

Developing University Students' Speaking Skill through Metacognitive Strategies

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Abstract

Speaking is a critical communication skill that requires real-time cognitive and metacognitive processes. Metacognitive strategies, including planning, monitoring, and evaluation, have been recognized for their role in enhancing language skills and fostering learner autonomy. Despite extensive studies on language learning strategies, their specific impact on speaking proficiency remains underexplored. This study aims to investigate the role of metacognitive strategies in improving the speaking skills of first-semester students. It also seeks to explore how these strategies can foster learner autonomy and reduce speaking-related anxiety. A quasi-experimental design was employed, involving 30 first semester EFL students divided into experimental and control groups. The experimental group received explicit training in metacognitive strategies, while the control group followed traditional speaking practices. The results revealed significant improvements in the experimental group's speaking proficiency, particularly in fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary use. The experimental group also demonstrated higher levels of self-awareness and confidence compared to the control group. These outcomes substantiate the effectiveness of metacognitive strategies in enhancing speaking skills and promoting learner autonomy. This study concludes that integrating metacognitive strategies into speaking instruction benefits learners by improving speaking proficiency and reducing anxiety. Incorporating these strategies into teaching practices can support learners in achieving greater autonomy and confidence in language acquisition.

Keywords: Metacognitive strategies, speaking skills, first-semester students, learner autonomy, language proficiency

INTRODUCTION

Cognitive strategies are those methods learners use to process and make sense of information. Such activities include note-taking, summarizing, and making inferences (Liu, 2020). The integration of these strategies into the learning process can contribute to learner autonomy, where learners not only understand the content but also reflect on their methods of learning and seek ways through which to improve their learning experience. In recent years, there has been rapid adoption of the use of short videos as a pedagogical tool. Haerazi (2023) highlights the fact that concise video formats can dramatically increase student engagement, help reinforce understanding and build critical thinking about information. Videos also provide a multisensory platform for clear explanation and elaboration of verbal information for deeper understanding of concepts. Combining cognitive and metacognitive strategies with short videos has been very effective in improving critical listening. Videos provide a dynamic learning environment that students can interact with the content actively while applying cognitive strategies like summarizing and note-taking at the same time with the metacognitive strategies—self-monitoring and reflection. Particularly, learners who use videos both in listening and speaking practices under metacognitive strategies obtained meaningful development in listening comprehension compared to others (Zhang et al., 2023). This phenomenon stems from the ability of video to provide a deeper level of engagement with the content, allowing learners to reflect on and manage their learning processes more successfully. Similarly, Bourdeaud'hui et al. (2021) also conducted a study that researched the combination of critical listening exercises with video materials in order to increase students' ability in monitoring their listening strategies for overall comprehension.

Moreover, metacognitive awareness enables students to realize their failure to understand, is a very important ability (Sintari, 2015). For instance, a student may be watching a video and come across ideas that they do not fully understand. Using metacognitive skills, the student is able to pause, reflect, and adjust their approach to the task at hand. This could be done by re-watching the video, taking notes, or even discussing with classmates to confirm understanding. Students with these characteristics have mastery over such complex listening tasks as analyzing content, evaluating the reliability of information, and synthesizing new learning. Students, through the utilization of metacognitive strategies, are able to monitor their comprehension when they are performing listening activities (Alshammari, 2015). As a result, they are processing the information actively and not just passively receiving information. The integration of both cognitive and metacognitive strategies in listening exercises could help the teacher to make students better listeners and become more critical; it could generally improve academic achievement and develop higher-order thinking. Cognitive skills are at the core of academic performance, more so in situations where students are expected to participate in activities that involve critical thinking and problem-solving. Teachers provoke the higher levels of these cognitive skills because it is necessary to present a challenge to induce production. Metacognitive skills, as defined by Flavell (1979), refer to the knowledge and control of one's cognitive processes, metacognition, in essence, refers to the awareness of planning, monitoring, and evaluating one's thought processes for improved learning outcomes. Learners with high metacognitive awareness often gain greater control of their learning behavior; learners thus adjust easily and perform well academically. On the other hand, metacognitive skills allow students to recognize instances of misunderstanding and to apply proactive strategies aimed at filling gaps in their knowledge.

