

INDIRECT LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES IN ACADEMIC SPEAKING CLASSES

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Abstract

Effective communication in academic contexts requires not only linguistic proficiency but also the strategic use of learning approaches that support speaking performance. This study aimed to investigate the use of indirect strategies, namely metacognitive, affective, and social strategies among EFL students in a Speaking for Academic Purposes class at UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar. A descriptive quantitative design with a cross-sectional survey was employed. The population consisted of 46 fifth-semester students of the English Teaching Department, selected through total sampling, with 45 valid respondents. Data were collected using a closed-ended questionnaire adapted from Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) with 55 items. The instrument was validated using Aiken's V (0.77, valid) and showed high reliability (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.975). Descriptive statistics were used for data analysis. The findings revealed that students "usually" employed indirect strategies in their academic speaking, with a high overall mean. Specifically, metacognitive strategies (M = 117.07), affective strategies (M = 49.29), and social strategies (M = 45.80) all were identified as the "usually used" category. These results indicate that students actively planned, monitored, and evaluated their performance, regulated their emotions, and engaged in cooperative interactions. The study highlights the importance of integrating indirect strategies into EFL pedagogy to strengthen students' academic speaking competence.

Keywords: *academic speaking, indirect learning strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, social strategies*

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is widely recognized as one of the most fundamental skills in human communication, serving as a primary medium for sharing knowledge, building relationships, and engaging in social and academic interactions. In the context of foreign language learning, speaking is often perceived as both the most challenging and the most critical skill to master, since it requires not only linguistic competence but also real-time processing, confidence, and adaptability (Pratiwi, 2022; Mahruf & Sari, 2022). As globalization accelerates and English continues to function as the lingua franca across academic and professional domains, the demand for effective speaking competence among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners becomes increasingly urgent. The ability to articulate ideas clearly in formal settings such as seminars, conferences, and academic discussions is no longer an optional skill but a prerequisite for academic success and professional competitiveness.

For EFL learners, mastering speaking skills involves more than accurate pronunciation and grammar; it encompasses interactional competence, including

turn-taking, feedback management, and the ability to respond spontaneously to dynamic communication contexts (Laksana, 2016; Crisianita & Mandasari, 2022). In Indonesian higher education, universities have responded to this need by offering specialized courses that prepare students for academic communication. One such course is Speaking for Academic Purposes (SAP), designed to equip learners with the skills required to perform in formal events such as moderating discussions, introducing speakers, and presenting research. Previous research highlights several factors influencing speaking performance: performance conditions, affective factors, topical knowledge, and teacher feedback (Nawi, 2019; Wael et al., 2018). Among these, learning strategies have been consistently identified as pivotal, as they directly shape how learners approach speaking tasks, regulate their emotions, and engage in interaction (Justralina, 2015; Chilmy et al., 2020).

Language learning strategies (LLS) have been widely categorized into direct and indirect strategies (Oxford, 1990). Direct strategies include memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies, which deal directly with language use. Indirect strategies, by contrast, involve metacognitive, affective, and social processes that support and enhance learning in broader ways (Syafryadin, 2020; Saidin, 2020). Research in this area has shown that indirect strategies are particularly significant for speaking, as they encompass learners' ability to plan, monitor, regulate emotions, build confidence, and seek support from others—factors that are critical in high-pressure academic speaking contexts (Wael et al., 2018; Ratih et al., 2020). Empirical studies provide further evidence: Syafryadin, (2020) found that students in two Indonesian schools relied heavily on metacognitive strategies such as planning and evaluating their learning. Similarly, Sintari et al. (2019) observed that EFL students frequently used focusing, organizing, and self-evaluating strategies to manage their speaking performance. Seng et al. (2023) emphasized that among indirect strategies, help-seeking behaviors were the most commonly employed, whereas metacognitive strategies were less frequently used. Collectively, these findings underscore the relevance of indirect strategies in supporting learners' speaking development.

