

**AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' STRATEGIES IN
IMPROVING ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS AMONG SIXTH-
SEMESTER AT STAIN MANDAILING NATAL**

THESIS

Submitted to the Department of English Education in a
Partial fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree of Strata I
(Bachelor of Education) in English Language Education



**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION
STATE COLLEGE OF ISLAMIC STUDIES
MANDAILING NATAL
2026**

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Panyabungan, September 2026

The researcher,

The image shows an official red stamp of STAIN Mandailing Natal. The stamp includes the text "STAIN MANDAILING NATAL" and "METERAL TEMPHU". Below the stamp is a handwritten signature in black ink. The signature appears to be "Arda Lestari".

Arda Lestari

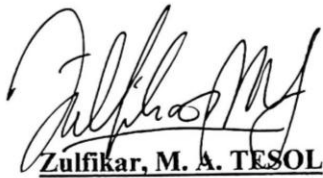
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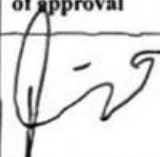
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ABSTRACT

Arda Lestari, 2026. *An Analysis of Students' Strategies in Improving English Speaking Skills Among Sixth-Semester at STAIN Mandailing Natal*

This study aimed to identify the strategies used by sixth-semester students at STAIN Mandailing Natal to improve their English speaking skills and to describe how the strategies were implemented. This research used a descriptive qualitative design. The participants were 21 sixth-semester students of the English Education Department at STAIN Mandailing Natal. The data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. The data were analyzed using the data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing stages proposed by Miles and Huberman. The findings showed that the students used three types of learning strategies based on O'Malley and Chamot's theory: metacognitive, cognitive, and socio-affective strategies. Cognitive strategies were the most frequently used, followed by metacognitive and socio-affective strategies. The strategies were implemented through planning speaking practice, managing practice time, repeating words and sentences, learning vocabulary, using dictionaries, listening to English songs, watching English content, practicing with friends, asking for help, receiving feedback, and managing nervousness. These strategies supported students in practicing and improving their English speaking skills.

Keywords: *learning strategies, speaking skills*

ABSTRAK

Arda Lestari, 2026. *An Analysis of Students' Strategies in Improving English Speaking Skills Among Sixth-Semester at STAIN Mandailing Natal*

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi strategi yang digunakan oleh mahasiswa semester enam di STAIN Mandailing Natal dalam meningkatkan keterampilan berbicara bahasa Inggris dan mendeskripsikan bagaimana strategi tersebut diterapkan. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain deskriptif kualitatif. Partisipan dalam penelitian ini adalah 21 mahasiswa semester enam Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris di STAIN Mandailing Natal. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara semi-terstruktur, dan dokumentasi. Data dianalisis menggunakan tahapan reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan yang dikemukakan oleh Miles dan Huberman. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa menggunakan tiga jenis strategi pembelajaran berdasarkan teori O'Malley dan Chamot, yaitu strategi metakognitif, kognitif, dan sosial-afektif. Strategi kognitif merupakan strategi yang paling sering digunakan, diikuti oleh strategi metakognitif dan sosial-afektif. Strategi tersebut diterapkan melalui perencanaan latihan berbicara, pengaturan waktu latihan, pengulangan kata dan kalimat, pembelajaran kosakata, penggunaan kamus, mendengarkan lagu berbahasa Inggris, menonton konten berbahasa Inggris, berlatih bersama teman, meminta bantuan, menerima umpan balik, dan mengelola rasa gugup. Strategi-strategi tersebut membantu mahasiswa dalam berlatih dan meningkatkan keterampilan berbicara bahasa Inggris.