Despite the growing body of research on metacognitive strategies and multimedia learning, the specific interplay between these approaches in developing speaking

proficiency remains underexplored. This study tries to fill this gap by investigating how the integration of short videos and metacognitive strategy instruction can improve speaking skills, reduce anxiety, and promote learner autonomy. By focusing on first semester EFL students, the study attempts to provide insight into the effectiveness of these approaches at the early stages of language learning. Learning is a social process, strongly influenced by others and the environment. Speaking, one of the major language skills, is particularly difficult because it not only requires instant cognitive processing but also the ability to use language in appropriate ways in a variety of social contexts. Speaking skills are normally taught in foreign language classrooms through means of conversation practice, debates, role-plays and discussions. Speaking is an essential communication skill in language learning, requiring learners to process and produce language in real time. It involves complex cognitive and metacognitive processes, making it one of the most challenging skills to develop. Metacognitive strategies, such as planning, monitoring, and evaluation, are critical for improving language skills, particularly speaking. Metacognitive strategies have been arousing interest in recent years, mainly into technology-enhanced learning contexts, such interactive platforms and speech recognition software are used to let learners try out speaking skills in controlled, supportive environment. The majority of these technologies would offer immediate feedback to learner, enabling them to realize mistakes and adjust their speaking strategies on the go (Haerazi, 2023). The development of speaking proficiency has long been recognized as one of the most difficult and important skills in language acquisition. As Goh & Vandergrift (2021) emphasize, speaking is a productive skill that involves the integration of cognitive, linguistic, and socio-cultural competencies; it is a dynamic process that involves real-time processing, which imposes a heavy cognitive demand on learners.

However, most learners of a foreign language experience difficulties related to fluency and accuracy, especially during the early stages of learning (Flavell, 1979). Metacognitive strategies are important because they enable learners to take control of their own learning, reflect on their progress, and change their approaches when they encounter difficulties (Cárdenas & Rodríguez, 2021). Research has demonstrated that metacognitive awareness can significantly improve language learning outcomes, including speaking proficiency, by promoting greater self-efficacy and engagement in the learning process (Zhao et al., 2022). Metacognitive strategies, when correctly incorporated into language teaching, make learners take an active part in their learning. For example, before speaking, learners can set goals that are specific for themselves; during practicing, they will monitor their speech for clarity and precision, and after that, they will review their performance with the aim of locating points of improvement (Yuan & Chunrong, 2023). This process of reflection and adjustment will bring improvement not only in the speaking skills but also in the general language proficiency of learners. This would especially be the case among first-semester learners. In the early stages of language learning, feelings of anxiety and uncertainty usually beset learners, which in effect inhibit them from speaking their minds freely (Tan & Kim, 2021).

The integration of mentioned technologies within metacognitive training results in feedback loop which reinforces students' capacity in self-monitoring and enhances their speaking proficiency. The present study attempts to illustrate an insight into how metacognitive awareness could be fostered in language learners and how it could be used for improving speaking proficiency (Putri et al., 2024). This study would also research integration of multimedia resources, particularly short videos, as helpful tool in improving metacognitive strategy use in language learning. The purpose is finding out whether addition of metacognitive strategy instruction to multimedia learning tools would

significantly improve learners' speaking ability, decrease their foreign language speaking anxiety, and increase learner autonomy.

Despite the established benefits of metacognitive strategies in language learning, their specific impact on speaking proficiency remains underexplored. Speaking differs significantly from other language skills, such as reading or writing, as it demands immediate cognitive processing, fluency, and interaction. It also explores the integration of multimedia resources, specifically short videos, as a means of supporting metacognitive strategy instruction. By focusing on learners in the early stages of language acquisition, this study aims to provide insights into fostering learner autonomy, reducing anxiety, and enhancing confidence in speaking and the role of short video content in supporting metacognitive strategies has been one of the promising avenues for language education.

Videos provide a rich context for speaking skills practice, offering authentic materials with a likeness to real-life communication. It might help reduce this anxiety since, through metacognitive training, learners could gain greater sense of self-awareness and self-regulation, resulting in feeling more in control of their learning. The planned, monitored, and evaluated metacognitive strategies allow learners to cope effectively with these cognitively demanding tasks (Flavell, 1979). It helps learners develop metacognitive awareness, which implies that learners will be able to take better control of their learning processes and thereby improve their ability in planning their speech, monitoring performance in real time, and appraising progress. According to Zhao et al., (2022), the use of metacognitive strategies in language teaching is not only effective in improving speaking proficiency but also beneficial for promoting learner autonomy, self-regulation, and confidence. These strategies enhance not only linguistic proficiency but also foster learner autonomy and reduce speaking-related anxiety (Zhao, Wei, & Li, 2022).

