

## Learning Strategies Employed by Non-English Department Students during Native Speaker Interview Sessions

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### ABSTRACT

The study participants were 46 first-semester students of the Early Childhood Islamic Education (PIAUD), Islamic Elementary School Education (PGMI), and Islamic Religious Education (PAI) study programs at STIT INSIDA Jakarta who were taking general English courses in the first semester of 2024. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews following interviews with native English speakers. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis based on the Oxford classification of language learning strategies, including memory, cognitive, compensatory, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. The results showed that students faced several major obstacles, namely limited vocabulary, pronunciation difficulties, and low confidence when speaking. To overcome these obstacles, students most often used compensatory strategies, such as paraphrasing, using simple sentences, and body movements. In addition, cognitive and metacognitive strategies were also widely used in the form of question practice, answer planning, monitoring, and evaluating speaking performance. Affective strategies helped students manage anxiety, while social strategies supported learning through interactions with peers and native speakers. These findings suggest that interview sessions with native speakers encourage the use of a variety of language learning strategies that contribute to the improvement of vocabulary and speaking confidence of non- English Department students.

**Keywords:** Language Learning Strategies Non-English Department Students, Interview, Native Speaker, Speaking Skill

### INTRODUCTION

English has become the most important language worldwide. Today, it is used for international communication in fields such as science, technology, economics, and education (Adawiyah, 2022). There are four language skills: reading, listening, speaking, and writing. Reading and listening are considered receptive skills, while speaking and writing are classified as productive skills. Among these, speaking is the productive skill used in oral communication. Speaking is more complex than reading and listening because it requires accurate pronunciation (Marhum, 2025). This means that students need to know effective ways by which they can strengthen their proficiency in English (Kartikasari et al., 2025). This research will examine how learning strategies are employed to develop

speaking skills among non-English department students, particularly in situations that require authentic oral communication like when doing interview to native speaker.

Generally recognized that learning strategy can be a useful device to help the second or foreign language learners in learning English especially for non-English students (Ningtyas, 2023). Learning strategies hold a crucial and substantial role in both teaching and learning processes, encompassing instructors' methods and students' approaches. Students' language learning employed the strategy in use of relevant contextual language and participation in authentic interactions which forms active- independent their active involvement. Effective learning strategies also improve the development of students' communicative competence (Nupus, 2021). The strategies that are adopted will differ from one learner to another. The choice of these strategies is also determined by the individualistic character of learners.

Strategies shape students' learning habits by promoting independence and personal responsibility. Teachers now play a vital role in fostering this by identifying students' strategies and providing training in effective ones. In learning processes, various challenges arise, and strategies serve as tools to address them, prompting students to adopt specific behaviours that enhance their progress. Language learning strategies extend beyond cognitive elements to include metacognitive, affective, and social dimensions. These aspects indirectly support learning, while the language itself impacts it directly, with both complementing each other equally. Some strategies remain invisible, even under close teacher observation, such as memorization techniques or those applied outside the classroom (Lestari, 2015; Sulistyanto & Prayoga, 2025).

As non-English Department students they need strategy of learning English. This study took student university at STIT INSIDA Jakarta from PIAUD Program Study (Early Childhood Islamic Education) Department who study English as their general course on first semester. Achieving proficiency in English, particularly in oral communication, allows individuals to engage more effectively in interactions with people worldwide (Hasanah et al., 2023). Learning strategies consist of techniques that individuals employ to take charge of their learning process. In

contemporary classrooms for second or foreign languages, teachers focus on strengthening these strategies as part of their duty to support student learning and reveal their thought processes (Jenny X. Montaña-González, 2017). Learning strategies refer to deliberate cognitive and behavioral efforts employed by learners to accomplish specific learning objectives. Learners who use strategies effectively possess metacognitive awareness of their thinking processes and preferred learning methods, understand the nature and requirements of a given task, and are able to select and coordinate strategies that align with both task demands and their individual learning strengths (Nurhidayah J, 2017).

Language plays a fundamental role in human life and constitutes an essential component of individual development. Every person acquires a language as it serves as the primary medium for interpersonal communication and information exchange. A Language enables humans to express ideas, aspirations, and emotions through both spoken and written forms. In the process of language learning, learners need to develop multiple language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These four skills are interrelated and support one another in language acquisition. Mastery of language skills requires continuous practice, which not only enhances linguistic ability but also contributes to the development of cognitive and thinking skills (Hidayad & Purwanto, 2022).

Language learning strategies support self-directed language acquisition, ultimately boosting learners' skills. Lestari observes that foreign language students build autonomy by choosing suitable strategies and techniques that match their goals and tasks to advance their learning. She elaborates that independent learning cultivates the necessary attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, and strategies for learners to actively manage their progress, thereby strengthening the overall learning experience. In summary, these strategies link closely to autonomous learning and aid in elevating language proficiency (Lestari, 2015).

