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# Fostering Self-Awareness and Self-Regulation in English Speaking Skills through Metacognitive Strategies: A Qualitative Perspective

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**Abstract:** This study investigates how metacognitive strategies foster self-awareness and self-regulation in English speaking among university students. Employing a qualitative research design, data were collected through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with English language students to explore their experiences using planning, monitoring, and evaluating strategies to develop speaking skills. Findings show that applying metacognitive strategies enables students to effectively plan speech content, monitor language use in real-time, and reflect on performance for continuous improvement. Students reported increased confidence, clearer expression of ideas, and a heightened ability to identify personal strengths and weaknesses in speaking. Additionally, the study highlights the crucial role of guided instruction and supportive feedback from lecturers in enhancing learners' metacognitive awareness and promoting autonomous learning behaviors. These results suggest that metacognitive strategy instruction serves as a powerful pedagogical tool for improving speaking proficiency and learner autonomy, underscoring its importance in English language education at the tertiary level.

**Keywords:** self-Regulated, Self-Awareness, Speaking Skills, Qualitative Research, English Language Learning

## Introduction

In the context of English language learning, speaking remains one of the most essential yet challenging skills to master, particularly in higher education where students are expected to communicate ideas clearly, confidently, and effectively. Despite years of instruction, many students struggle with fluency, organization of ideas, and anxiety during oral communication. These difficulties often stem not only from linguistic gaps but also from a lack of self-awareness and self-regulation in their learning process. Therefore, there is a growing need for instructional approaches that go beyond traditional speaking drills and address the cognitive and metacognitive aspects of learning to speak effectively.

Metacognition allows students to be more expert-like in their thinking and more effective and efficient in their learning. While collaborating in small groups, students can also stimulate metacognition in one another, leading to improved outcomes. Ever since metacognition was first described (Flavell, 1979), enthusiasm for its potential impact on student learning has remained high. Metacognitive strategies such as planning, monitoring, and evaluating have emerged as powerful tools in helping learners take control of their own

learning processes. When applied to speaking, these strategies encourage students to consciously prepare for speaking tasks, stay aware of their performance in real-time, and reflect on their output to identify areas of improvement. Through these reflective practices, learners are able to develop greater self-awareness (recognizing their speaking habits, challenges, and strengths) and self-regulation (managing their behavior and strategies to improve performance), both of which are crucial for communicative success and lifelong learning. This study seeks to address that gap by investigating how university students cultivate self-awareness and self-regulation in English speaking through the application of metacognitive strategies. Through a qualitative approach, the study aims to gain insight into students' experiences, the obstacles they face, and the advantages they perceive while developing into more confident and independent English speakers. Studies have shown that metacognitive strategies improve English speaking skills in university students (Neman & Rolangon, 2024) (Tulusita, 2016).

Based on the statements above about the metacognitive strategy in teaching speaking, the researcher proposes a research dealing with title Fostering Self-Awareness and Self-Regulation in English Speaking Skills through Metacognitive Strategies: A Qualitative Perspective, which this research find out the students' face challenges and the in speaking skill, also to find out the impact of implemented metacognitive strategies in teaching speaking.

Based on above, the researcher formulates research questions as follows:

1. How do students develop self-awareness in their English speaking performance through metacognitive strategies?
2. How do students regulate their speaking behaviors and strategies using metacognitive approaches?
3. What challenges do students face in applying metacognitive strategies in speaking, and how do students overcome the challenges ?
4. How does the use of metacognitive strategies impact students' speaking fluency, confidence, and autonomy?

## Literature Review

### a. Metacognitive Strategies in speaking skills

Harmer (2001) explains that speaking fluently requires more than just understanding language element. It also involves the skill to process both information and language spontaneously (p. 269). He further emphasizes that when teaching or developing speaking skills, it is crucial to incorporate them into three key stages: introducing new language, engaging in practice, and participating in communicative activities.

