengerti apa yang dibicarakan kak.*

She used contextual clues, such as key words, to understand the meaning of the conversation despite not knowing all the words used.

#### f. Note Taking

The students used the cognitive strategy of note-taking to remember and increase their vocabulary and supported the development of their speaking skills in English.

S3/BZ stated: *"Biasa di tulis sih ka"*.

S5/AA also stated: *"Biasa ditulis"*.

#### g. Summarizing

Summarize mentally, verbally, or in writing of new information obtained through listening or reading activity. students applied summarizing strategy as a technique to develop speaking skill, where they actively process new information obtained through listening and watching activity, both mentally and verbally, to enrich their understanding and use of language.

S4/RR explained:

*saya itu sering nonton film jadi saya dapat kata-kata baru. Terus, saya itu kadang ada banyak artis dari luar yang saya dengar terus saya dengar lagunya terus ada kata-kata yang saya pahami, jadi buat saya tahu arti baru dari bahasa inggris.*

Slightly different with S1/KB, he stated:

*"Sering-sering saja nonton orang berbicara bahasa inggris"*.

Moreover, S5/AA also use this strategy, as she said:

*"melihat video-video. karna kalau saya itu cenderung merekam apa yang saya lihat jadi setelah saya lihat langsung saya terapkan"*.

### 3. Socio-affective strategy

Socio-affective strategy is strategy that help learners regulate and control their emotions, motivation and attitudes towards learning, and help learners learn through contact and interaction with other (Robiansyah, Maulid, & Pryla, 2020).

Student at the eleventh grade of SMA Al-Azhar Mandiri Palu apply some subcategories in this strategy such as:

### a. Questioning for clarification

Ask the teacher or peers for explanation, verification, repetition or examples of the material. The students actively use the strategy of asking questions for clarification as a way of overcoming comprehension difficulties either through direct communication with the interlocutor or through the help of friends to understand the material.

S2/MR commented:

*saya biasanya meminta lawan bicara saya untuk menjelaskan secara singkat apa yang dikatakan supaya setidaknya saya paham satu dua kata, dan bisa menyimpulkan isi pembicaraannya.*

S3/BZ also stated: *“saya bakal bertanya ke teman yang lebih paham”*.

### b. Cooperation

Coordinate with peers in solving problems, gather information, analyze learning tasks, practice language activities, and obtain feedback on oral and written performance. S3/BZ mentioned joining an organization helped her express ideas and practice speaking regularly. S4/RR highlighted that being surrounded by friends who speak English motivated her to improve. Similarly, S1/KB shared that connecting with online friends enabled him to continue practicing English at home.

### c. Self-talk

Using mental control to assure oneself that a learning activity will be successful or to reduce anxiety about a task (Vijaya, 2012). This strategy was demonstrated by S2/MR, who emphasized the importance of emotional regulation and mental readiness before performing communicative tasks. S2/MR:

*Kalau untuk saya lebih ke mengendalikan emosi dan meyiapkan mental, karena kalau sudah siap mental otomatis kita siap menghadapi banyak orang pada satu waktu--dengan mental yang tidak siap otomatis berbicara saja sulit dan pasti itu terbata-bata.*

The result of the study which confirmed that the implementation of self-talk strategy can improve the students' speaking skill (Lulu, 2022).

## B. Students' Challenges in Developing Speaking Skill

### 1. Environment Challenge

One of the main challenges in developing English speaking skill is the lack of an environment that supports the practice of the language. As expressed by S1/KB:

*“tantangannya mencari orang untuk bisa di ajak berbicara itu sangat sulit, karna mostly people di sini itu agak susah untuk diajak berbicara apalagi bahasa asing”*.

Without regular interaction in English, learners are often unable to build confidence, receive feedback or develop fluency.

### 2. Nerveousness

For some people, the experience of speaking in front of a crowd can be stressful. This is clearly illustrated in the statement one of the informants S2/MR who revealed that nervousness is the main obstacle in developing speaking skills. He said:

*lebih ke tatapan orang, karna itu buat hati merasa gugup otomatis takut salah. Jadi kadang kalau gugup kadang terbata-bata, terpotong-potong dan sangat sulit dikendalikan.*

As a result of this nervousness, he has difficulty in conveying ideas smoothly can interfere with concentration and make participants lose their way when speaking.

### 3. Fear of judgement

Liu in Riqah explains that students' concerns about receiving a poor evaluation stem from their worries about what their teacher, classmate or others think of their English skill, without considering the students' actual level of competence (Riqah, Noni, & Salija, 2024).

With S3/BZ statement which stated:

*"Kalau misalnya tantangannya itu, sudah berbicara ini didepan, itu kaya takut dilihat orang begitu, kaya takut dikira aneh begitu".*

The expression illustrated the fear of being judged negatively when having to speak in public.