Although studies have examined the use of language learning strategies in speaking, the majority have concentrated either on direct strategies or on general strategy use without distinguishing their application in specific academic contexts (Gani et al., 2015; Chilmy et al., 2020). Moreover, research focusing explicitly on indirect strategies particularly metacognitive, affective, and social strategies within the framework of Speaking for Academic Purposes remains limited. Existing findings are fragmented and sometimes inconsistent; for instance, while Syafryadin (2020) highlighted the dominance of metacognitive strategies, Seng et al. (2023) found them to be less commonly used. Furthermore, most previous studies have not systematically explored how indirect strategies influence students' performance in structured academic speaking tasks such as moderating, introducing speakers, or presenting research reports. This lack of focused investigation leaves a significant gap in understanding how indirect strategies

contribute to learners' preparedness, emotional regulation, and interactional competence in academic contexts.

To address these gaps, the present study investigates the use of indirect strategies—metacognitive, affective, and social by students enrolled in the Speaking for Academic Purposes course at UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar. The novelty of this study lies in its specific focus on the interplay of indirect strategies within a structured academic speaking environment, a context that has received limited scholarly attention in previous research. By situating the analysis in the SAP course, this study not only expands theoretical understanding of strategy use but also offers practical insights for lecturers to design more effective teaching interventions that foster students' confidence, fluency, and autonomy. Therefore, the aim of this research is to describe and analyze the types of indirect strategies employed by students, specifically addressing (1) metacognitive strategies, (2) affective strategies, and (3) social strategies in academic speaking tasks. Ultimately, this study contributes to bridging the knowledge gap and enhancing pedagogical practices in EFL speaking instruction.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive quantitative approach with a survey design to investigate the use of indirect strategies among students in Speaking for Academic Purposes (SAP) classes. A descriptive quantitative approach was chosen as it provides numerical data that allow researchers to describe trends, frequencies, and variations in strategy use without manipulating variables. The survey design enabled the researcher to obtain a cross-sectional description of students' language learning strategies by collecting data at a single point in time. This design was considered appropriate to capture the patterns of strategy use and to generalize findings from the sample to the population.

Participants

The participants were fifth-semester students of the English Teaching Department at UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar who were enrolled in the SAP course during the academic year under study. Initially, the population consisted of 46 students distributed across three classes (A, B, and C). However, due to one student's non-active status, the final number of participants was 45. A total sampling technique was used because the population size was fewer than 100 individuals, allowing all accessible members to be included in the study. This sampling method ensured comprehensive representation of the research population and avoided sampling bias.

Instruments

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire adapted from Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), focusing specifically on indirect strategies. The instrument consisted of 55 items developed through a construct-based procedure that aligned with relevant theories of language learning strategies. These items were distributed across three

dimensions: Metacognitive 30 items, Affective 13 items, and Social strategies 12 items. The questionnaire was designed in Bahasa Indonesia to ensure clarity and accessibility for respondents. A five-point Likert scale was used, with responses ranging from “Selalu (Always)” to “Tidak Pernah (Never).” The instrument underwent content validation by three expert validators, and the Aiken’s V formula was applied to assess validity, producing coefficients within the valid to highly valid range (0.66–0.92). Reliability was tested using Cronbach’s Alpha through SPSS, resulting in a coefficient of 0.975, which indicated perfect internal consistency. Thus, the questionnaire was both valid and reliable as a data collection tool.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics with the assistance of SPSS version 30. Responses were tabulated, and frequencies, means, and percentages were calculated to identify the level and patterns of indirect strategy use. The classification of strategy use followed Oxford’s (1990) criteria, categorizing mean scores into high, medium, and low usage. Furthermore, interpretation of results was guided by descriptive categories ranging from strongly positive to strongly negative, based on Sudijono’s formula in Rahmanto et al. (2024). Standard deviation was also calculated to measure variability in responses across participants. The analytical procedure provided an objective overview of the strategies employed by students, allowing the study to draw conclusions regarding their tendencies in using indirect strategies within academic speaking contexts.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Descriptive statistics indicated that students “usually” employed indirect strategies in Speaking for Academic Purposes. The overall mean score was 212.16 with a percentage of 57.8%, classified as “usually used” according to Oxford’s (1990) category. Details are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Overall Use of Indirect Strategies

