

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of the study, problem statement, objectives, significance, scope and limitation, and the definition of key terms.

1.1. Background of the Study

Speaking is a fundamental skill for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, as it enables them to express ideas and engage in meaningful communication. According to Becker and Roos (2016), speaking involves both imitative and productive aspects, allowing learners to practice language patterns and refine their communication strategies. Proficiency in speaking is essential for success in social, academic, and professional contexts, as it equips learners with the confidence and ability to interact effectively across diverse situations. Due to its significance, speaking is regarded as a core component of language learning and a key indicator of communicative competence.

Despite its importance, many EFL learners face significant challenges in developing effective speaking strategies. These difficulties often stem from limited vocabulary, low self-confidence, anxiety, and insufficient opportunities to practice speaking in authentic or structured settings. Such barriers can hinder learners from achieving fluency and communicative success. Addressing these challenges requires the use of intentional strategies that not only enhance linguistic competence but also empower learners to monitor, control, and evaluate their own speaking performance.

Metacognitive knowledge refers to an individual's awareness and understanding of their own cognitive processes, particularly regarding when and how to use specific strategies for learning. According to Flavell (1979), metacognitive knowledge includes declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge, all of which are essential for managing learning effectively. In the context of language learning, metacognitive knowledge enables learners to reflect on their use of strategies, assess their effectiveness, and make necessary

adjustments to improve outcomes. This form of knowledge is key to fostering self-regulated learning and improving speaking performance.

Although metacognitive knowledge has been widely acknowledged as important in language learning, most studies have focused on its application to reading and listening comprehension (Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995; Vandergrift, 2003). In contrast, the role of metacognitive knowledge in speaking has received less attention. Studies that do address speaking often emphasize cognitive aspects such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, rather than learners' ability to reflect on and regulate the use of speaking strategies (Goh & Burns, 2012). As a result, learners often lack explicit instruction on how to plan, monitor, and evaluate their spoken output—key dimensions of metacognitive knowledge that are crucial to speaking development.

Moreover, existing research tends to focus on advanced learners (Zhang & Goh, 2006), with limited exploration of beginner and intermediate learners. These lower-proficiency learners may encounter greater difficulty in applying metacognitive strategies, such as planning speech, monitoring fluency, or evaluating their own performance. However, there is limited empirical evidence exploring the specific challenges faced by this group (Cohen, 2011). Without a deeper understanding of how metacognitive strategies are employed across proficiency levels, teachers may find it difficult to provide appropriate support. Therefore, research is needed to investigate how learners at various levels use metacognitive strategies in speaking and how these can be developed through instruction.

For EFL learners, enhancing metacognitive knowledge can significantly improve their speaking performance. Through the application of metacognitive strategies, learners can plan how to approach speaking tasks, monitor their output in real time, and reflect on their effectiveness after completion. This self-regulatory process not only supports language development but also builds learners' confidence and autonomy. Furthermore, in the era of digital learning and AI-based language tools, the application of metacognitive strategies to speaking remains

underexplored. Most technology-assisted metacognitive research continues to focus on reading or listening (Goh & Vandergrift, 2021), leaving speaking strategies relatively neglected.

In conclusion, while previous research has acknowledged the role of metacognition in language learning, there remains a clear gap in its application to speaking, particularly among EFL learners at varying levels of proficiency. To address this gap, this study aims to investigate EFL students' metacognitive knowledge related to speaking strategies and to identify which strategies are most frequently used and which areas require further development.

1.2. Problem Statement

Based on the background above, the research problem can be formulated as follows:

1. What types of metacognitive knowledge strategies are frequently used by EFL students in speaking?
2. What areas of metacognitive knowledge need to be improved in relation to students' speaking performance?

1.3. Objective of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

1. To analyze the types of metacognitive knowledge strategies most frequently applied by EFL students in speaking.
2. To identify areas of metacognitive knowledge that require further development to enhance students' speaking proficiency.

1.4. Significance of the Study

This study is expected to offer valuable contributions to students, teachers, and future researchers, particularly in the context of EFL speaking instruction.

- 1) For students

The study helps students develop a deeper understanding of their own metacognitive knowledge and how it influences their speaking performance. By becoming more aware of the strategies they use and the areas they need to improve, students are encouraged to engage in self-regulated learning and take

active responsibility for their oral language development.

2) For Teacher

The findings provide insights into the types of metacognitive strategies that students commonly use, as well as areas where they may require additional support. This information can assist teachers in designing targeted instructional approaches that foster planning, monitoring, and evaluating speaking performance among EFL learners.

3) For other researchers

This study contributes to the existing body of research on metacognitive knowledge in language learning, specifically in the underexplored area of speaking. It may serve as a foundation for future studies aiming to investigate the development of metacognitive strategies and their impact on oral communication skills across different proficiency levels.

1.5. Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study focuses on analyzing EFL students' metacognitive knowledge in relation to speaking strategies. Specifically, it investigates the types of metacognitive strategies frequently used by students when engaging in speaking activities and identifies which areas of knowledge require further development.

The scope of the study is limited to students from the English Education Department at Muhammadiyah University of Gresik, particularly those enrolled in the 1st, 3rd, 5th, and 7th semesters. The research uses a descriptive quantitative method and collects data through the Metacognitive Awareness Speaking Questionnaire (MASQ). As such, the findings reflect the specific context and participant responses and may not be generalizable to other populations or institutions.

1.6. Definition of Key Terms

To enhance understanding, the following key terms are clarified:

1) EFL Students' Metacognitive Knowledge:

Refers to students' awareness and understanding of their own cognitive processes in relation to speaking activities. It includes three main components:

declarative knowledge (knowing what strategies to use), procedural knowledge (knowing how to use the strategies), and conditional knowledge (knowing when and why to use them). This metacognitive knowledge helps learners plan, monitor, and evaluate their speaking strategies effectively.

2) Speaking:

Speaking is a productive language skill that involves real-time processing, requiring fluency, accuracy, and the ability to convey meaning clearly. In the context of this study, speaking refers to EFL students' oral communication performance in English, which can be enhanced through the use of metacognitive strategies such as planning, self-monitoring, and reflection.

3) Speaking strategies:

Refers to the specific techniques or approaches that EFL learners use to manage and improve their speaking performance. These strategies include planning what to say, monitoring language output, evaluating effectiveness, and addressing communication problems—all of which are influenced by learners' metacognitive knowledge.