

Integrating Metacognitive Strategies and Islamic Reflection: A Case Study of Speaking Instruction

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Abstract

The study aims to identify the aspects of metacognitive strategies employed by the teacher in developing students' speaking skills and to examine how these strategies were implemented to enhance students' speaking skills. This qualitative case study involved an English teacher and students investigated the metacognitive strategies applied by an English teacher of the Islamic Junior High School in Sampit, Kalimantan Tengah Province, Indonesia. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis of the teacher's lesson plans. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the six phases of Braun and Clarke, involving familiarization, coding, theme searching, reviewing, defining, and reporting. The findings show that the teacher systematically employed three interconnected metacognitive phases: planning through vocabulary-based and contextual preparation, monitoring through real-time feedback and peer-assisted learning, and evaluating through post-task reflection and differentiated feedback. These strategies were embedded in lesson planning and further reinforced through the Islamic value of *muhasabah* (self-reflection), creating a culturally grounded model of self-regulated speaking instruction. The teacher implemented the strategies through explicit modeling, guided practice, and gradual release of responsibility, resulting in observable improvements in students' confidence, fluency, and self-correction ability. This study concludes that the systematic integration of planning, monitoring, and evaluating strategies, combined with faith-based reflective practices, effectively supports speaking development and learner autonomy among EFL learners in Islamic junior high schools.

Keywords: Case Study; Metacognitive Strategy; Islamic Reflection; Self-Reflection; Speaking Skill; Speaking Skill Development

A. Introduction

Speaking is widely regarded as one of the most demanding language skills for EFL learners to master, since it requires learners to simultaneously manage vocabulary retrieval, grammatical accuracy, pronunciation, and social-emotional factors in real time. In Indonesian junior high schools, and particularly in Islamic junior high schools (Madrasah Tsanawiyah), students commonly display hesitancy, high speaking anxiety, and limited oral proficiency despite years of formal English instruction. This concern is not confined to speaking: in a correlational study of fifth-semester English department students in the same city, Siska et al. (2021) found that writing anxiety was significantly related to writing proficiency, whereas writing motivation alone was not, suggesting that affective factors such as anxiety, rather than motivation in isolation, are a more consistent predictor of productive language performance in this regional EFL context. This communicative gap is frequently intensified in faith-based settings, where teaching has traditionally prioritized grammar-translation and rote memorization over interactive, communicative practice (Abduh et al., 2022). Indonesia's national curriculum has undergone repeated reform since independence, a trajectory that Oktavia et al. (2023) trace from the nationalist-oriented *Rentjana Peladjaran 1947* through successive competency- and autonomy-based reforms culminating in the *Merdeka Curriculum*. Although this most recent reform was introduced to promote learner autonomy, critical thinking, and student-centered instruction, many teachers still struggle to translate these principles into concrete classroom strategies capable of fostering self-regulated speaking development.

Metacognitive strategies, encompassing planning, monitoring, and evaluating, have emerged as a promising response to this persistent challenge. Metacognition, defined by Flavell (1979) as thinking about one's own thinking, allows learners to consciously regulate their cognitive processes rather than merely absorbing content. In speaking instruction specifically, planning helps students organize vocabulary and ideas before they speak, monitoring enables real-time self-correction of pronunciation and grammar, and evaluating encourages reflective assessment of performance after a task is completed (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). This planning function has also been demonstrated locally in productive-skill instruction: Miftah (2015) developed an Idea Listing Technique, a structured prewriting strategy for generating and organizing ideas before writing, and found through classroom

action research that its systematic implementation enhanced students' writing achievement and classroom engagement across successive instructional cycles, illustrating that explicit planning-stage scaffolding can measurably improve productive language performance among Indonesian EFL learners. Empirical evidence supports the value of these strategies more broadly: Alqarni (2023) found that metacognitive strategies were the most frequently used and most strongly correlated with achievement among Saudi EFL learners, while Ruiz de Zarobe and Smala (2020) demonstrated that explicit metacognitive instruction improved both comprehension outcomes and self-regulated learning behavior in CLIL classrooms.