Metacognitive strategies play a crucial role in the development of speaking skills, especially in the context of second language learning. These strategies involve learners actively planning, monitoring, and evaluating their speaking processes. Through these higher-order thinking skills, learners gain control over how they communicate, allowing them to become more reflective, autonomous, and effective speakers. It involve techniques that assist students in understanding how they learn. Essentially, these strategies encourage

learners to reflect on their own thinking processes and to manage activities such as planning, monitoring, and evaluating in order to achieve specific learning goals. When students apply these strategies together, they become more conscious of their learning habits, allowing them to absorb new information more effectively and develop greater independence in thinking. By mastering these processes, students can enhance key aspects of learning—such as organizing, overseeing, assessing, and extending their understanding—while carrying out tasks. Through the use of metacognitive strategies, they gain better control over their cognitive functions (Mahdavi, 2014). Nevertheless, many students, especially beginners, are not yet aware of the need to regulate and apply these strategies in their language learning journey (Dwina, 2016). Metacognitive preparation enhances confidence in virtual speaking assessments (Lestari & Nugroho, 2022)

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) define metacognitive strategies as executive functions that help students manage their learning activities. In the context of speaking, these strategies may involve organizing thoughts before engaging in a task, paying attention to grammar and fluency while speaking, and reviewing one's performance afterward to identify areas for improvement.

Guided instruction and feedback are crucial for learner autonomy (Mustikasari & Nur, n.d.; Puspitasari & Nugroho, n.d.). Their work emphasizes that students who apply these strategies tend to be more successful in communicating their ideas clearly and confidently. Building upon this idea, Goh (2008) argues that effective speaking instruction should not focus solely on fluency or accuracy, but also include explicit training in metacognitive strategies. She suggests that students should be guided to apply strategies before, during, and after speaking tasks, which helps them to plan more effectively, monitor their language use in real time, and reflect critically on their output. This approach enables learners to take greater responsibility for their own progress and encourages self-regulation. Foundational theory supports the role of metacognition in cognitive development (Flavell, 1979).

Vandergrift and Goh (2012) further highlight that metacognitive instruction is not limited to receptive skills like listening but is also applicable to productive skills such as speaking. They emphasize that when students are taught to monitor and evaluate their spoken language strategically, they are better equipped to handle real-time communication and adapt their speech to suit various contexts. This reinforces the importance of integrating metacognitive elements across all language skills. Cohen (1998) also supports this perspective by noting that learners who consciously plan their speech, monitor how it is being delivered, and evaluate the outcome are more likely to be successful communicators. According to Cohen, such strategic learners are able to adjust their performance based on the communicative demands and the feedback they receive from their listeners. Purwanto et al. (2024) investigated the implementation of metacognitive strategies in Indonesian speaking classrooms. Their findings indicate that students who were taught to use planning, monitoring, and evaluation techniques in speaking showed increased levels of self-confidence and reduced speaking anxiety. Furthermore, these students were better able to organize their ideas and respond more effectively during oral tasks, suggesting that metacognitive strategy training significantly contributes to the development of speaking

competence. These previous studies collectively support the integration of metacognitive strategy training in speaking instruction. When learners are taught to plan, monitor, and evaluate their speaking tasks, they develop greater self-awareness, confidence, and control over their communication, which ultimately leads to improved speaking proficiency and learner autonomy.

**b. Self-awareness and Self-Regulation in Speaking skills**

Self-awareness and self-regulation are two interrelated psychological constructs that play a significant role in language learning, particularly in the development of speaking skills. Self-awareness refers to a learner's ability to consciously recognize their own speaking abilities, emotional responses, strengths, weaknesses, and patterns of performance. Self-regulation, meanwhile, involves the capacity to manage one's behavior, emotions, and strategies in order to achieve speaking goals effectively and independently. Together, these skills empower learners to take control of their learning process and make continuous improvements in how they communicate. Being aware of language enhances a person's ability to deliver messages with clarity and precision. Individuals who possess strong self-awareness are able to observe and control their facial expressions, vocal tone, and physical gestures during speaking. In the educational context, promoting cultural awareness among second language (L2) learners is believed to support the integration of language proficiency with successful intercultural communication.

