

## STUDENTS' META-COGNITIVE LEARNING STRATEGIES TOWARD SPEAKING PROFICIENCY IN EFL CLASS

A. Ika Handayani<sup>1\*</sup>, B. Siti Aisah<sup>1\*\*</sup>

English Education Study Program, Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa State University-Banten

\*Corresponding email: logika\_handayani@yahoo.com

\*\*Corresponding email: aisamia@yahoo.com

---

### Abstract

This writing is a report of a minor research conducted to find out students' meta-cognitive learning strategies toward their speaking proficiency and investigate some barriers in applying the meta-cognitive strategies toward their grammatical, strategic, discourse and sociolinguistic competencies. The meta-cognitive learning strategies itself, in this research, refers students' self-reflection, self-responsibility and initiative, as well as goal setting and time management, (Hismanouglu, 2000). Oxford (1990) adds that meta-cognitive learning strategies include recognizing when a strategy is needed, selecting strategies, memorizing or rehearsing strategies, and assessing the helpfulness of strategies. So, in this study, the researchers limits on what kind of meta-cognitive learning strategies that the students use to encounter some problems in learning speaking toward their speaking proficiency and the barriers that they find in applying the strategies include in meta-cognitive strategies. This idea, in line with the theory from Oxford (1990) about three majors strategies in learning English as foreign language: centering the learning, arranging and planning the learning and evaluating the learning. The researchers tried to focus in the students' meta-cognitive strategies toward their speaking proficiency: grammatical competencies, strategic competencies, discourse competencies and sociolinguistic competencies. It means that the researchers elaborate the students' meta-cognitive learning strategies in mastering those four competences in speaking proficiency. As it is a case study, the researcher involved ten students in the speaking 4 class at the English education department. The choice of these subjects is based on their speaking fluency which is better than other friends in the classroom. This is important choosing the ten students, because in implementing meta-cognitive learning strategies, the students should have better ability in finishing their speaking tasks.. The data were collected through classroom observation, informal talk with the lecturer and interview with students (ten students). Further, the data analysis was conducted qualitatively and done over the course of the study. On going data analysis and interpretations were based mainly on observation notes (note taking), informal conversations (interview) with both lecturer and students. And, the data analysis was done through expert judgment and theory which is using triangulation in techniques and source. Results of this study reveal that most of the students (70%) centered their learning before the lecturer explaining the tasks. There were 50 % students who arranged and planned their learning in accomplishing their tasks. However, the students did not apply all six minor strategies of the second major in meta-cognitive learning strategies.. They skipped "identifying the purpose of the task and setting the objective of the learning of tasks". There were 50% students who applied the last strategy in meta-cognitive learning strategies, evaluating their learning by having self monitoring and self evaluation. In terms of barriers toward speaking proficiency, the interview conducted show that the students got barriers in discourse and strategic competence that refers to the ability to keep communication in meaningful way, to know when and how to take the floor, how to keep a conversation going, how to terminate the conversation and how to clear up the communication break down as well as comprehension problems.

*Keywords:* Meta-cognitive learning strategies, speaking proficiencies, centering the learning, arranging and planning the learning, and evaluating the learning

---

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Research

A person needs special skills either orally or written if he/she wants to succeed in communication. To everyone knowledge, speaking as an oral skill which is very urgent to be mastered, both as a Second Language (ESL) and Foreign Language (EFL). Among other three macro skills, speaking has been considered as an interesting and challenging skill. Luoma (2004:1) says that the ability to speak in a foreign language is at the very heart of what it means to be able to use a foreign language. It means that the ability to speak a foreign language is the effort and reflection of one's personality, image, thoughts and experience and knowledge of the world.

There are many reasons of why a learner of English eager to learn and practice it continuously. One of the reasons is having a main goal of being able to speak to friends and even speak with foreigners. Luoma (2004:2) also says that speaking in a foreign language is very difficult and the competence in speaking takes a long time to develop. It can not be denied that being able to speak English fluently and accurately takes much time and needs a lot of efforts to maintain and improve the speaking skills seriously. Sometimes, the learners take a private English course or join to any English club to evaluate whether they have mastered this language or not.