Despite this growing body of evidence, most existing research on metacognitive strategies has concentrated on reading, listening, and writing, leaving speaking comparatively under-examined (Bakhtiyarovich, 2023). This pattern also holds locally: in a correlational study of English department students at a neighboring Islamic university, Permata and Mirza (2018) examined metacognitive awareness in relation to listening comprehension and found no significant correlation between the two, concluding that metacognitive strategy use was not a dominant factor affecting listening outcomes. Their finding indicates that even where metacognitive strategies have been studied in the regional EFL context, the relationship between metacognitive awareness and skill-specific performance remains unsettled, and that speaking in particular has yet to receive comparable empirical attention. Furthermore, studies that do address speaking tend to emphasize measurable outcomes rather than the process through which teachers actually plan, model, and enact metacognitive strategies in daily instruction. This gap is especially pronounced in Islamic educational contexts, where the practice of *muhasabah*, a sincere and deliberate self-reckoning, offers a culturally resonant foundation for the evaluating phase of metacognition, yet remains largely unexplored in the existing EFL literature (Ubaidillah et al., 2024).

This gap motivated the present case study at the Islamic junior high school implementing a bilingual education program under the Merdeka Curriculum. Preliminary document analysis and an observational checklist administered prior to formal data collection confirmed that the school had institutionally embedded metacognitive principles into its formal teaching modules, providing a rich and naturally occurring research site rather than one requiring artificial intervention. This distinguishes the present research from studies conducted in settings where metacognitive strategies must be introduced or elicited by the

researcher, and strengthens the empirical grounds for treating this case as a genuine instance of teacher-facilitated metacognitive practice.

Guided by these considerations, this study addresses two research problems: (1) What aspects of metacognitive strategies are employed by the English teacher in developing students' speaking skills; and (2) How does the teacher implement these metacognitive strategies to enhance students' speaking skills. By focusing on the teacher's perspective and actual instructional practice rather than on learner outcomes alone, this study seeks to provide a contextualized, qualitative account of metacognitive strategy implementation in an authentic Islamic junior high school classroom. The findings are expected to inform teacher training programs, guide curriculum developers working within the Merdeka Curriculum framework, and offer a culturally grounded reference point for future research on speaking instruction in faith-based EFL settings.

B. Research Method

This study employed a qualitative, exploratory single-case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of how metacognitive strategies were applied in developing students' speaking skills at an Islamic junior high school (Creswell, 2014). A single-case design was selected because the research concentrated on one specific and purposively chosen site, the Islamic Junior High School, which demonstrated an institutionally embedded pattern of metacognitive strategy use rather than an incidental or isolated practice. The exploratory nature of the design allowed the researcher to uncover new insights into the teacher's naturally occurring practices rather than to test a predetermined hypothesis.

The study was conducted at the Islamic Junior High School in Sampit, Kalimantan Tengah Province, Indonesia, over a period of approximately two months, from July to September 2025, during the first semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. This school was purposively selected because it implemented a bilingual education program that placed strong emphasis on developing students' communicative competence in English within the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum.

The primary data source was one English teacher who was purposively selected based on criteria that included a minimum of three years of teaching experience, direct experience