According to Zimmerman (2002), self-regulated learners are those who are "metacognitively, motivationally, and behaviorally active participants in their own learning process." In speaking tasks, this means that learners set goals, plan their performance, monitor how they are speaking in real time, and reflect afterward to make adjustments. Self-awareness is a critical starting point in this cycle, as learners must first recognize what aspects of their speaking (e.g., fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, anxiety) need attention before they can regulate them effectively. Gkonou and Oxford (2016) explain that emotional self-awareness helps learners manage speaking anxiety and other affective barriers that hinder oral communication. When learners understand how their emotions influence their performance, they are better equipped to apply coping strategies, such as positive self-talk or relaxation techniques, to regulate their affective states and speak more confidently. This emotional dimension of self-awareness is crucial in communicative settings where performance pressure is high. In addition, Flavell (1979), who introduced the concept of metacognition, emphasized that awareness of one's cognitive processes enables better planning and strategy use. When applied to speaking, metacognitive self-awareness allows learners to identify effective and ineffective strategies (e.g., noticing overuse of filler words or pauses) and adapt their approach accordingly. This strategic thinking underpins self-regulation, as learners become able to manage their speech production consciously.

Meanwhile, Vandergrift and Goh (2012) also stress the importance of reflective practices that promote self-awareness in speaking. They argue that learners benefit from structured tasks such as keeping speaking journals, peer feedback sessions, or recording and analyzing their own speech. These activities increase learners' metacognitive engagement and promote a habit of reflection that supports self-regulation. Recent studies

in the Indonesian context (e.g., Purwanto et al., 2024) further affirm that students who develop self-awareness of their speaking strengths and challenges are more likely to set realistic goals, choose suitable strategies, and engage more deeply in the learning process. They also demonstrate improved autonomy, which is crucial in higher education, where learners are expected to take responsibility for their own progress. Fostering self-awareness and self-regulation in speaking skills enables learners to become reflective and independent communicators. Through awareness of their speaking processes and the ability to adjust behavior and strategies, learners can improve fluency, reduce anxiety, and enhance overall performance. Therefore, integrating activities that build both self-awareness and self-regulation into speaking instruction is essential for promoting long-term oral proficiency and learner autonomy.

Self-regulation in speaking skills refers to a student's ability to manage their own cognitive, emotional, and behavioral processes before, during, and after speaking activities. It involves setting communication goals, planning what to say, monitoring speech performance in real-time, and reflecting on outcomes to improve future performance. Zimmerman (2002) describes self-regulation as a proactive process where learners take control of their own learning through goal setting, self-monitoring, self-instruction, and self-reflection. In speaking, this means being aware of language use, actively correcting errors, managing anxiety, and adapting to the demands of real-time communication. It is essential because speaking in a second language is cognitively demanding. Students must organize their thoughts, select appropriate vocabulary, structure sentences, and manage fluency—all while interacting with others. According to O'Malley and Chamot (1990), students who apply metacognitive strategies such as planning and self-monitoring are often more effective speakers. These strategies align closely with self-regulatory behaviors. For example, a self-regulated speaker might prepare key points before a presentation (planning), adjust speech based on listener feedback (monitoring), and evaluate fluency afterward to identify areas of improvement (evaluation). Self-regulation also supports emotional control, which is vital in speaking tasks that may provoke anxiety. As noted by Tseng et al. (2006), students with stronger self-regulatory capacities are better at maintaining motivation and overcoming setbacks in communication. This contributes to greater confidence and long-term speaking proficiency. It empowers language students to become independent, reflective, and adaptable speakers. It enhances both fluency and confidence by fostering an active role in managing the learning and performance of speaking skills.

## Methodology

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach, aiming to explore how students enhance their self-awareness in English speaking through metacognitive strategies such as reflection, self-assessment, and feedback. It also examined how students regulate their speaking behaviors using these strategies, the challenges students encounter in the process, and the impact of metacognitive strategy use on students' fluency, confidence, and autonomy in speaking. The participants consisted of ten English language students who received instruction from lecturers familiar with metacognitive approaches. To analyze data

collected from classroom observations and interviews, the researcher applied the qualitative data analysis framework by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014**)**, which involves four stages: (1) data collection, (2) data condensation, (3) data display, and (4) drawing and verifying conclusions.

## Discussion

### Findings

Students' self-awareness in English speaking through metacognitive strategies

The researcher found that students had difficulty initiating conversations in front of their peers due to their limited speaking skills. Even when engaging in simple dialogue, many relied on reading directly from textbooks. They developed self-awareness primarily through reflection on their speaking experiences. Many students reported becoming more aware of their strengths, such as vocabulary range or pronunciation clarity, and of their weaknesses, including nervousness or lack of fluency. This awareness emerged after repeated speaking tasks and guided reflection through self-assessment and feedback sessions.