Consequently, to speak English as a foreign language, the learners must master language components and have communicative competences. They must master the sound system of the language and have instant access to have appropriate vocabulary and be able to put words together intelligibly with minimal hesitation. In addition, they must also understand what is being said to them, and be able to respond appropriately to achieve their communicative goals. Communicative goals can be achieved well if they have master the four communicative competences: grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence. Therefore, learners of English should have abilities to plan, process and produce it since speaking is done in real-time.

The students of English Study Program of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa are demanded to be able to speak English fluently and accurately because they will be English teachers who are going to be the model for their students. They are also demanded to give any academic presentation by using communicative and acceptable English in the class or in public. According to Thornburry (2005:94) students who are studying English for academic purpose are likely to need preparation in giving academic presentation or conference papers. However, the students still find speaking as a difficult skill to be mastered especially when they have to present their papers, proposal or research project. Having lack of vocabulary, lack of self confidence, being afraid of making mistakes and having confused in using good context are some reasons that caused speaking is difficult to be mastered by them.

To minimize those problems above, the lecturers of speaking (which are also the researchers), have applied learning strategies to help and encourage the students speaking mastery. As Luoma (2004:106) states that strategies make learner's communication efficient, and traces of them in learner performances provide evidence that they are actively engaged in meaning making. While learning strategy is a strategy used by the learner to be active in a process of teaching and learning. It infers that applying certain supporting strategy help the learners solve his/her language skills, especially speaking skill.

Oxford (1990:11) classified the learning strategies into direct and indirect strategies which are further subdivided into 6 groups. Direct strategies consist of memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and compensation strategies. While, indirect strategies classified into metacognitive strategies, affective strategies and social strategies. In Oxford's system, metacognitive strategies help learners to regulate their learning. Affective strategies are concerned with the learner's emotional requirements such as confidence, while social strategies lead to increased interaction with the target language. Cognitive strategies are the mental strategies that learners use to make sense of their learning. For this case, the researcher were focused on implementing metacognitive strategies since it could make the students have self-reflection, self-responsibility and initiative, as well as goal setting and time management (Hismanoglu,2000). In short, by applying meta-cognitive learning students will be self regulated learners or independent learner who manage their own learning while accomplishing their tasks, the speaking tasks.

## **1.2 Formulation of the Problem**

We formulated the problems, as followed:

1. What kind of meta-cognitive learning strategies did the students use to encounter some problems in learning speaking toward their speaking proficiency?
2. What kind of barriers did they find in applying the strategies include in meta-cognitive strategies?

## **1.3 Significance of the Research**

1. To give information about meta-cognitive strategies as a learning strategy which help the learners to be independent learner in the speaking class
2. To give contribution to teachers and lecturers in solving their problems in teaching speaking

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Speaking Proficiency**

Speaking is used for many different purposes and each purpose needs different skill. We may use to request something, to entertain people, to express opinion, to give instruction, to persuade someone, to have social contact with certain people, and so on. In other words, the purpose of speaking implies knowledge of the context

or situation in which speech occurs, the participants involved and their specific roles and relationships, and the kind of activity the speakers are involved in.