implementing planning, monitoring, and evaluating strategies in speaking instruction, and willingness to participate in interviews, classroom observations, and documentation review. Primary data were obtained through three semi-structured interviews focusing on the aspects and implementation of metacognitive strategies, while supporting data were collected through classroom observations guided by an observation checklist and through document analysis of instructional materials, including lesson plans (Modul Perencanaan Pembelajaran), teaching materials, and speaking assessment rubrics. Prior to formal data collection, the researcher administered a structured observational checklist across two sessions to verify the presence of metacognitive strategy implementation at the school; all twelve indicators, covering both research questions, were confirmed as present, providing empirical grounds for selecting the research site.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the study applied the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was established through triangulation of interviews, observations, and documentation, together with member checking with the participant. Transferability was supported by providing rich, detailed descriptions of the research context. Dependability was maintained through an audit trail documenting all stages of the research process, and confirmability was ensured by grounding interpretations in multiple independent data sources rather than in the researcher's personal assumptions.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the six phases proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006): familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, and observation notes and documents were reviewed repeatedly to identify meaningful codes, such as vocabulary preparation, teacher feedback, and self-evaluation. These codes were then grouped into broader themes corresponding to the three metacognitive phases of planning, monitoring, and evaluating, as well as themes related to strategy implementation, including strategy integration, teacher scaffolding, and speaking development. Triangulation among the three data sources was applied consistently throughout the analysis process to verify the accuracy and coherence of the emerging themes before they were reported as findings.

C. Results and Discussion

1. Results

The Aspects of Metacognitive Strategies Employed in Developing Students' Speaking Skills

Rather than being applied as isolated techniques, metacognitive strategies were found to be embedded systematically in teaching practices through interconnected planning, monitoring, and evaluating processes. Table 1 summarizes the three central themes identified for the first research question.

Table 1. Final Themes for Research Question 1

Theme	Description
Planning Strategies	Teacher's efforts to help students prepare vocabulary and ideas before speaking activities.
Monitoring Strategies	Teacher's efforts to guide students in observing and regulating their speaking performance in real time.
Evaluating Strategies	Teacher's efforts to encourage reflection and differentiated feedback after speaking activities.

Planning strategies constituted the foundation of speaking instruction. The teacher consistently emphasized pre-speaking preparation through vocabulary building, contextual exposure, and mental readiness before students engaged in oral production. Vocabulary mastery served as the starting point for speaking performance, particularly because many students entered junior high school with limited English exposure. As the teacher explained, students were typically given fifty to one hundred vocabulary words to memorize before a speaking activity began, since memorization formed the basis for constructing sentences and dialogues. Document analysis of the teaching module on the topic of Willingness (Modal Will) confirmed that planning was embedded through structured activities such as watching contextual videos, identifying target expressions, writing simple responses, and preparing short dialogues before oral practice. Observation data further confirmed that pre-speaking preparation consistently appeared across classroom sessions through teacher prompts and structured modeling.

Monitoring strategies were applied consistently to help students observe and regulate their speaking performance in real time. Two interconnected dimensions emerged from the triangulated data: teacher-initiated corrective feedback and peer-assisted collaborative

monitoring. During interviews, the teacher described actively circulating during speaking activities to identify errors in pronunciation, vocabulary choice, or topic focus, and addressing them immediately rather than waiting until the activity ended. The teacher also intentionally grouped students by mixed proficiency levels, pairing stronger speakers with weaker ones so that monitoring occurred both from the teacher and among students themselves. Observation checklist data corroborated these reports, confirming that the teacher consistently circulated the classroom and provided brief corrective prompts, while field notes recorded instances of students self-correcting mid-sentence without prompting. Document analysis of the teaching module confirmed that a speaking-recording activity, in which students listened back to their own spoken output, was formally embedded in the lesson design as a structured self-monitoring task.

Evaluating strategies were applied systematically after each speaking activity to facilitate reflection, identify areas for improvement, and close the metacognitive loop initiated by planning and sustained through monitoring. The teacher described evaluation as a two-track process that distinguished between proficient and struggling learners: stronger students received praise and encouragement to sustain their progress, while struggling students received targeted diagnosis of specific weaknesses, such as mispronunciation or limited fluency, followed by concrete remediation. Evaluation also functioned as a forward-looking mechanism, with the teacher consistently guiding students to compare current performance with previous sessions and to set specific improvement goals. Documentary evidence confirmed that evaluation was architecturally designed into the lesson structure through a self-assessment activity, a speaking rubric with explicit criteria for fluency and accuracy, and a role-play review session at the close of each unit.