Kata kunci: *strategi pembelajaran, keterampilan berbicara*

MOTTO

رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا

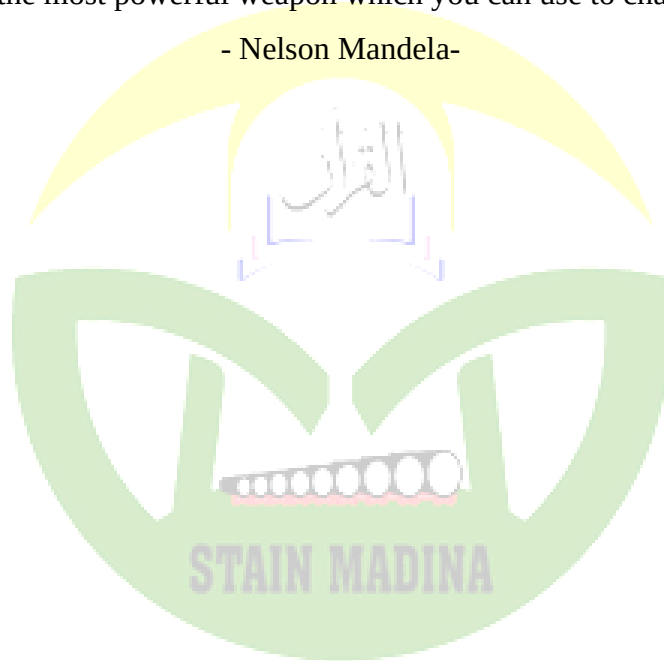
"And say, 'My Lord, increase me in knowledge'."

(QS. Thaha: 114)

"Whoever travels a path in search of knowledge, Allah will make easy for him a path to Paradise." (H.R Muslim)

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

- Nelson Mandela-



DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to:

- To my beloved family, the eternal sanctuary of my life. For every silent prayer whispered in the middle of the night, for the boundless patience, and for the unconditional love that picked me up every time I stumbled. This success is yours, long before it is mine.
- To my respected lecturers, the guiding lights who illuminated the darkest alleys of my confusion. Thank you for your unwavering wisdom, your gentle corrections, and for believing in me when I almost lost faith in my own capabilities.
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11. Finally, may Allah SWT always devote joy to all of us; hopefully, this thesis can be useful for the reader.

Panyabungan, , September, 2026

The Researcher

Arda Lestari

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of Study

English has become an international language that plays an important role in global communication, education, and professional development. Many countries, including Indonesia, teach English as a foreign language from early education up to higher education levels. According to Crystal (2003), English is widely used as a global language to connect people from different countries and cultures. In learning English, students are expected to master four basic skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among these skills, speaking is often considered the most important because it shows how well learners can communicate in real-life situations. Brown (2001) states that speaking is a productive skill that requires learners to use language actively in communication. Through speaking, students are able to express their ideas, opinions, and feelings clearly to others. For this reason, improving speaking skills becomes a key goal in English language learning, especially for students in higher education.

Speaking is one of the most important and effective ways of human communication. It is a process where people share ideas, opinions, and other information with others. In language learning, speaking is considered a key skill that students need to develop. According to Prasetyaningrum et al., (2020), students use various strategies to improve their speaking ability. Language teaching generally focuses on four main skills, which help learners build their overall language proficiency. Among these skills, speaking requires more attention, practice, and effort to master. Students need enough opportunities to practice speaking, especially through listening and speaking activities. When learners are given proper chances to use the target language, the results of language learning can become more effective and successful.

Speaking is often more difficult than writing for EFL learners because it requires quick thinking and immediate response. When writing, students have enough time to organize their ideas, check vocabulary in a dictionary, and

revise their sentences before presenting them. However, in speaking, learners must produce language directly without much preparation time, which makes speaking more challenging than writing. According to Su and Su (2021), productive skills such as speaking and writing are more difficult than receptive skills like reading and listening because learners need to use language actively in real communication.

There are many problems that EFL learners face in developing their speaking skills. These include speaking anxiety, limited vocabulary, lack of grammar mastery, poor pronunciation, low motivation, and weak listening ability. Other factors such as an unsupportive environment, ineffective teaching strategies, and an unsuitable curriculum can also influence students' speaking performance. According to Muhsin (2017), one of the main problems is lack of vocabulary, which makes it difficult for students to express their ideas clearly, and many students feel afraid of making mistakes and being misunderstood, so they are reluctant to speak English.