The ability to speak in a foreign language is being able to use it fluently and appropriately. Hymes in Richard (2002:206) says that learners of English need to know not only the linguistic knowledge but also the culturally acceptable ways of interacting with others in different situations and relationships. Furthermore, the learners of English as foreign language want to have communicative competence for the speaking skill. Canale and Swain in Richard and Renandya (2002:207) propose that communicative competence includes the following four competences.

a. *Grammatical competence*

It is an umbrella concept that includes increasing expertise grammar (morphology, syntax), vocabulary and mechanics. With regard to speaking, the term mechanics refer to basic sounds of letter and syllables, pronunciation of words, intonation and stress.

b. *Discourse competence*

It refers to hold the communication together in a meaningful way. The learners should have the ability to perceive and process stretches of discourse and to formulate representations of meanings from referents in both previous sentences and following sentences. In addition to grammatical competence, EFL learners must develop discourse competence, which is concerned with inferential relationships.

c. *Sociolinguistic competence*

It involves knowing what is expected socially and culturally by users of the target language. The learners should also acquire the rules and norms governing the appropriate timing and realization of the speech acts. Understanding the sociolinguistic side of language helps learners know what comments are appropriate, how to ask question during interaction, and how to respond non verbally according to the purpose of the talk. Knowledge about language alone does not adequately prepare learners for effective and appropriate use of the target language

d. *Strategic competence*

It refers to the ability know when and how to take the floor, how to keep a conversation going, how to terminate the conversation and how to clear up the communication break down as well as comprehension problems. In other words, this concerns with the strategy during a progress of conversation

To make it clear, there is a scheme of the explanation above as follows:

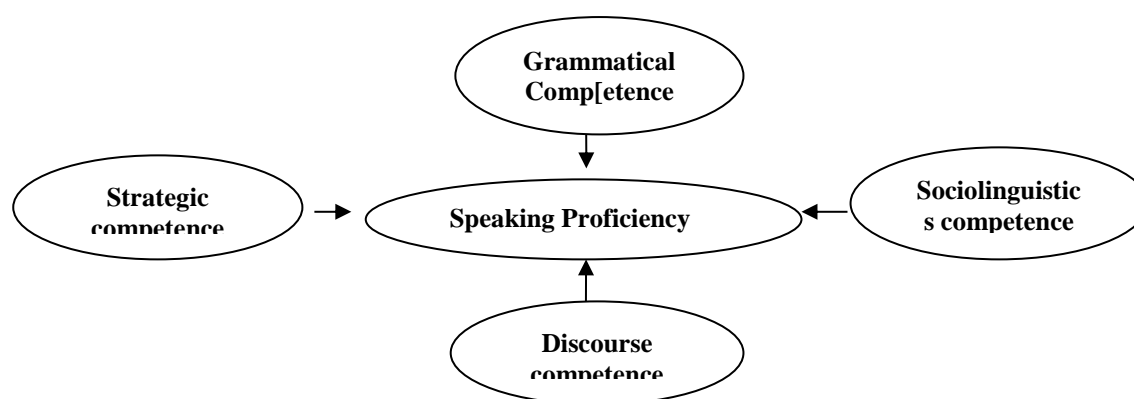


Figure 1: Canale and Swain in Richard and Renandya about Speaking Proficiency.

The figure shows that grammatical competence, discourse competence, socio-linguistic competence and strategic competence are essential components of speaking effectiveness. The learners of English should have these components to create meaningful and communicative speaking. Furthermore, speaking proficiency also can be reached if the interlocutors apply those competences integrately.

## 2.2 Classroom Speaking Activities

There are many classroom speaking activities that might be used by the teachers. Each activity is practiced to reach the goal that is called communicative competence. Furthermore, Harmer (2000:206) communicative competence is supported by communicative activities. In case, communicative activities have basic principles, such as, desire to communicate, communicative purpose, content not form, variety of language, no teacher intervention, and no materials control. Those principles should be considered by the language teachers when they want to practice speaking. Harmer states the classroom speaking activities that support communicative competence. He categorized them into six activities.

The first activity is acting from a script. The students act out the scenes or course books even the dialogues that they have made. Secondly, communication games to get students talking as quickly and as fluently as possible. Then, the third is discussion that can be range from highly formal, whole group staged events to informal small group interaction. Next, the fourth is prepared talks. Here, the students make presentation on a topic of their own choice. If possible, students should speak from notes rather than from a script. The point is the students should be active in listening as well as in speaking. The fifth activity is simulation and role-play. In this activity, the students stimulate a real life encounter as if they were doing in the real world. Then, they can act out the role of the character which totally different from his/her character.