Strategy Type	Mean	Percentage	Category
Indirect Strategies	212.16	57.8%	Usually used

The table above shows that most students’ scores were concentrated in the “usually used” category, while only a small portion appeared in the lower ranges. This pattern confirms that indirect strategies were consistently applied at a moderate to high frequency. A histogram summarizing the overall category is presented in Figure 1.

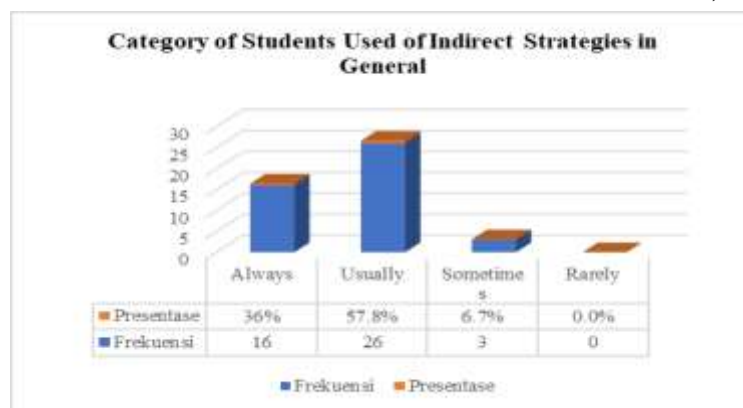


Figure 1. Distribution of Indirect Strategies Use (Overall)

Metacognitive Strategies

The mean score for metacognitive strategies was 117.07, corresponding to 93.3% and categorized as “usually used.” Sub-strategies within this category are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Use of Metacognitive Sub-Strategies

No.	Metacognitive Strategies	Mean	Percentage
1.	Planning	11.80	57.8%
2.	Self-monitoring	7.89	60%
3.	Self-evaluating	8.38	46.7%
4.	Seeking practice opportunities	8.24	55.6%
5.	Organizing	14.96	55.6%
6.	Paying attention	11.73	55.6%
7.	Delaying speech production	3.91	48.9%
8.	Self-management	11.33	55.6%
9.	Overviewing with already known material	11.56	53.3%
10.	Linking with already known material	7.84	62.2%
11.	Finding out about language	8.11	51.1%
12.	Setting goals and objectives	7.36	42.2%
13.	Identifying the purpose of language task	3.96	42.2%
Total		117.07	

As shown in Table 2, organizing recorded the highest mean among metacognitive strategies, followed by planning, paying attention, overviewing and self-management. All sub-strategies remained within the “usually used” category. A histogram summarizing the overall distribution of metacognitive strategies is displayed in Figure 2. The figure shows that the majority of students’ scores were clustered within the “usually used” category, with little variation across the group.

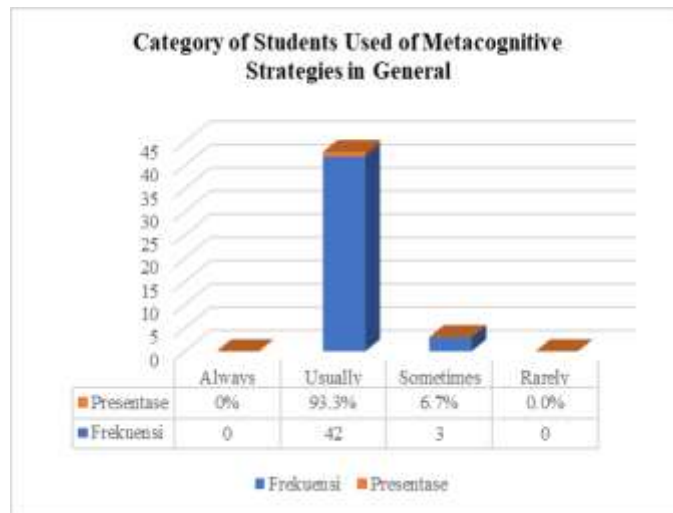


Figure 2. Distribution of Metacognitive Strategies Use in General

Affective Strategies

The affective strategies obtained a mean score of 49.29, equal to 40% and categorized as “usually used.” The breakdown of sub-strategies within this dimension is provided in Table 3.