Learning strategies can be also understood as part of five psycholinguistic processes that influence the formation of an interlanguage system, namely native language transfer, overgeneralization of target language rules, transfer of training, communication strategies, and learning strategies (Jenny X. Montaña-González, 2017). Language learning strategies serve as useful indicators of how learners

approach tasks or address problems during the language learning process. In other words, although these strategies may not always be observable or may be used unconsciously, they provide teachers with valuable insights into how students evaluate learning situations, plan their actions, and select appropriate strategies to understand, learn, and retain new language input in the classroom (Nurhidayah J, 2017).

In addition, direct strategies in learning English as a second language, as follows (Luh et al., 2024): (a) Memory strategies: memory strategies are employed to facilitate the retention of the language being learned. These strategies involve specific techniques that assist learners in storing and retrieving new linguistic information. (b) Cognitive strategies refer to learners' mental processes used to enhance language learning, including understanding and constructing texts in the target language. Such strategies facilitate the manipulation and transformation of linguistic input, thereby promoting greater comprehension. (c) Compensation strategies describe how learners overcome deficiencies in their target language knowledge and competence in order to communicate successfully. (d) Metacognitive strategies help learners manage and control their learning processes. Zhang argues that learners' awareness of their learning strategies increases the likelihood of success. By employing metacognitive strategies, learners can plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning and modify their approaches, when necessary, which may differentiate successful learners from less successful ones. (e) Affective strategies support learners in managing their emotional states throughout the learning process, including attitudes, beliefs, emotions, and motivation (Oxford, 1990).

By applying these strategies, learners can maintain and strengthen positive affective factors, which have been found to be especially beneficial for the development of receptive language skills, namely reading and listening. (f) Social strategies support language learning through social interaction. These strategies enhance learners' engagement with others in both learning and using the target language. Oxford further argued that no strategy is superior to the others, as all strategies are complementary and most effective when used together.

Language learning has emerged as a central concern in educational contexts, as it is influenced by a wide range of factors, including cognitive, psychological, and sociological dimensions. Consequently, numerous studies have examined various contributing factors, such as learners' motivation, aptitude, and other individual differences (Nupus, 2021). Previous studies have highlighted that limited exposure to authentic communication and high levels of speaking anxiety are major barriers for non-English department students. This educational issue has been primarily addressed by researchers such as Berlinda in her study entitled *English Language Learning Strategies: An Exploratory Study of Management and Engineering Students* with result showed that those learning strategies were affective, memory, social, metacognitive, cognitive, and compensation language learning strategies. Furthermore, students from both study program learned English better by using affective strategy which meant that they employed feeling in learning English ( Mandasari, 2018). In addition, a reseach by Riandi and Nupus entitled *Student Learning Strategies in Second Language Acquisition of English: Empirical Study of Private University Student in Pandeglang Distric* with result that the students use different strategies however the metacognitive and cognitive strategies are the most preferred strategies used individually by students (Nupus, 2021).

Numerous studies have emphasized the importance of learning strategies and individual differences in second language acquisition; however, there remains limited empirical evidence examining how specific learning strategies facilitate direct communication with native speakers among non-English department students. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the learning strategies employed by non-English department students to overcome their communication difficulties and to examine how these language learning strategies contribute to the improvement of their English-speaking skills.

Language learning has become a central concern in educational contexts, as it is influenced by a wide range of factors, including cognitive, psychological, and sociological dimensions (Fataa, M. A., & Toyyibah, T., 2024). Numerous studies have examined these factors, such as motivation and aptitude. Dörnyei and Skehan emphasize that such factors are crucial components of individual differences in

second language learning. Accordingly, a number of previous studies have investigated learning strategies and their influence on English language learning (Nupus, 2021).

Language serves as a medium through which individuals express their emotions and ideas, and it also functions as a tool for communication among nations worldwide (Tantri et al., 2023). To achieve proficiency in English, learners must develop competence in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among these skills, communication plays a central role, with effective speaking serving as a crucial factor in successful language learning (Nurman et al., 2022).

Despite the importance of speaking proficiency, many students from non-English departments continue to encounter significant challenges in oral English communication. These challenges stem from difficulties in pronunciation and vocabulary acquisition, limited self-confidence, and frequent reliance on the mother tongue due to fear of peer mockery. Accordingly, this research seeks to analyze the speaking problems faced by non-English department students, examine their contributing factors, and identify possible solutions to these issues (Tantri et al., 2023).