Those activities will be more meaningful if the students use good strategy such as metacognitive strategy which brings them to be self regulated learner. Teacher or lecturer can also help the learners master speaking skill easily by facilitating each activity based on the students' need.

### 2.3 Meta-cognitive Learning Strategies

According to O'Malley in Brown (2000:125), metacognitive strategies have eight points. The first is Advance Organizers which is related to making a general but comprehensive preview of the organizing concept or principle. The second is Directed Attention that connected to deciding to attend in a learning task and to ignore irrelevant distracters. The third is Selective Attention which refers to deciding to attend to specific aspects of language input or situational details that will cue the retention of language input. The fourth is Self-Management related to understanding the conditions that help one learn and arranging for the presence of those conditions. The fifth is Functional Planning that is related to planning for and rehearsing linguistic components necessary to carry out an upcoming language tasks. The sixth is Self-monitoring which is connected to correcting one's speech for accuracy in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, or for appropriateness related to the setting or to the people who are present. The seventh is Delayed Production which is consciously deciding to postpone speaking in order to learn initially through listening comprehension. The last, the eighth is Self-Evaluation that is related to checking the outcomes of one's own language learning against an internal measure of completeness accuracy.

Oxford (1990:135) supports Brown statements about metacognitive strategy. She said that among the main metacognitive strategies, it is possible to include advance organizers, directed attention, selective attention-management, functional planning, self-monitoring, delayed production, self-evaluation. Further she said that metacognitive strategies allows the learners to control their own cognition by coordinating the learning process such as centering, arranging, planning and evaluating their own learning.

Oxford (1990:138) classifies metacognitive strategies into three major strategies. They are centering the learning, arranging and planning the learning and evaluating the learning. She said that The strategies are essential to be applied in learning a foreign language that emphasize on the skills, reading, writing, listening and speaking. The first strategy is centering the learning which consists of three sets strategies: over-viewing and linking with already known material, paying attention and delaying speech production to focus on listening. The use of strategies provide a focus for language learning. The second strategy is arranging and planning the learning. That consists of six strategies: finding out about language learning, organizing, setting goals and objectives, identifying the purpose of language task, planning for a language task and seeking practice for opportunities. These strategies help learners to organize and plan the language learning. The third strategy is evaluating the learning. There are two related strategies: self monitoring and self evaluation. Both strategies add learners in checking their language performance. Here is the diagram based on the above explanation:

