Exploring speaking learning strategies among introverted students in english education programs: A case study

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	This study aims to explore the speaking learning strategies employed by introverted students in the English Education program, focusing on how personality traits influence strategic language learning. Employing a qualitative descriptive method, data were collected through semi-structured interviews and questionnaires administered to five fourth-semester students identified as introverts via the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) test. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis through three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that introverted students predominantly utilize four types of speaking strategies: memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensatory strategies, and metacognitive strategies. In contrast, affective and social strategies were not employed by the participants, highlighting their preference for introspective and independent learning approaches. Cognitive and compensatory strategies were found to be the most frequently used, indicating a strong inclination toward planning, mental rehearsal, and overcoming limitations in speaking fluency. These results suggest that introverted students benefit from structured, personalized speaking instruction that accommodates their reflective learning styles. The study offers practical implications for educators to design adaptive language learning environments that respect diverse personality traits, thereby enhancing speaking proficiency among introverted learners.

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is widely regarded as one of the most essential yet challenging language skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning (Alhaysony, 2017; Yusnimar, 2019). Unlike receptive skills such as listening and reading, speaking demands active language production, real-time cognitive processing, and social interaction, all of which require learners to integrate vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, fluency, and accuracy simultaneously. In academic settings, particularly in English education programs, speaking competence is not only expected but often used as a measure of a student's overall communicative ability (Basalama et al., 2020; Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020). However, mastering speaking skills is not solely influenced by instructional methods or curriculum content it is deeply affected by individual learner differences, including psychological and personality factors that shape one's approach to learning.

Among the various personality traits that influence learning, introversion has received increased scholarly attention due to its potential impact on learners' engagement in oral activities (Hadi et al., 2019). Introverted students are typically described as reserved,

introspective, and more comfortable with solitary work than group-based tasks (Mustoip et al., 2024). In the speaking classroom, these learners may appear passive or reluctant to participate, often being misjudged as underperforming or disengaged. However, such surface-level observations can obscure the more complex reality that introverted learners may in fact be deeply engaged cognitively, preferring internal rehearsal, strategic note-taking, and reflective planning over spontaneous verbal expression (Binu, 2022). These preferences raise important questions about how introverted students navigate the speaking learning process and which strategies they adopt to overcome communication barriers.

While language learning strategy research particularly that based on Oxford's (1990) taxonomy has shown the value of both direct (memory, cognitive, compensatory) and indirect (metacognitive, affective, social) strategies in supporting speaking skills, the literature has largely treated learners as a homogenous group. Few empirical studies have isolated the experiences of introverted EFL learners or explored the specific strategies they employ to develop their speaking competence (Rachmawati, 2013; Yusnimar, 2019). Existing studies tend to generalize findings without accounting for the differentiated needs that arise from personality traits (Kehing & Yunus, 2021). As a result, there is a notable research gap in understanding how introverted students actively and consciously manage their speaking development, especially within teacher education contexts where speaking is a core competency.

This oversight is particularly problematic given that most EFL speaking instruction still heavily favors extroverted modes of participation group discussions, impromptu presentations, peer collaboration all of which may unintentionally marginalize introverted learners (Basalama et al., 2020; Chou, 2018). Teaching methods that rely on outward expressiveness may not accommodate students who process information internally and require more time and structure before engaging in speaking. The consequence is a systemic underestimation of introverted students' abilities and a lack of tailored pedagogical support to meet their learning preferences (Han & Kim, 2018; Hasan & Yulianti, 2019). Without a clear understanding of how these learners operate and what strategies they find effective, educators may fail to provide equitable learning environments.

The urgency of addressing this issue becomes even more pronounced in learner-centered education models that emphasize inclusivity and individualized instruction (Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020). Understanding the strategic behavior of introverted students is essential not only for correcting misconceptions but also for designing speaking instruction that empowers all learners. If speaking strategies are aligned with students' psychological orientations, educators can improve speaking outcomes without forcing learners into interactional formats that are misaligned with their natural dispositions (Gani et al., 2015; Yusnimar, 2019). Therefore, investigating the learning strategies of introverted students is not only pedagogically relevant but essential to achieving equitable language development across diverse learner profiles.

This study aims to fill the identified research gap by examining the speaking learning strategies used by introverted students in the fourth semester of the English Education Study Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Kotabumi. Using qualitative methods involving interviews and questionnaires, the study explores which strategies are adopted and how frequently they are employed. The goal is to generate a nuanced understanding of how introverted learners approach the development of speaking skills and to provide empirical

evidence that supports the design of more personalized and effective language instruction. The findings are expected to contribute to both theoretical discussions on learner differences and practical improvements in classroom pedagogy that better serve introverted students.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore the speaking learning strategies used by introverted students in the English Education Study Program. The choice of this method was based on the need to obtain a deep and contextual understanding of learners' individual experiences, perceptions, and strategic behaviors in language learning particularly speaking. A qualitative approach enables researchers to investigate how introverted students consciously and unconsciously manage their speaking challenges through specific strategies, as shaped by their personality traits. The study was exploratory in nature, aiming to interpret participants' subjective experiences rather than generalize findings to a wider population.