Learning strategies are essential for helping students improve their English speaking skills. This study focuses on the relationship between learning strategies and speaking skills. By using appropriate strategies, students can organize their learning, practice speaking consistently, evaluate their progress, and overcome difficulties in communication. These strategies also encourage students to become more confident and independent in using English in various situations. As students apply effective learning strategies, they are more likely to participate actively in speaking activities and improve their communication skills. Therefore, identifying the learning strategies used by students is important because it helps explain how they develop their speaking ability. The findings can also provide useful information for lecturers in designing learning activities that better support students' needs. According to Cohen (2011), language learning strategies are conscious thoughts and actions that learners use to improve their language learning and language use. Therefore, understanding students' learning strategies is important for supporting the development of their English speaking skills.

Based on the previous explanation, students need to use appropriate learning strategies when learning a foreign language. Learning strategies refer to the techniques or actions that students use to improve their language learning process. These strategies can help students increase their motivation, confidence, and overall learning ability. According to Shi (2017), learning strategies play an important role in helping students become more active and successful in their learning. Without effective strategies, students may become passive learners and experience difficulties in achieving good academic results. Therefore, learning strategies focus on helping students understand how to learn and how to apply their knowledge effectively. For English major students, it is important to develop suitable strategies to support their success in learning the language.

According to Rubin (2012), language learning strategies are the techniques or actions used by learners to improve their language learning. Rubin explains that successful language learners use different strategies to understand, learn, and use a new language more effectively. She classifies learning strategies into two main types: direct strategies and indirect strategies. Direct strategies help learners work directly with the language, while indirect strategies support the learning process through planning, practice, and interaction. Rubin's classification provides an early foundation for understanding how learners use different strategies to achieve success in language learning.

According to Macaro (2006), language learning strategies are part of learners' strategic behaviour that helps them become more effective and independent in learning a language. He explains that learners use different strategies to solve learning problems and achieve their language learning goals. Macaro also emphasizes the importance of self-regulation, which allows learners to plan, monitor, and evaluate their own learning process. In addition, he states that learning strategies support learner autonomy by encouraging students to take responsibility for their own learning. Therefore, strategic

behaviour plays an important role in helping learners improve their language proficiency.

According to Rose et al. (2018), successful language learners use different learning strategies to improve their language ability. They identify five main learning strategies: taking an active approach to learning, understanding language as a system, using language for communication, managing emotions during learning, and monitoring learning performance. These strategies help learners become more active and responsible in the learning process. The authors explain that successful learners do not rely only on classroom instruction but also use various strategies to improve their language skills. Therefore, these learning strategies contribute to more effective and successful language learning.

According to O'Malley (1985), language learning strategies are the steps or actions used by learners to help them understand, store, recall, and use information effectively. Different language skills, such as speaking, reading, listening, and writing, require different strategies for improvement. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) classifies language learning strategies into three main groups: metacognitive, cognitive, and social-affective strategies. In this study, the focus is on the strategies used by students to enhance their speaking fluency. Among the various classifications of language learning strategies, this study adopts O'Malley and Chamot's framework because it provides a clear classification considered appropriate for analyzing students' strategies in improving speaking skills since they focus not only on cognitive processes but also on planning, self-monitoring, and social interaction during language learning.

At the same time, students often face challenges while using different learning strategies. According to Syafryadin (2020), students use a variety of strategies in learning speaking, and these differences show that each student has their own preferred way of learning. When students are taught using appropriate strategies and curriculum, they are expected to improve both their general knowledge and English skills for their future careers. In addition,

creating a comfortable and supportive learning environment can help students feel more relaxed and motivated to learn. According to Oxford (2011), language learning strategies can be classified into several types, as shown in the Strategies Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), which helps learners improve their language acquisition.