Table 3. Use of Affective Sub-Strategies

No.	Affective Strategies	Mean	Percentage
1.	Progressing relaxation, meditation, or deep breathing	11.53	48.9%
2.	Using music	4.09	40%
3.	Using laughter	3.87	37.8%
4.	Positive statement	3.84	48.9%
5.	Taking risks wisely	3.91	40%
6.	Rewarding one’s self	3.87	42.2%
7.	Listening to your body	7.82	46.7%
8.	Using checklist	3.49	33.3%
9.	Writing a language learning diary	3.13	40%
10.	Discussing your feeling with someone else	3.73	42.2%
Total		49.29	

As indicated in Table 3, progressing relaxation, meditation, or deep breathing received the highest mean score, suggesting that students frequently employed techniques to control feelings to make them comfort during speaking tasks, while writing a diary was the least frequent.

Figure 3 depicts the overall distribution of affective strategies. The histogram demonstrates that most students reported scores in the “usually used” category, although the spread of responses was slightly wider compared to metacognitive strategies.

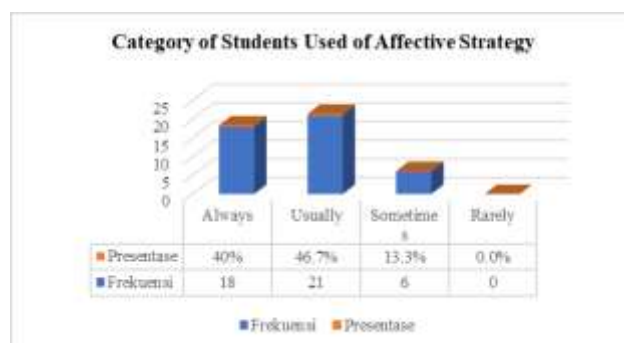


Figure 3. Distribution of Affective Strategies Use in General

Social Strategies

The mean score for social strategies was 45.80, corresponding to 48.9% and classified as “usually used.” Detailed descriptive results for each sub-strategy are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Use of Social Sub-Strategies

No.	Social Strategies	Mean	Percentage
1.	Cooperating with Peers	7.64	48.9%
2.	Learn Production Techniques	7.69	40%
3.	Question for Clarification	7.96	37.8%
4.	Cooperating with Proficient User	6.98	48.9%
5.	Developing Cultural Understanding	7.84	40%
6.	Becoming Aware Other’s Thoughts and Feelings	7.69	42.2%
Total			45.80

Based on Table 4, almost all social sub-strategies were consistently categorized as “usually used” except cooperating with proficient users. Asking questions recorded the highest mean score, reflecting the tendency of students to seek clarification and assistance from others, while cooperating with peers received the lowest.

Figure 4 summarizes the overall distribution of social strategies. The histogram shows a clear concentration in the “usually used” range, with minimal responses falling outside this category, confirming a consistent pattern of application among students.