Recent studies emphasize the importance of integrating metacognitive strategies into language teaching to help students become self-regulated learners capable of managing their language acquisition process (Cárdenas & Rodríguez, 2021). This multi-modal input—combining visual, auditory, and linguistic stimuli—engages students in deeper processing and enhances retention (Haerazi, 2023), metacognitive strategies in developing speaking skills. More recently, role of portfolio assessment in science learning, where learners had to engage in employing metacognitive strategies to monitor their own progress (Ulfa et al., 2023). These results relate directly to the area of language learning, in which portfolios might become key reflective tool for learners in their speaking performance and in goal setting and revising strategies. Significantly related (Petrenko & Alto, 2023), metacognitive scaffolding—providing structured opportunities for reflection leads to gains in both language and academic performances. This scaffolding may come into form of structured feedback, peer assessment, or guided self-reflection at whole which allow learner developing their speaking and bring out areas where improvement is needed These unique challenges such as anxiety and vocabulary limitations could hinder learners' performance in real-time communication (Tan & Kim, 2021).

Moreover, potential of multimedia tools, such as short videos, to support metacognitive strategies and enhance speaking skills has not been fully examined, particularly in EFL contexts (Haerazi, 2023), addresses these gaps by investigating the effectiveness of metacognitive strategies in improving speaking proficiency of first-semester EFL students. Along with the metacognitive strategies, anxiety reduction has an important place in speaking development. Speaking in foreign language brings about great anxiety for plenty of learners; this may interfere with both fluency and performance

when speaking (Bourdeaud'hui et al., 2021). Several metacognitive strategies, for instance, reflecting on speaking experiences and setting realistic goals, might help learners reduce fear of producing mistakes and, therefore, raise their confidence in speaking (Liu, 2020).

This study aimed to address the challenges faced by first-semester EFL students in developing speaking proficiency, including anxiety, lack of confidence, and limited learner autonomy. The findings demonstrate that integrating metacognitive strategies—planning, monitoring, and evaluation—into speaking instruction significantly enhances students' self-awareness, confidence, and autonomy in language practice. Quantitative results from pre-test and post-test scores reveal that students in the experimental group showed substantial improvements in fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary use compared to those in the control group.

METHOD

The research method used in this research was quasi-experimental research. This research involved a population of 30 students consisting of two groups, namely the experimental group and the control group, each with 15 students. The purpose of this research was to examine the effect of certain treatments on students' speaking skills. This research used an experimental design by giving a pre-test and post-test of speaking skills to both groups. This research method aimed to determine changes in students' speaking skills after being treated in the experimental group. Data collection was carried out through speaking tests given before and after treatment (pre-test and post-test). The data obtained from the speaking test was analyzed to determine the difference in scores between the experimental group and the control group. Data analysis used statistical techniques to compare pre-test and post-test results, as well as to measure the effect of treatment on improving speaking skills. To analyze the data, t-test was used to find significant differences between the two groups (Sugiyono, 2018).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the metacognitive approach significantly enhances learners' ability to reflect on their learning processes, heightens their self-awareness, and strengthens their confidence in speaking skills. These improvements collectively contribute to better oral communication skills. Quantitative analysis of pre-test and post-test scores, complemented by qualitative data from self-reflection journals, interviews, and classroom observations, provides robust evidence supporting these conclusions.

Table 1 presents the pre-test and post-test speaking proficiency scores for both the experimental and control groups. A normality test was conducted prior to statistical analysis to ensure the data followed a normal distribution. Results from the Shapiro-Wilk test indicated that both pre-test and post-test scores in the experimental and control groups were normally distributed ($p > 0.05$). Following the confirmation of normality, a paired samples t-test was used to compare pre-test and post-test scores within each group, while an independent samples t-test was applied to assess the differences between the groups. In the experimental group, the paired samples t-test showed a significant improvement in speaking proficiency from pre-test ($M = 5.2$, $SD = 0.6$) to post-test ($M = 7.8$, $SD = 0.7$), $t(14) = 12.57$, $p < 0.001$. This demonstrates a strong effect of the metacognitive strategy intervention. In contrast, the control group showed no statistically significant improvement, with pre-test scores ($M = 5.1$, $SD = 0.5$) and post-test scores ($M = 5.3$, $SD = 0.5$), $t(14) = 1.03$, $p = 0.31$. An independent samples t-test comparing post-test scores revealed a statistically significant difference between the experimental group ($M = 7.8$,

SD = 0.7) and the control group (M = 5.3, SD = 0.5), $t(28) = 10.32$, $p < 0.001$. The effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.09$) for the experimental group highlights the practical significance of metacognitive strategy training in enhancing speaking proficiency.