Several studies have looked into the use of learning techniques in developing English skills, particularly speaking abilities, and have found that they have a wide range of applications and are effective. To support this, in a study by Ainun (2019), titled *Analysis of Students' Language Learning Strategies in Learning English at MTs Ummatan Wasathan Pesantren Teknologi Riau*, the researcher focused on identifying the dominant language learning strategies used by eighth-grade students at the Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs). Using a descriptive quantitative approach, the study found that the most common strategies employed by students were Affective (22.60%), followed by Memory (16.42%), Cognitive (15.50%), Compensation (16.35%), Metacognitive (15.59%), and Social (13.52%) strategies. This result aligns with previous research suggesting that students use a variety of strategies, with a notable preference for strategies that engage emotional and motivational aspects of learning Oxford (1990). This study is similar to the present research because both focus on students' learning strategies in learning English. However, the present research focuses specifically on speaking skills at the university level, while Alfiani's study focuses on general language learning strategies at the junior high school level.

The next that is relevant to this research is by Inayah (2021) performed a study that examined the learning strategies used by eighth-grade bilingual students at SMP Negeri 03 Kota Tangerang Selatan during online learning. Using a descriptive qualitative methodology and the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) questionnaire and interviews, the study discovered that students used a number of strategies, the most prominent of which were metacognitive. The assignments included lesson planning, scheduling, and measuring learning outcomes. Such metacognitive approaches are crucial in

speaking skill development because they encourage learners to actively plan and monitor their practice sessions, which ensures consistency and improvement. This study is similar to the present research because both analyze students' learning strategies in learning English. However, this study focuses on online learning and general strategies at the junior high school level, while the present research focuses on speaking strategies used by university students.

Another relevant study was conducted by Limeranto and Jeane (2022), which explored EFL graduate students' perspectives and strategies in improving their English speaking skills. This study used a qualitative method with semi-structured interviews to gain deeper understanding of students' experiences. The participants were graduate students in an English Education Master's Program at Sanata Dharma University. The results showed that students still faced several challenges in speaking, such as lack of accurate pronunciation and limited vocabulary. However, the study also found that students used various effective strategies to improve their speaking ability. These findings indicate that even advanced learners still experience difficulties in speaking but can overcome them by applying appropriate strategies. This study is similar to the present research because both focus on speaking strategies used by EFL learners. However, this study focuses on graduate students' perspectives, while the present research focuses on undergraduate students' strategies in improving their speaking skills.

Based on existing gaps in the previous studies, there are several similarities and differences with the present research. All of the studies focus on students' learning strategies in learning English, especially in improving speaking skills, and they show that using appropriate strategies can help students develop their language ability. However, the differences lie in the context, level of participants, and focus of the studies. Ainun (2019) and Inayah (2021) focused on junior high school students and general language learning strategies, including in online learning situations, while Limeranto and Jeane Theresia (2022) examined graduate students' perspectives and

challenges in speaking. In contrast, the present research focuses specifically on undergraduate students at the university level and emphasizes the strategies used to improve speaking skills. Therefore, this research provides a different perspective by exploring speaking strategies in a higher education context with a more specific focus on speaking ability.

Based on preliminary observation conducted on sixth-semester students of the English Education Study Program at STAIN Mandailing Natal, the researcher found that many students still experience difficulties in speaking English fluently despite having studied English for several years and having completed various speaking-related courses. Some students often hesitate when expressing their ideas, frequently switch to *Bahasa Indonesia* during classroom discussions, and show a lack of confidence when speaking in front of their classmates. Several students admitted that they were afraid of making grammatical and pronunciation mistakes, while others reported that limited vocabulary made it difficult for them to communicate effectively in English. This study aims to identify the strategies used by students to overcome their speaking difficulties and improve their English speaking skills. Furthermore, the sixth-semester students are considered suitable participants because they have completed several English courses such as Basic Speaking, Intermediate Speaking, Advanced Speaking, and other language-related subjects. Therefore, they are expected to have developed their own learning strategies to improve their speaking ability. However, the strategies used by these students and their effectiveness in improving speaking skills have not yet been thoroughly investigated. Based on these considerations, this study is entitled “An Analysis of Students’ Strategies in Improving English Speaking Skills Among Sixth-Semester at STAIN Mandailing Natal.”