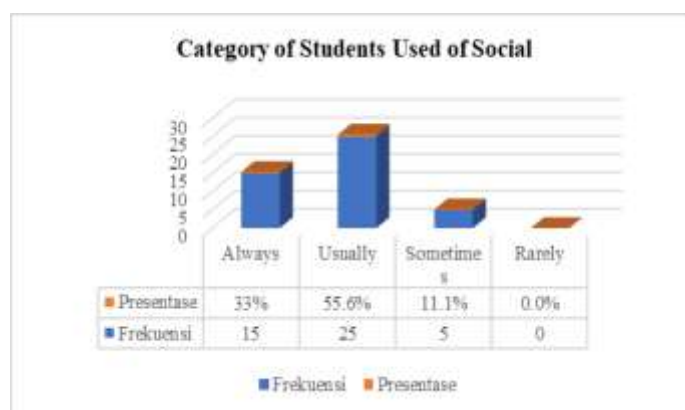


Figure 4. Distribution of Social Strategies Use in General

Discussion

The findings indicate that students generally showed a positive tendency in using indirect strategies in Speaking for Academic Purposes. The overall mean score of 212.16 (57.8%) indicates that these strategies were categorized as “usually used,” suggesting a relatively high level of engagement with indirect learning strategies. Among the three types, metacognitive strategies were the most dominant, followed by affective and social strategies. This pattern implies that students tend to rely more on self-regulation processes to support their academic speaking performance.

Metacognitive strategies played a significant role in helping students plan, monitor, and evaluate their speaking performance. The high use of these strategies reflects students’ awareness of their learning process and their ability to manage speaking tasks effectively. The conclusion of a recent study (Resdiana et al., 2025) highlights that metacognitive strategies such as planning, monitoring, and evaluating not only improve students’ speaking proficiency but also foster self-awareness, autonomy, and confidence in language learning. This aligns closely with the present study, where students demonstrated a strong tendency to regulate their own learning processes during speaking tasks. The ability to monitor performance and reflect on strengths and weaknesses, as observed in both studies, indicates that learners become more independent and strategic in managing their academic speaking activities.

Affective strategies were also frequently used by students, including relaxation techniques, self-encouragement, and self-reward. The use of these strategies indicates that students actively attempted to regulate their emotions and reduce anxiety during speaking activities. This finding is in line with the study (Samad & Kafryawan, 2021), who found that socio-affective strategies, particularly self-encouragement and emotional regulation, help learners maintain positive emotions and support their participation in speaking activities. In academic speaking contexts, where students often face performance pressure, the ability to manage emotions becomes essential for maintaining participation and engagement.

Social strategies were likewise applied by students, particularly in the form of asking for clarification and cooperating with peers. The consistent use of these strategies suggests that students benefit from interaction and collaborative learning in speaking activities. However, this finding differs from (Amri et al., 2023), who found that social strategies were less frequently used among certain groups of learners, indicating that the use of these strategies may vary depending on the learning context. In the present study, the structured and interactive nature of the Speaking for Academic Purposes class likely encouraged students to engage more actively with their peers. This suggests that classroom design and task structure play an important role in promoting the use of social strategies in academic speaking

Overall, the findings confirm that indirect strategies play an important role in supporting students' academic speaking skills. These strategies not only help students regulate their learning processes but also enhance their confidence and interactional competence. However, this study is limited to self-reported questionnaire data and a single institutional context, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, future research is recommended to employ mixed methods, such as combining questionnaires with interviews or classroom observations, and to involve larger and more diverse samples to gain deeper insights into the actual implementation of indirect strategies in academic speaking.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study investigated the use of indirect strategies among students in a Speaking for Academic Purposes class and found that overall, their strategy use was high and categorized as "usually." Among the three types, metacognitive strategies were most frequently employed, indicating that students actively planned, monitored, and evaluated their speaking tasks. Affective strategies were also commonly used, reflecting students' efforts to regulate emotions, reduce anxiety, and sustain motivation, while social strategies highlighted their tendency to cooperate, seek clarification, and learn collaboratively. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of how EFL learners regulate not only their performance but also their learning processes in academic speaking contexts. Theoretically, this research strengthens the framework of self-regulated language learning, while practically, it underscores the importance for lecturers to integrate strategy-based instruction that fosters planning, emotional regulation, and peer interaction. Such practices can enhance students' autonomy, confidence, and competence in academic communication. For future research, it is suggested that researchers employ mixed-method approaches by combining questionnaires with interviews or classroom observations to gain deeper insights into students' actual strategy use. In addition, studies involving larger and more diverse samples across institutions are recommended to enhance the generalizability of findings.

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