The Implementation of the Metacognitive Strategies to Enhance Students' Speaking Skills

Table 2 presents the themes identified for the second research question, concerning how the teacher implemented these metacognitive strategies in practice. The teacher reported intentionally embedding metacognitive components into daily lesson plans, allocating specific time for planning at the beginning of a lesson, monitoring during the activity, and evaluation at its conclusion. Various instructional formats, including group discussions, role plays, storytelling, and pair interviews, were used to naturally integrate the three phases. The teacher also employed a gradual release of responsibility model, first modeling each strategy

explicitly, then guiding students through practice, and eventually encouraging independent application. Students were permitted to choose their own planning methods, such as notes, mind maps, or outlines, and were encouraged to monitor and evaluate their own performance using checklists or reflective diaries without constant teacher reminders.

Table 2. Final Themes for Research Question 2

Theme	Description
Strategy Integration	How planning, monitoring, and evaluating are embedded into daily speaking lesson plans.
Teacher Scaffolding	Teacher support through modeling, guided practice, and gradual release of responsibility.
Speaking Development	Observed improvements in students' confidence, fluency, and self-correction ability.

Regarding observed improvements, the teacher reported noticeable gains in students' speaking performance following the implementation of metacognitive strategies, including increased confidence, more structured and coherent ideas, improved pronunciation awareness, reduced anxiety and hesitation, and a greater ability to self-correct and reflect on mistakes. According to the teacher, the most significant change was students' increased autonomy and awareness of their own learning process. These findings were reinforced by document analysis of the Teaching Module's three-tier assessment framework, comprising an initial assessment that activated prior knowledge for planning, a process assessment that captured real-time progress for monitoring, and a summative assessment that enacted the evaluating function through the speaking rubric, a vocabulary quiz, and a moral reflection task. The consistent presence of these instruments across different topic modules, together with convergence across interview, observation, and documentary evidence, indicates that metacognitive strategy implementation at this school was not incidental but represented a deeply embedded, institutionally supported instructional approach.

The credibility of these findings was strengthened by the convergence of three independent data sources across all three strategy dimensions: interview narratives, classroom observation records, and formal instructional documents. The preliminary observational checklist administered before the study began, the Teaching Module's three-tier assessment framework, and the formally authorized lesson plan collectively demonstrated that metacognitive strategy use at the Islamic Junior High School in Sampit, Kalimantan Tengah

Province, Indonesia, was a consistent, institutionally established practice rather than a temporary or researcher-induced behavior. This triangulated foundation distinguishes the present case from research contexts in which metacognitive strategies are introduced artificially or observed only in isolated sessions, and it reinforces the trustworthiness of the findings reported above.

2. Discussion

This study set out to identify the aspects of metacognitive strategies employed by an English teacher in developing students' speaking skills and to examine how these strategies were implemented in classroom practice. The findings show that the teacher consistently applied three interconnected components, planning, monitoring, and evaluating, and that these components were integrated not only during instructional activities but also before and after classroom tasks, forming a continuous and cyclical process consistent with the metacognitive model proposed by Flavell (1979) and O'Malley and Chamot (1990).

Regarding the first research question, the finding that planning centered on vocabulary preparation and contextual exposure aligns with Apandi and Santoso (2023), who emphasized that structured vocabulary previews and outlines are essential in metacognitive speaking instruction for building students' confidence and reducing anxiety at the junior high school level. It is also consistent with Ruiz de Zarobe and Smala (2020), who found that explicit planning helps learners anticipate challenges and activate prior knowledge before performance. However, this study extends prior work by showing how planning is enacted through a specific, locally developed routine, memorizing fifty to one hundred vocabulary items before each activity, embedded within an authentic Islamic junior high school classroom operating under the Merdeka Curriculum, rather than examined only as a conceptual or experimental construct. This vocabulary-centered planning routine echoes Miftah's (2015) finding that a structured prewriting technique, the Idea Listing Technique, measurably enhanced students' writing achievement across successive instructional cycles when systematically implemented; taken together, the two studies suggest that explicit, teacher-structured planning stages transfer productively across different language skills within the same regional EFL context, from writing to speaking.