### 4. Pronunciation and vocabulary difficulty

Pronunciation inconsistencies between British, American, and Australian English often cause confusion for Indonesian learners (Fadillah, 2020). S4/RR admitted: *"mengucapkan pronunciation itu... jadi saya bingung bagaimana pronunciation-nya ini,"* highlighting the difficulty in identifying correct pronunciation. She also noted challenges in vocabulary: *"biasa bingung juga apa yang mau dibilang,"* indicating a struggle to express ideas due to limited word knowledge.

This was reinforced by the English teacher (ET/SD), who stated: *"Kosakata. Kadang pronunciation juga... jadi mereka kaya takut... ketika kosakata mereka lupa mereka langsung ke bahasa Indonesia."* These insights confirm that pronunciation and vocabulary remain major obstacles in students' speaking development.

### 5. Lack of Confidence

Lack of confidence often hinders students from speaking comfortably (Geria, 2022). S5/AA stated, *"Keberanian. Karena tidak mudah untuk berbicara di depan banyak orang,"*. This shows that there is a barrier in the form of a lack of self-confidence which affects the courage to speak English. The English teacher confirmed that even students with good English skill tend to underperform due to nervousness and shyness. He emphasized that confidence is essential. Without it, students struggle to demonstrate their actual speaking ability.

## Discussion

The strategies classified by O'Malley and Chamot were used by eleventh-grade students at SMA Al-Azhar Mandiri Palu to develop speaking skill. In metacognitive strategy, students used self-management, self-monitoring, and self-evaluation. In self-management, students motivated themselves to speak in English and established speaking practice routines. This aligns with O'Malley and Chamot who stated that self-management helps create effective learning conditions. Through self-monitoring, students checked their understanding by using a dictionary, translating unfamiliar sentences online, noting down unfamiliar points, and listening carefully. When applying self-monitoring strategy, learners

will become independent and can control their own learning and learn to learn for life (Maricel, 2023). In self-evaluation, students reflected on their speaking skill through report grade as an indicator of their practice success. This aligns with the concept of self-evaluation as a means to support learning autonomy (Anwar & Aberash, 2024).

The cognitive strategy the students used resources (using books, articles, especially social media platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and Twitter), repetition (writing and repeating vocabulary and speaking in front of a mirror), transfer (using Indonesian storytelling techniques and later adjusting her pronunciation to suit English), keyword method (remembering by pronouncing English words in an Indonesian way), inferring (identifying key words in speech to infer overall meaning), note-taking (writing down new words), and summarizing (processing new information from watching videos, movies and listening to music in English). This shows that learners, regardless of their academic background, actively use cognitive strategies such as resourcing, repetition, inferencing, and note-taking in learning English (Talok, Hornay, & Djehatu, 2023). The socio-affective strategy identified were asking for clarification, cooperation, and self-talk. Students asked peers for help to better understand material, joined organization or peer group, and sought online speaking partners to practice. Through self-talk, they mentally prepared and managed emotions before speaking. Social-affective strategy help learners manage emotions and develop language skills through interaction, especially with peers (Razawi & Mohamad 2024).

Despite of the strategies used, the students faced several challenges. There was environment challenge, nervousness, fear of judgment, pronunciation and vocabulary difficulty, and lack of confidence. These barriers are commonly experienced by second language learners. Indonesian EFL students generally struggle with vocabulary limitations, low self-confidence, and lack of speaking partners (Rizkon et al., 2023). Lack of speaking practice, fear of making mistakes, weak mastery of vocabulary and grammar, low motivation and participation, lazy reading, embarrassment, infrequent use of dictionaries, nervousness, fear of criticism, and difficulty in pronouncing unfamiliar words (Hariswan, Ismail & Nova 2022).

Although students employed various metacognitive, cognitive, and socio-affective strategies, several strategies outlined in O'Malley and Chamot's framework such as advance organizers, selective attention, functional planning, grouping, deduction, imagination, auditory representation, and elaboration were not found. This absence could have been clarified through observation, but it was not conducted because the teacher did not give permission as the students were preparing for exam.

## Conclusion

The conclusion of this study indicates that the eleventh-grade students of SMA Al-Azhar Mandiri Palu utilized three categories of strategies classified by O'Malley and Chamot, which were metacognitive, cognitive, and socio-affective to develop speaking skill. The findings explained that students used the strategies described by the theory with their typical activity and frequency. Students faced challenges in developing their speaking skill,

including environment challenge, nervousness, fear of judgment, pronunciation and vocabulary difficulty, and lack of confidence.

The results of this study indicate that the language learning strategies classified by O'Malley and Chamot are highly relevant and important to be integrated into the English language learning process at the high school level. The challenges in developing speaking skill indicate the need for more structured support from teachers and school stakeholders.

For future research, it is recommended to include classroom observation to identify implicit learning strategies that may not be revealed through interview. The number of participant should also be expanded to obtain richer data. Additionally, the use of a mixed-methods approach is recommended to generate more comprehensive data and a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

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