Table 1. Pre-test and Post-test Speaking Proficiency Scores

Group	Pre-test Mean (SD)	Post-test Mean (SD)	t-value	p-value	Effect Size (Cohen's d)
Experimental	5.2 (0.6)	7.8 (0.7)	12.57	< 0.001	1.09
Control	5.1 (0.5)	5.3 (0.5)	1.03	0.31	0.07

These results confirm that the metacognitive strategy training significantly improved speaking proficiency in the experimental group compared to traditional methods. The large effect size further supports the integration of metacognitive strategies into language instruction to foster better outcomes in speaking proficiency. The results clearly indicate that the training in metacognitive strategies has led to a large gain in the speaking ability of the participants in the experimental group. The large effect size, therefore, further supports the statement that metacognitive strategies are effective for improving fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary usage among foreign language learners. Examinations of the self-reflection journals revealed valuable information regarding the participants' engagement with metacognitive strategies. The individuals in the experimental group indicated marked improvements in self-awareness, which they credited to their consistent application of planning, monitoring, and evaluation techniques. For instance, one participant remarked, "I've become more aware of my pronunciation mistakes, and I try to correct them immediately during my speaking tasks." This observation underscores the significance of the monitoring strategy in enhancing both accuracy and fluency. Furthermore, the evaluative aspect of the metacognitive strategy enabled students to recognize specific areas that required enhancement and to establish new objectives for subsequent speaking assignments. Numerous students expressed that they experienced an increase in confidence regarding their speaking skills as they gained a clearer understanding of which elements needed improvement following each practice session. One participant remarked, "I know what I need to focus on now because I assess myself after every task." It makes me feel more confident when I speak. Semi-structured interviews with 15 students from the experimental group provided quite a lot of evidence in support of the potential effectiveness of the metacognitive strategies used. A majority of the participants reported that these strategies helped reduce their anxiety about speaking tasks. One participant commented, "Before using these strategies, I was always nervous to speak, but now I feel more in control, especially when I can plan my speech ahead of time."

This approach allowed for the emergence of patterns that repeated themselves in relation to the use of metacognitive strategies: goal setting, self-monitoring, and reflection over speaking performance (Daha & Altelwany, 2023). Moreover, a correlation analysis was carried out to specify the relationship between the use of metacognitive strategies and the development of speaking skills. The data obtained from the analyses provided much insight into the powerful role of metacognition in enhancing language learning outcomes and a quasi-experimental design was selected in order to evaluate the efficacy of metacognitive strategies in a more natural classroom setting where random assignment to groups is not possible. This methodological approach facilitated a regulated comparison between the two cohorts while preserving ecological validity. The combination of both quantitative and qualitative data allowed for an in-depth understanding of the effects of metacognitive strategy instruction on the speaking abilities

of students. The methods of data collection used in this study were carefully selected to represent those used in prior studies on metacognitive strategy instruction and language acquisition (Petrenko & Alto, 2023). Such a study design, with the integration of pre-test and post-test assessments and self-reflection journals, together with interviews, was very powerful and ensured that the measurements actually related to both cognitive and emotional dimensions of language acquisition; thus, the findings would reflect the multifaceted features of the intervention. The observation of teachers is an essential tool in educational settings with the purpose of assessment, guidance, and improvement of pedagogical practice and student learning. Systematic observation and analysis of interactions in the classroom can give teachers and administrators insight into important aspects of the effectiveness of instruction, levels of student engagement, and dynamics of the classroom. And the importance of teacher observation as follows: Professional Development: Observations help identify strengths and areas for improvement in teaching methods, enabling educators to enhance their skills and strategies. Student Learning Assessment: By observing how students respond to lessons, teachers can assess the effectiveness of their teaching and adjust methods to meet diverse learning needs. Classroom Management: Observation provides valuable feedback on managing student behavior, maintaining engagement, and fostering a productive learning environment. Peer Collaboration: Peer observations promote collaborative learning among educators, encouraging the exchange of ideas and best practices. Performance Evaluation: It serves as a tool for administrators to evaluate teacher performance and ensure adherence to educational standards. And also, the strategies for effective teacher observation as follow: Pre-Observation Planning: Clearly define the goals and criteria for the observation, such as lesson objectives, student engagement, or specific teaching techniques. Systematic Observation: Use structured tools such as checklists, rubrics, or note-taking templates to document observations systematically. Non-Intrusive Approach: Minimize disruption during the observation to maintain a natural classroom environment. Focused Feedback: Provide constructive feedback that is specific, actionable, and focused on achieving instructional goals. Follow-Up and Reflection: Conduct post-observation discussions to reflect on the observations, address concerns, and collaboratively develop improvement