The finding on monitoring, characterized by teacher-initiated corrective feedback combined with peer-assisted collaborative monitoring, corroborates Marée and Mutezo's

(2025) argument that co-regulation, in which learners jointly monitor and adjust each other's performance, produces deeper metacognitive engagement than individual self-monitoring alone. While Marée and Mutezo examined co-regulation within online learning communities, the present study extends this principle to a face-to-face, resource-limited EFL classroom, demonstrating that co-regulated monitoring does not depend on digital infrastructure. This finding also aligns with Sabnani (2024), who found that monitoring behaviors become more consistent and transferable when strategy instruction is formally integrated into lesson design rather than left to spontaneous teacher decisions, a pattern reflected in the present study's Teaching Module.

The evaluating theme, marked by differentiated post-task feedback and structured reflective tools, resonates with Alqarni's (2023) finding that personalized, strategy-specific evaluative feedback predicts stronger learner engagement and achievement than generalized correction. It also supports Brevik Saethern et al. (2022), who identified structured reflective checkpoints, embedded at predictable and planned intervals, as a defining feature of effective metacognitive coaching. A distinctive contribution of the present study, however, lies in the integration of evaluation with the Islamic concept of *muhasabah*, a deliberate and sincere self-reckoning that extends cognitive self-assessment into moral self-awareness. This culturally embedded dimension of evaluation has not been addressed in prior EFL metacognition research (Apandi & Santoso, 2023; Alqarni, 2023), and it suggests that metacognitive evaluation in faith-based educational settings can draw meaningfully on existing spiritual practices rather than requiring an entirely new reflective vocabulary.

Turning to the second research question, the finding that the teacher deliberately embedded planning, monitoring, and evaluating into daily lesson plans, and gradually released responsibility to students, mirrors the framework proposed by Sabnani (2024) for structuring metacognitive instruction within formal lesson design. The gradual release model observed here, moving from explicit modeling to guided practice to independent application, is consistent with well-established principles of scaffolded instruction and suggests that speaking-specific metacognitive training benefits from the same staged support structures documented in other language skill areas.

The observed improvements in students' confidence, coherence, pronunciation awareness, and self-correction ability corroborate Ruiz de Zarobe and Smala's (2020)

conclusion that metacognitive strategy instruction enhances learner autonomy and reduces anxiety, and they are consistent with Brevik Saethern et al.'s (2022) findings linking structured reflective coaching to increased self-efficacy and motivation. These reported reductions in speaking anxiety are also consistent with Siska et al.'s (2021) regional finding that anxiety, more than motivation, significantly predicts productive-skill proficiency; by directly targeting anxiety through structured monitoring and differentiated evaluation rather than relying on motivational encouragement alone, the teacher's practice aligns with the factor that regional evidence identifies as the more consistent driver of productive language performance. Taken together, these outcomes suggest that the benefits of metacognitive instruction documented in university-level and technology-mediated contexts elsewhere in the literature (Bakhtiyarovich, 2023; Mahdi, 2024) are equally attainable in a low-resource, face-to-face junior high school classroom, provided that the three strategy phases are deliberately and consistently structured by the teacher.

Nevertheless, the findings should be interpreted within the boundaries of a single-case, teacher-perspective design. Because data were drawn from one teacher at one school, and no data were collected directly from students, the study cannot determine whether students' own accounts of their metacognitive engagement would align fully with the teacher's reported practices and observed behaviors. The two-month data collection period, while sufficient to capture a recurring instructional pattern, does not allow conclusions about the durability of these strategies or their long-term effect on speaking proficiency. These boundaries do not diminish the value of the findings as a detailed, triangulated account of how metacognitive strategies are actually enacted in an authentic Islamic junior high school classroom, but they do indicate that the findings should be treated as context-specific insights rather than generalizable claims about metacognitive strategy effectiveness across settings.