This aligns with Gkonou and Oxford (2016), who emphasized that emotional and cognitive self-awareness is essential for learners to recognize the factors that influence their speaking. When students became aware of what triggered their anxiety or hesitation, they began to take more control of their performance. Additionally, Vandergrift and Goh (2012) support that metacognitive awareness helps learners become more conscious of how they learn and perform, particularly in speaking contexts that require quick thinking and emotional control.

Students regulate their speaking behaviors using metacognitive strategies

Before speaking, students practiced planning strategies, which involved brainstorming ideas, outlining main points, and preparing useful vocabulary or sentence structures. Some students reported that they mentally rehearsed what they wanted to say or visualized how they would deliver their speech. This phase reflects what O'Malley & Chamot (1990) describe as "advance organizers," which assist learners in activating relevant knowledge and anticipating speaking challenges.

During speaking, students used monitoring strategies. They paid attention to the clarity and structure of their sentences, adjusted their tone or speed as needed, and made spontaneous corrections when they noticed errors or confusion. Some studentss mentioned rephrasing their statements or pausing to rethink a word choice, which aligns with Goh & Taib's (2006) view that effective speakers are those who are able to adapt their speech in real time.

After completing the speaking task, students reflected on their performance using evaluation strategies. They considered what aspects went well and what needed improvement. Some studentss noted keeping mental or written notes about their fluency, grammar use, or nervousness, which helped them set goals for future improvement. According to Vandergrift & Goh (2012), this type of evaluative reflection strengthens learners' control over their learning and fosters continuous improvement.

Students exhibited self-regulation by intentionally planning their speech, closely monitoring their performance as they spoke, and engaging in reflective evaluation afterward. Several students shared that they mentally rehearsed, outlined key points, or prepared useful expressions before starting their speaking tasks. While speaking, they paid attention to their delivery by managing their speed, modifying sentence structures, or rewording statements for better clarity. Following the activity, they frequently reflected on their performance to identify both successful aspects and areas needing improvement.

These behaviors align with Zimmerman's (2002) self-regulated learning cycle, where learners engage in forethought, performance, and reflection. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) also highlight the importance of metacognitive strategies in managing complex language tasks.

Students' challenges when applying metacognitive strategies in speaking skills

While metacognitive strategies offer clear benefits for developing speaking skills, students often encountered several challenges in applying them effectively. A common obstacle was language anxiety, which hinders students from planning and monitoring their speech confidently. Many students also struggle with a limited range of vocabulary and grammatical structures, which makes it difficult to evaluate or adjust their speaking in real time. Additionally, the lack of familiarity with metacognitive techniques such as self-questioning, goal setting, or reflective evaluation—results in uncertainty about how to implement these strategies during oral tasks. Time pressure during speaking activities, especially in spontaneous conversations, further reduces students' ability to pause and reflect. Despite these challenges, students reported several ways to cope, including collaborative learning, teacher modelling of strategy use, and keeping reflective journals to track progress. With consistent practice and guidance, students gradually became more comfortable and autonomous in applying metacognitive approaches to their speaking performance.

Impact of Metacognitive Strategies on Speaking Fluency, Confidence, and Autonomy

The use of metacognitive strategies has a significant positive impact on students' speaking fluency, confidence, and autonomy in English. Through strategies such as planning, monitoring, and evaluating, students became more intentional and reflective in their approach to speaking tasks. For instance, by planning what they want to say, students organized their ideas, selected appropriate vocabulary, and prepared sentence structures in advance, which contributes to smoother and more fluent delivery. During speaking, the act of monitoring helped students adjust their language use in real time such as rephrasing unclear expressions or managing their speaking pace, allowing for clearer communication and increased fluency. Meanwhile, evaluative reflection after speaking enabled students to assess their strengths and areas for improvement, fostering a growth mindset and boosting self-confidence. As students repeatedly engaged in this cycle of self-regulation, they gain a deeper awareness of their speaking process and begin to take ownership of their learning. This growing sense of control and responsibility leads to increased learner autonomy, as students rely less on teacher feedback and more on their internal strategies to self-correct