Second language acquisition involves a developmental process in which learners progress from producing isolated syllables to integrating individual sounds into meaningful and communicative sentences. In second language learning, pronunciation instruction commonly emphasizes the analysis, comparison, and practice of phonological differences between the first and target languages. Nevertheless, that complex pronunciation difficulties cannot be effectively addressed through listening practice and imitation alone when substantial structural differences exist between the two language systems (Shu & Wang, 2025).

Interactive approaches such as conducting interviews with native English speakers have attracted increasing attention as alternative strategies for enhancing students' authentic language practice. Engaging in interviews with native speakers allows students to use English in real-life contexts, refine their pronunciation, enrich their vocabulary, and develop greater confidence in speaking. Although this approach has been widely implemented in English education programs, empirical

studies examining non-English major students' perceptions of its effectiveness in improving English proficiency remain limited (Iswanto Wibowo et al., 2025).

This study investigate non-English major students' perceptions of the role of interviewing native speakers in enhancing their English proficiency, what kind of strategies they used to solve or to face the problem when interviewing native speaker since language learning strategies play a crucial role in the process of language acquisition, particularly in learning a foreign language

## **METHOD**

This study used descriptive qualitative method. Descriptive research is also called as survey research (Luh et al., 2024). This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to explore the language learning strategies used by non-English department students during native speaker interview sessions. A qualitative approach was chosen to gain in-depth insights into students' experiences, perceptions, and strategic behaviours in authentic communication contexts.

The participants of this study were 46 non-English department students from the Early Childhood Islamic Education (PIAUD) Program, Islamic Study Program and Islamic Elementary Education Program at STIT INSIDA Jakarta in the academic year 2024. English was a general compulsory course for these first-semester students.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted after the native speaker interview sessions. The interviews aimed to elicit detailed information regarding students' challenges, learning strategies, and perceptions during the interaction with native English speakers.

The collected data were analysed using thematic analysis, following the procedures of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The interview transcripts were coded based on Oxford's (1990) language learning strategy framework, including memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. To ensure data credibility, member checking was conducted by confirming the interview results with the participants. This process helped validate the accuracy and trustworthiness of the findings.



## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings reveal that non-English department students encountered several challenges when interviewing native English speakers. The most frequently reported difficulties were limited vocabulary, pronunciation problems, and low speaking confidence. These challenges are consistent with previous studies indicating that non-English major students often struggle with oral communication due to insufficient exposure to authentic English use and high levels of speaking anxiety (Tantri et al., 2023; Nurman et al., 2022).

### Direct Strategies

Among direct strategies, compensation strategies were the most frequently used. Students reported using paraphrasing, gestures, and simpler sentence structures when they lacked specific vocabulary. The cognitive approach developed from a growing understanding of learning processes based on cognitive psychology. This learner-centered paradigm originated from research conducted in the 1980s and 1990s that focused on learning functions, memory, and cognition (Jenny X. Montaña-González, 2017).

**Table 1. Language Learning Strategies Used by Non-English Department Students**

Type of Strategies	Strategy Category	Description	Examples of Students' Use
<b>Direct Strategy</b>	<b>Memory Strategies</b>	Strategies used to store and retrieve new language information	Memorizing key vocabulary and common expressions related to the interview topic
	<b>Cognitive Strategies</b>	Mental processes used to understand and produce the target language.	Practicing interview questions, repeating sentences, translating ideas before speaking.
	<b>Compensation Strategies</b>	Techniques used to overcome gaps in language knowledge.	Paraphrasing ideas, using simpler sentences, gestures, or synonyms when vocabulary is limited.
<b>Indirect Strategy</b>	<b>Metacognitive Strategies</b>	Strategies for planning, monitoring, and evaluating learning.	Planning interview responses, monitoring speech during interviews, reflecting on performance afterward.
	<b>Affective Strategies</b>	Strategies used to regulate emotions,	Reducing anxiety through positive self-talk, encouraging



<b>Social Strategies</b>	attitudes, and motivation. Strategies involving interaction with others to facilitate learning.	oneself to speak confidently. Practicing with peers, asking native speakers for clarification, engaging in real conversations.
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**Source: Adapted from Oxford**

The findings presented in Table 2 below illustrate the challenges faced by non-English major students when interviewing native English speakers, the strategies they employed to cope with these challenges, and the learning outcomes they experienced. The results indicate that students encountered both linguistic and affective difficulties during the interview process.

In terms of speaking challenges, limited vocabulary emerged as the most prominent issue. Students reported difficulty expressing their ideas clearly due to a lack of appropriate vocabulary, particularly in spontaneous communication. This limitation often caused hesitation and disrupted fluency. In addition to vocabulary constraints, pronunciation problems were also frequently mentioned. Students felt uncertain about producing correct sounds and feared being misunderstood by native speakers. These linguistic challenges were further intensified by low speaking confidence, as many students experienced anxiety and fear of making mistakes during interaction with native speakers.