These findings also carry implications beyond the immediate speaking classroom. The teacher's use of a school-wide vocabulary initiative and mixed-ability grouping suggests that metacognitive monitoring can be cultivated not only through formal lesson activities but also through everyday school culture, extending Ubaidillah et al.'s (2024) observation that EFL learner identity and investment in Indonesian Islamic schools are shaped by practices embedded in the broader institutional environment rather than confined to individual lessons.

This points to a promising area for future pedagogical design: treating metacognitive strategy instruction as a whole-school commitment rather than an isolated classroom technique.

It is worth situating these positive findings against Permata and Mirza's (2018) regional study, which found no significant correlation between metacognitive awareness and listening comprehension among tertiary EFL students. The contrast is instructive rather than contradictory: Permata and Mirza (2018) measured a statistical association between learners' self-reported metacognitive awareness and test scores on a single receptive skill, whereas the present study traces how a teacher actively plans, models, and scaffolds metacognitive strategies within productive, face-to-face speaking instruction. Taken together, the two studies suggest that metacognitive awareness alone, absent deliberate teacher scaffolding, does not reliably translate into measurable performance gains, reinforcing the present study's emphasis on the teacher's active, structured facilitation of the planning-monitoring-evaluating cycle as the mechanism that makes metacognitive strategies effective in practice.

Overall, the discussion indicates that the teacher's implementation of metacognitive strategies was not incidental but purposeful, structured, and reflective, forming a continuous cycle embedded in every stage of speaking instruction. This cycle cultivated not only immediate gains in speaking performance but also broader habits of self-regulation and autonomous learning, carrying practical implications for English language teaching in Islamic junior high schools implementing the Merdeka Curriculum.

D. Conclusion

This case study has examined how an English teacher at an Islamic junior high school applied metacognitive strategies, planning, monitoring, and evaluating, to develop students' speaking skills under Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum. The teacher's practice reflected a consistent, three-phase cycle: planning through vocabulary-based and contextual preparation, monitoring through real-time teacher feedback and peer-assisted collaboration, and evaluating through differentiated post-task reflection reinforced by the Islamic value of muhasabah. This cycle was not applied incidentally but was deliberately embedded into lesson planning and gradually released to students through explicit modeling and guided practice, transforming speaking instruction from a teacher-centered activity into a more student-regulated process.

The implications of these findings extend to teacher training, curriculum design, and classroom practice. Teacher education programs would benefit from explicitly training pre-service and in-service teachers to model and scaffold the planning-monitoring-evaluating cycle rather than assuming it will develop informally through experience. Curriculum developers working within the Merdeka Curriculum framework may consider incorporating explicit metacognitive objectives and culturally relevant reflective elements, such as *muhasabah*, into speaking modules to support consistent implementation across Islamic schools. At the classroom level, teachers can adapt the specific tools observed in this study, structured vocabulary previews, mixed-proficiency peer grouping, and post-task reflection sheets, without requiring extensive technological infrastructure.

This study is limited by its single-case, single-teacher design, which restricts the generalizability of its findings beyond the specific school examined. The absence of data collected directly from students means that the teacher's reported practices and observed classroom behaviors, rather than students' own metacognitive experiences, form the basis of the findings. The two-month observation period, while adequate to establish a recurring instructional pattern, does not permit conclusions about the long-term durability of these strategies or their sustained effect on speaking proficiency.

Future research should therefore extend this work through multi-site studies comparing metacognitive strategy implementation across different Islamic and public junior high schools, mixed-methods designs that incorporate speaking assessments and student metacognitive awareness questionnaires, and studies that directly capture students' perceptions of metacognitive instruction and *muhasabah* through focus groups or reflective diaries. Longitudinal designs tracking the same cohort across multiple academic years would further clarify whether the gains in confidence, fluency, and self-correction observed in this study are sustained over time. Pursuing these directions can help refine metacognitive pedagogy in Indonesian EFL contexts and support the development of more autonomous, confident, and reflective English speakers.

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