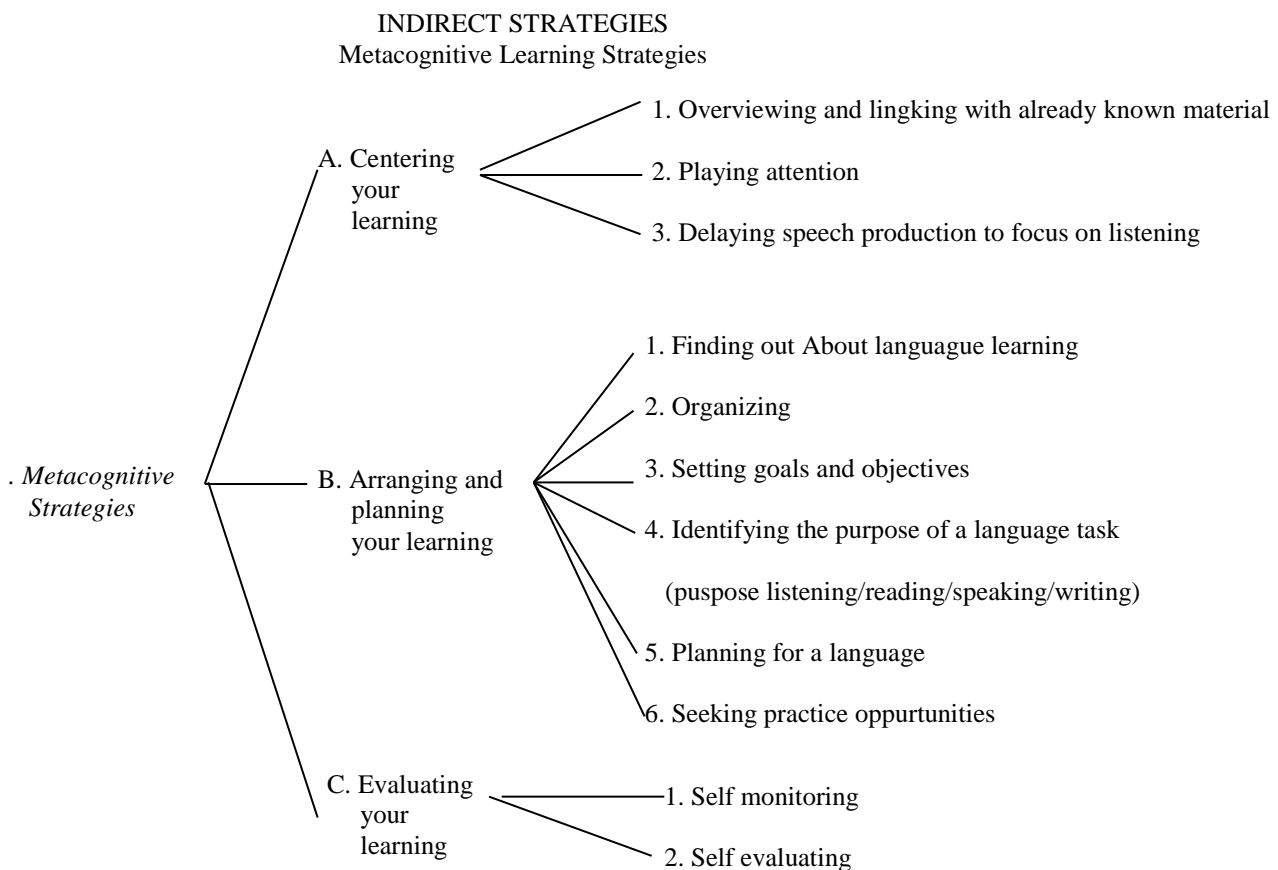


Figure 2: Diagram of Meta-cognitive Learning Strategies based on Oxford.

In conclusion, metacognitive learning strategies are used to oversee, regulate or self direct language learning which involve various processes as planning, prioritizing, setting goals and self management. Metacognitive strategy is related to the understanding of a person about his/her personal learning schema including the strategies used to accomplish tasks, and the process of his/her oversees and monitors the use of strategies. In other words, if the students use or apply the metacognitive strategies, he/she will improve his/her learning time organization, self monitoring and self evaluation well.

### 3. Research Methodology

#### 3.1 The objective of the Problems

1. To find the kind of meta-cognitive learning strategies that the students often used in learning speaking toward their speaking proficiency
2. To know the barriers in applying meta-cognitive strategies in learning speaking

#### 3.2 Time and Place of the Research

This research conducted at English Study Program, the fourth semester students of FKIP-UNTIRTA, Serang-Banten. There were ten students, chosen students (students who admitted that they often used Meta-cognitive strategies in learning speaking and had good score in speaking class).

#### 3.3 Research Method

The method of this research was case study, a qualitative study

#### 3.4 Data Collecting Technique

The data were gained by classroom observation, informal talk with the lecturer and interview with students (ten students), note taking.

#### 3.5 Data Analysis technique

The data analysis was conducted qualitatively. On going data analysis and interpretations were based mainly on observation notes (note taking), informal conversations (interview) with both lecturer and students. And, the data was analyzed through expert judgment and theory which is using triangulation in techniques and source.