The strategies enable one to take greater control over anxiety, independently, and develop positive beliefs about speaking—thereby making it easier to change one’s mindset when approaching a speaking task. Furthermore, results discussed above were identified as metacognitive strategies that served as catalysts for reduced language anxiety and increased learner autonomy, as reported in previous research (Tan & Kim, 2021). These results from the speaking proficiency test, self-reflective journals, and interviews conducted do yield strong evidence in support of the effectiveness of metacognitive strategies on improving students’ speaking ability. The experimental group performed significantly better than the control group in the speaking test, with large statistical differences found for the subdimensions of fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary use. The data strongly indicate that when learners use metacognitive strategies of planning, monitoring, and evaluation in language acquisition, this might have a large impact on their speaking performance. The large effect size of 1.09 in the experimental group suggests that training in metacognitive strategies is practically significant and not just statistically significant in trying to improve students’ speaking performance. This confirms prior studies by Yuan & Chunrong (2023) and Zhao et al. (2022), it was put forward that a heightened awareness of metacognition can improve proficiency in a language, especially in speaking tasks, owing to the enhancement of self-regulation and fostering learners’ autonomy. Moreover, students’ responses in the self-reflection journals and interviews showed that metacognitive strategies helped them develop self-

confidence and self-awareness—two crucial ones in overcoming anxiety in language learning and performance. Such findings clearly indicate that the fostering of SRL through metacognitive strategy instruction is not only effective for improving speaking proficiency but also indispensable for long-term autonomous learning. The control group, which had received no training in metacognitive strategies, showed minimal gains in speaking ability. This would indicate that more traditional forms of speaking practice are relatively less effective at early stages in language acquisition. This finding is in line with the results of (Tan & Kim, 2021), who found that students whose metacognitive strategies were trained showed a higher level of engagement and progress in performing speaking tasks compared with their untrained peers. The present study has demonstrated that the integration of metacognitive strategies into language teaching, particularly for beginning learners, significantly enhances speaking skills and leads to a higher level of learner independence. Considering the positive effects uncovered in this research, it is quite reasonable to recommend that language teachers include training in metacognitive strategies as part of the instructional cycle, especially at the early stages of language learning.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study highlights the transformative potential of metacognitive strategies in language teaching, particularly for developing speaking skills. By fostering self-awareness, confidence, and autonomy, these strategies empower learners to overcome barriers and achieve greater proficiency in language use. The findings underscore the importance of integrating metacognitive strategies into teaching practices and leveraging technology to enhance their impact. While the study provides valuable insights, it also opens up opportunities for further exploration, particularly in understanding the long-term and cross-skill effects of metacognitive strategy instruction. Educators and researchers alike are encouraged to build on these findings to advance the field of language learning and support learners in their journey toward effective communication.

These gains were supported by qualitative data from self-reflection journals and interviews, which highlighted students' ability to identify areas for improvement, monitor their performance, and set realistic goals for further progress. Furthermore, the use of metacognitive strategies helped reduce language anxiety, enabling students to approach speaking tasks with greater confidence and motivation. The integration of metacognitive strategies into language teaching not only improves speaking proficiency but also fosters essential skills for lifelong learning, such as self-regulation and independence. These findings suggest that metacognitive strategies should be a core component of language instruction, particularly for beginners, to help them overcome initial barriers and achieve long-term success in speaking and this study has demonstrated the significant role of metacognitive strategies—planning, monitoring, and evaluation—in enhancing the speaking skills of first-semester EFL students. The integration of these strategies into speaking instruction has proven to be effective not only in improving fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary use but also in fostering learner autonomy and reducing anxiety. These findings address critical challenges faced by language learners at the early stages of acquisition and offer valuable insights for educators aiming to improve speaking proficiency in similar contexts. The study's quantitative results, as evidenced by pre-test and post-test scores, highlighted substantial improvements in the speaking proficiency of the experimental group compared to the control group. The large effect size further substantiates the practical significance of metacognitive strategy instruction. Qualitative data from self-reflection journals and interviews also revealed that students gained

heightened self-awareness, enabling them to identify areas for improvement and take proactive steps toward achieving their speaking goals. For instance, students frequently mentioned that the act of monitoring their speech during tasks and reflecting afterward gave them a sense of control over their learning process, thereby reducing their anxiety and boosting their confidence.

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