and improve. Overall, cognitive strategies empowered learners to become more independent, confident, and proficient speakers of English.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that metacognitive strategies significantly contribute to the development of self-awareness and self-regulation in students' English speaking performance. These results align with prior studies emphasizing the value of metacognitive knowledge in enhancing learners' ability to monitor, control, and evaluate their language use (Veenman et al., 2006; Wenden, 1998). Students in this study exhibited growing awareness of their speaking strengths and weaknesses through activities such as planning speech content, observing their own performance, and engaging in reflective thinking. This self-awareness is foundational in shaping more deliberate and effective speaking practices.

The study also confirms that metacognitive regulation plays a pivotal role in improving learners' speaking behaviors. As noted by O'Malley and Chamot (1990), effective language learners actively engage in planning, monitoring, and evaluating their performance. In this study, students used these regulatory strategies to manage speaking tasks more confidently, adjust speech in real-time, and reflect on outcomes. These behaviors suggest that learners are not only applying metacognitive strategies but are also internalizing them as part of their ongoing speaking development.

Despite these benefits, the findings also reveal that students face challenges in applying metacognitive strategies. High levels of speaking anxiety, limited vocabulary, and time pressure often hindered their ability to implement these strategies effectively. These obstacles are consistent with previous research, which identifies affective and linguistic barriers as major hindrances to the use of metacognitive strategies in real-time communication (Chamot, 2005; Goh & Taib, 2006). Nevertheless, the students in this study demonstrated resilience and adaptability by employing coping strategies such as peer collaboration, modeling, and self-reflection. This illustrates that while challenges are inevitable, learners can gradually overcome them with support and intentional practice.

Importantly, the study highlights the broader impact of metacognitive strategy use on speaking

fluency, confidence, and learner autonomy. Students who consistently applied planning and monitoring techniques reported improvements in speech flow and reduced hesitation. Furthermore, as students gained more control over their speaking process, they expressed increased confidence and willingness to engage in oral communication, even in high-stakes or spontaneous contexts. This shift in learner mindset is significant, as it supports the claim that metacognitive training enhances not only linguistic competence but also psychological readiness and self-efficacy (Oxford, 2011). Finally, the development of learner autonomy was evident as students began to rely more on self-regulation and less on teacher input. They took initiative in setting goals, tracking progress, and making independent corrections, which is a core characteristic of autonomous learners (Little, 1991). These findings suggest that incorporating metacognitive instruction into speaking classes

can empower students to become more self-directed, confident, and reflective communicators.

## Conclusion

This study concludes that metacognitive strategies play a critical role in fostering both self-awareness and self-regulation in students' English speaking skills. Through planning, monitoring, and evaluating their speaking tasks, students became more aware of their strengths, limitations, and progress. Some students apply metacognitive strategies by practicing with peers to expand their vocabulary over time. They also engage in breathing exercises to reduce anxiety and enhance concentration, which helps build self-confidence before speaking tasks. Another students developed reflective habits that helped them organize their thoughts, manage their speech in real time, and assess their own performance after speaking activities. These cognitive and affective processes contributed significantly to increased speaking fluency, enhanced confidence, and the development of learner autonomy. Despite encountering challenges such as language anxiety, limited vocabulary, and time constraints, the students demonstrated a capacity for adaptation by applying coping mechanisms like peer collaboration, teacher modelling, and reflective practice. Overall, the use of metacognitive strategies not only improved students' linguistic performance but also promoted psychological readiness and independent learning. The research underscores the value of embedding metacognitive training in English speaking instruction as a means of supporting sustainable and learner-centered language development.

## Suggestion

Future research could explore the long-term effects of metacognitive strategy training on speaking proficiency across diverse cultural and linguistic contexts to validate and extend the current findings. Additionally, quantitative studies with larger sample sizes might examine the relationship between specific metacognitive strategies and measurable improvements in speaking outcomes. Practically, language educators are encouraged to integrate explicit metacognitive strategy instruction and continuous feedback into their curricula, tailoring support to individual learner needs to enhance autonomy and self-regulation. Developing digital tools or apps that facilitate real-time monitoring and reflection could also provide innovative avenues for promoting metacognitive awareness in language learners.

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