To address these difficulties, students applied various language learning strategies. Compensation strategies were commonly used to overcome vocabulary gaps, such as paraphrasing ideas, using simpler sentence structures, and employing gestures to convey meaning. These strategies enabled students to maintain communication despite their limited language proficiency. Cognitive strategies were also evident, particularly in the form of practicing interview questions and mentally translating ideas before speaking. Such strategies helped students organize their thoughts and prepare for the interview task.

Furthermore, metacognitive strategies played an important role in students' learning processes. Students reported planning their responses before the interview, monitoring their speech during interaction, and evaluating their performance afterward. This awareness of the learning process allowed students

to identify their weaknesses and reflect on ways to improve their speaking ability. Affective strategies were also employed to manage anxiety and build confidence. Students attempted to encourage themselves and reduce nervousness by adopting positive self-talk and accepting mistakes as part of the learning process.

Social strategies were reflected in students' interactions with peers and native speakers. Practicing with classmates before the interview and asking native speakers for clarification helped students gain confidence and improve their speaking performance. Through these social interactions, students were able to engage in authentic language use, which contributed positively to their learning experience.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that interviewing native speakers contributed to students' English proficiency, particularly in vocabulary development and speaking confidence. Authentic interaction exposed students to new vocabulary and real-life language use, while repeated practice reduced anxiety and increased self-confidence. These results suggest that the combination of various language learning strategies supports non-English major students in overcoming speaking challenges and enhances their overall English learning experience. The following tables present the thematic findings derived from interview data analysis.

**Tabel 2. Findings on Language Learning Strategies Used by Non-English Department Students**

Theme	Learning Strategy	Key Findings	Sample Students' Statement
Speaking Challenges	Vocabulary Limitation	Students experienced difficulty expressing ideas due to limited vocabulary, especially during spontaneous interaction.	"Sometimes I know what I want to say, but I don't know the English words."
	Pronunciation Problems	Students struggled with correct pronunciation when speaking to native speakers, which affected fluency.	I was afraid my pronunciation was wrong, so I spoke slowly and feel doubtful"
	Low Confidence	Anxiety and fear of making mistakes reduced students' willingness to speak actively.	"I was nervous because I was afraid the native speaker would not understand me."
Coping Strategies	Compensation Strategy	Students used paraphrasing, gestures, and	"When I forgot the word, I explained it

	Metacognitive Strategy	simpler sentences to maintain communication. Students planned, monitored, and evaluated their speaking performance.	using simple English.” “I planned what I wanted to say and evaluated my speaking after the interview.”
Affective Regulation	Affective Strategy	Students tried to control anxiety and motivate themselves to speak confidently.	“I told myself not to be afraid of making mistakes.”
Social Interaction	Social Strategy	Interaction with peers and native speakers helped students gain confidence and improve speaking skills.	“Practicing with friends helped me feel more confident when talking to native speakers.”
Learning Outcomes	Vocabulary Development	Students acquired new vocabulary from authentic interaction.	“I learned new words directly from the conversation.”
	Speaking Confidence	Repeated interaction increased students’ confidence in speaking English.	“After the interview, I felt more confident speaking English.”

These findings are consistent with previous studies by Mandasari (2018) and Nupus (2021), which found that non-English department students predominantly employed affective, cognitive, and metacognitive strategies in oral communication tasks. They experienced several interconnected challenges during interviews with native English speakers, particularly limited vocabulary, pronunciation difficulties, and low speaking confidence. Limited vocabulary hindered students’ ability to express ideas spontaneously, resulting in hesitation and reduced fluency. Pronunciation problems, especially related to stress and sound accuracy, further affected students’ confidence, while anxiety and fear of making mistakes discouraged active participation. These challenges reflect common barriers faced by non-English major students in authentic oral communication contexts.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that non-English department students employ a range of language learning strategies when participating in native speaker interview sessions to cope with linguistic and affective challenges. The main difficulties encountered include limited vocabulary, pronunciation problems, and low speaking confidence. To address these challenges, students most frequently used compensation strategies such as paraphrasing, using simple sentence structures, and employing gestures to

sustain communication. Cognitive and metacognitive strategies were also evident through question practice, planning responses, and evaluating speaking performance, while affective and social strategies helped students manage anxiety and gain confidence through interaction.

Overall, native speaker interview sessions provide meaningful opportunities for authentic language use and encourage the integration of multiple learning strategies. These interactions contribute positively to vocabulary development and increased speaking confidence among non-English department students. The findings suggest that incorporating native speaker interviews into general English courses can effectively support students' speaking development and strategic language learning.

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