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 Result

1. Application of Meta-cognitive Learning Strategies in Speaking Class

Based on the classroom observation, the researchers got interesting data when the students used meta-cognitive strategies in leaning speaking. The lecturer facilitated the students in accomplishing the speaking task. The lecturer acted as manager who managed her teaching starting from seating management, topic discussed and time management. She also acted as facilitator who facilitated the students' need such as preparing various topic to be discussed, reviewing and over-viewing some information and arousing motivation. As supervisor, she tried hard to understand the students' problems in the teaching and learning process and find the solution to overcome those problems. On the other hand, the students were also so enthusiastic in learning speaking even though they got barriers in applying the met-cognitive learning strategies. Starting from the first activity to the sixth activity in speaking: acting from script, communication games, discussion, prepared talk: speech, simulation and role-play.

In Centering the Learning : the lecturer overviewed and linked with already known material, and the students paid attention and listened carefully by trying also to memorize the materials/ information connected to the topic. There were seven students (70%) did the strategies well. In Arranging and planning the learning, the lecturer let the students to accomplish the task to be performed in front of their friends. The students tried to understand the task and the topic, get more data to support the topic/ the task, learn many new words and arranged them into good sentences (organizing) they identified why they learned the task, they planned for how they perform the task and practice to perform and get the opportunities to perform. In Evaluating the Learning, for the first meeting, the lecturer gave suggestion and evaluation on the students' performance. However for the second up to the sixth meeting, the lecturer let the students did self evaluation and self monitoring. However, half of the students (50%) sometimes ignored this strategy.

The data of informal talks (informal interview) with the students and the lecturer showed that most of the students applied the first major strategy in meta-cognitive strategy, Centering the Learning. The students said that they paid attention and listened carefully all information or instruction from the lecturer. The students said that they skipped two or two minor strategies in Arranging and Planning the Learning, such as setting the goals of the tasks and identifying the purpose of the task. They informed that they suddenly focused on finding out what to do for the text, organized the words into good sentences/ arguments, they plan the step before performing the tasks and they performed well. For having the last major strategy, Evaluating the Learning, the students said that they preferred having evaluation from their lecturer rather than having self evaluation..

## 2. The Barriers of Using Meta-Cognitive Strategies Toward Speaking Proficiency

Based on the informal talks and the classroom observation, there were interesting data gained by the researchers. There were three students (30%) who still got difficulties in making appropriate sentences and pronouncing the words/sentences when they performed in front of their friends (Grammatical Competence). There were five students (50%) who were confused to keep communication in meaningful way (Discourse Competence). About four students (40%) who doubted their own Sociolinguistic Competence, such as giving appropriate comments, asking during interaction and verbally or non verbally. There were six students (60%) who felt that their barriers were keeping the conversation going, terminating the conversation and clearing up the communication breaking down (Strategic Competence).

In Speaking, the speaker's main goal is to have continuum communication with other English users, so, all communicative competences should be mastered well by the learners of EFL. As Harmer (2000:269) says that the ability to speak fluently needs not only knowledge of language features, but also the ability to process information and language "on the spot".

## 4.2 Discussion

Based on the result above, the students skipped two points in second major strategy, Arranging and Planning the Learning: setting the goal and identifying the purpose of the task. The lecturer should be a source of the learning by informing they should do the task and the goal to finish the task. Since meta-cognition refers to the knowledge and regulation of the act or process of knowing. This can include knowledge about oneself, knowledge about the cognitive demands of tasks, and knowledge about both cognitive and metacognitive learning strategies.

Metacognition also consists of two basic processes occurring simultaneously: monitoring the progress as the students learn, and making changes and adapting the strategies if the students perceive that they are not doing so well. It's about self-reflection, self-responsibility and initiative, as well as goal setting and time management. It can be concluded that applying meta-cognitive strategies encourage the learners of EFL to be self regulated learners who can regulate themselves to be successful learners in term of recognizing when the strategy is needed, selecting strategies, rehearsing strategies and assessing strategies.