B. Formulation of Study

Based on the background of study, researcher the writer formulates a research question as follows:

1. What strategies do students employ to improve their English speaking skills at sixth-semester of STAIN Mandailing Natal?

2. What factor influence students choice of students for improving English speaking skills?

C. Objectives of Study

This research is intended to meet the following objective:

1. To identify the strategies students at STAIN Mandailing Natal to enhance their English speaking skills.
2. To examine how sixth-semester students at STAIN Mandailing Natal to apply the strategies in Improving their English Speaking skills.

D. Significance of Study

1. Theoretical significance.

This research makes an important contribution to the field of English language acquisition by increasing awareness of strategies used to improve speaking skills. The study closes a gap in the literature by focusing on the practical strategies that STAIN Mandailing Natal students employ to improve their English speaking abilities. These findings provide insights that can help refine or develop new theoretical frameworks for language development. By examining particular strategies, this study contributes to the theoretical discourse on language learning, particularly in higher education, by providing a better understanding of how students approach speaking skill development.

2. Practically

- a. For Teacher

The findings of research can help teachers identify effective speaking methods utilized by children. Understanding the strategies used by students allows educators to modify their teaching methods to better meet the needs of their students. This information enables teachers to create conditions that promote active speaking practice, minimize students' speaking anxiety, and address issues such as a lack of confidence. Teachers can also add peer collaboration, self-monitoring, and technology-based tools into their curriculum, which

will improve the learning experience and ensure more successful skill development in the classroom.

b. For Students

The research offers students practical insights into efficient strategies for improving their English speaking skills. The study provides suggestions on addressing the issues that students confront, such as nervousness or restricted practice chances. The findings encourage students to engage in active practice, use technology, and collaborate with classmates in order to improve their speaking confidence. The research also emphasizes the importance of self-directed learning, which allows students to take responsibility for their own language development and build specific strategies that fit their learning styles.

c. For Readers

As readers interested in language learning, this study provides excellent insights on strategies for improving English speaking skills. The study emphasizes a variety of strategies that readers, whether educators, students, or researchers, might employ in their own settings. It is a resource for understanding the dynamics of language learning, particularly speaking, and inspiration for using comparable strategies to develop language skills in a variety of conditions. Readers can also investigate how external elements, such as peer collaboration and technology, contribute to improved speaking skill, making this research relevant to a wide audience interested in language education.

E. Key Terms

1. Learning Strategies

Learning strategies are techniques that learners use consciously to improve their understanding, learning, and retention of knowledge. These strategies help students become more effective and independent learners by enhancing how they process, organize, and recall information. According to McDaniel (2024), effective strategies such as retrieval

practice, elaboration, and interleaved learning promote deeper understanding and long-term retention through active engagement with learning.

2. English Speaking Skills

Speaking is a productive oral skill used to communicate meaning through spoken language. According to Nunan (in Malini, 2022), speaking involves producing organized verbal utterances to express ideas, feelings, and thoughts effectively. It enables learners to communicate appropriately in real-life situations for various purposes, such as expressing opinions, describing events, making requests, persuading others, and conveying complaints.

F. Research Systematics

The research systematics of this study are structured as follows, they are:

Chapter I Introduction: this chapter presents the background of the study, formulation of the study, objectives of the study, significance of the study, scope and limitation, key terms, and research systematics.

Chapter II Review of Related Literature: this chapter discusses the theories of learning strategies and speaking skills, reviews previous related studies, and provides the theoretical framework that supports the research.

Chapter III Research Method: this chapter explains the research design, location and time of the research, participants, source of data, research instruments, techniques of data collection, data validation, and data analysis used in this study.

Chapter IV Research Findings and Discussion: this chapter presents the findings and discusses the learning strategies used by students to improve their English speaking skills, along with the factors influencing their strategy use.

Chapter V Conclusion and Suggestion: this chapter provides the conclusions drawn from the research findings and offers suggestions for students, lecturers, and future researchers.