Having complete proficiency in speaking needs continuum practice in any kind of speaking tasks/activities. Mastering the communicative competences by applying meta-cognitive learning strategies also needed more

understanding and mental and social support from the lecturer and other students as friends as listeners. Since speaking is also a productive skill, a speaker of English should prepare any responds that come from the listener because many utterances produced by the speaker will affect to the skill of his listening. Harmer (2000:269) has his own statement about the process of productive language. He states that success on speaking is also depends on the rapid of processing skills that talking necessitates. Further he describes about mental and social processing in speaking:

- a. Language processing. Effective speakers need to be able to process language in their own heads and put it into coherent order so that it comes out in forms that are not only comprehensible, but also conveys the meanings that are intended. Language processing involves the retrieval of words and phrases from memory and their assembly into syntactically and propositionally appropriate sequences. One of the main reasons for including speaking activities in language lesson is to help students to develop habits of rapid language processing in English.
- b. Interacting with others. Most speaking involves interaction with one or more participants. This means that effective speaking also involves a good deal of listening, an understanding of how the other participants are feeling, and a knowledge of how linguistically to take turns or allows others to do so.
- c. On the spot information processing. Here, it is also needed to be able to process the information at the moment we get it.

It can be concluded that before producing meaningful words or utterances, the speakers do many process either mentally or socially. In addition, mastering listening and understanding hearer's feeling also needed when communication happened because oral production is really connected to direct interaction which needs potential comprehension and negotiation of meanings.

## 5. CONCLUSION

There were some interesting points to be concluded:

1. The ten students applied all major strategies in Meta-cognitive Learning Strategies. However there were two points in second major strategies (Planning and Arranging the Learning) which were skipped by the students: Setting the goals and identifying the purpose of the task. In Evaluating the Learning, the students were more comfortable evaluated by themselves or by the lecturer rather than by their friends
2. While applying meta-cognitive strategies, most of the students tried hard to master all communicative competences (grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic, strategic) to achieve speaking proficiency. However, the students felt the most difficult competence to be mastered was strategic and discourse competence. Therefore, there is supporting information of having meta-cognitive skills and mastering the Strategic competences to be successful speaker in English

## REFERENCES

- [1]Beebe, Steven A, Beebe, Susan J., *Public Speaking: An Audience Centered Approach*, Prentice Hall Inc., 1991
- [2]Brown, H. Douglas., *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*, Fourth Edition, New York: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc., 2000.
- [3]Brown H. Douglas, *Language Assessment: Principles and Language Classrooms Activities*. Pearson Education, Inc.,2004
- [4]Cresswell, John W., *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*., Sage Publications., Inc.
- [5]Gay, L.R, and Airasian. Peter. *Educational Research*, Prentice-Hall, Inc.,2000
- [6]Harmer, Jeremy. *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. Pearson education Limited.,2000
- [7]Harmer, Jeremy. *The Practice of English Language Teaching* Pearson education Limited.,2007
- [8]Hismanoglu, Murat. *Language Learning Strategies in Foreign Language Learning and Teaching*, the TESL Journal Vol. VI, no.8.
- [9]<http://iteslj.org/Articles/Hismanoglu-Strategies.html>. 2000
- [10]Hughes, Rebecca. *Teaching and Researching Speaking*, Pearson Education, 2002.
- [11]Luoma, Sari. *Assessing Speaking*. Cambridge University Press, 2006
- [12]Moleong, Lexy J. *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif*, Pt. Remaja Rosdakarya, 2001
- [13]Oxford, Rebecca. *Language Learning Strategies*. Newbury House Publishers, 1990
- [14]Richard, Jack and Renandya Willy. *Methodology of Language Teaching: A Compilation*. Cambridge University Press, 2002
- [15]Thornbury, Scott. *How to Teach Speaking*, Pearson Education Limited, 2005