The participants in this research were five students from the fourth semester of the English Education Study Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Kotabumi, selected based on the results of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) test conducted on January 9th, 2025. Out of 37 students in the class, 16 were identified as having introverted personalities, and from this group, five participants with the highest introversion scores were purposively chosen. This sampling technique ensured that the study focused on individuals who strongly exhibited introverted characteristics, which was crucial to understanding how such traits influenced the selection and application of speaking strategies.

Data collection was conducted over a five-day period, from April 7 to April 11, 2025, using two main instruments: semi-structured interviews and a closed-ended questionnaire. The MBTI test was used in the initial phase to identify the participants' personality types. Subsequently, semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant to elicit detailed narratives regarding the speaking strategies they employed. The interview format allowed for flexibility while still focusing on key themes related to language learning strategies. Each session lasted approximately one hour and was conducted individually to ensure privacy and in-depth responses. The questionnaire consisted of 19 items reflecting various speaking strategies, designed to capture the frequency and preference of strategy use among the participants.

The data obtained were analyzed using qualitative thematic analysis techniques. The process began with data reduction, in which all interview recordings were transcribed, and non-relevant information was excluded. Important statements were then coded and organized into categories based on Oxford's (1990) classification of language learning strategies. The next step involved data display, where the findings were synthesized into narrative descriptions and frequency summaries. Finally, conclusion drawing and verification were carried out through triangulation comparing data from interviews and questionnaires to enhance the credibility and consistency of the findings. Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the research process, including informed consent, confidentiality, and the voluntary nature of participation.

RESULTS

In this study, the first step taken by the researcher was to measure the personality of all fourth semester students in English Education Study Program to classify and determine the number of introvert and extrovert students in this class using the MBTI test which was carried out on January 9th 2025. Based on the results of MBTI test, in this class there were sixteen introvert students and twenty one extrovert students. However, in this study only five students with the highest levels of the introvert dimension will be the research subjects. After finding research subjects, the researcher then collected

data by conducting interviews and questionnaires which were conducted for one week starting from April 7th 2025 to April 11st 2025.

Interview

The researcher conducted semi-structured interview with open-ended question with the five respondents. This interview was used to strengthen data collection and find out the strategies used by introvert students. In this interview, the researcher asked thirteen questions to the respondents. The researcher conducted one time interviews with the five students one by one.

Based on the explanation from the interview results of the five introvert students who were respondents in this study regarding the use of speaking learning strategies used by introvert students, the researcher can conclude that the five respondents have their own strategies used to help improve speaking skill. Based on the results of this interview, respondent 1, respondent 3 and respondent 4 used four speaking learning strategies namely memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies and meta-cognitive strategies. Meanwhile, respondent 2 only used three speaking learning strategies, namely memory strategies, cognitive strategies and compensation strategies. Respondent 5 only three speaking learning strategies are used, namely cognitive strategies, compensation strategies and meta-cognitive strategies. However, based on the six speaking strategies, there are two strategies that are not used by the five respondents namely, affective strategies and social strategies.

Questionnaire

The researcher also used a questionnaire with close questions. This questionnaire was used to find out the most speaking strategies often used by introvert students. This questionnaire contains 19 statements about speaking strategies. From the presentation of the results of the questionnaire, it can be concluded that each introverted student has a different speaking learning strategies. Based on the results of the questionnaire, it can be concluded that memory strategies used by introverted students. This can be seen from their answer, in their speaking activities they try to connect what they just learned and the sound they hear with their previous knowledge. Then the metacognitive strategies, based on the results of the questionnaire it is also known that four respondents used this strategies, it can be seen from the respondent needed to plan or make plans before they spoke, especially formal activities.

Furthermore, the cognitive strategies and compensation strategies have similarities in the results of the questionnaire, where both of these strategies were used by all respondents. This can be seen from the answers given by respondents made notebooks to support fluency when speaking and made various efforts to overcome the difficulties experienced when speaking. Based on the presentation of the results of the questionnaire, it was found that cognitive strategies and compensation strategies are the most speaking learning strategies used by introvert students.

Furthermore, metacognitive strategies, based on the results of the questionnaire, it is also known that four respondents use this strategy, which can be seen from the respondents' need to plan or make plans before they speak, especially in formal activities. Furthermore, cognitive and compensation strategies have similarities in the results of the questionnaire, where both of these strategies are used by all respondents. This can be seen from the answers given by respondents who make notes to support fluency in speaking and make various efforts to overcome the difficulties they experience when speaking. Based on the presentation of the questionnaire results, it was found that cognitive and compensation strategies are the most frequently used speaking learning strategies by introvert students.

To provide a clearer picture of the use of speaking strategies by each respondent, the following is Table 1 which shows the results of interviews and questionnaires regarding speaking learning strategies used by introvert students:

Table 1. *interview and questionnaire results of speaking strategies used by introvert students*

No	Speaking Strategies	Five Respondents with Introvert Personality				
		RA Respondent 1	AMR Respondent 2	MF Respondent 3	IL Respondent 4	RRO Respondent 5
1.	Memory	√	√	√	√	×
2.	Cognitive	√	√	√	√	√
3.	Compensation	√	√	√	√	√
4.	Metacognitive	√	×	√	√	√
5.	Affective	×	×	×	×	×
6.	Social	×	×	×	×	×

Table 1 illustrates that introverted students in this study employed four out of six types of speaking learning strategies: memory, cognitive, compensatory, and metacognitive. Cognitive and compensatory strategies emerged as the most frequently used across all five participants. This indicates a strong tendency among introverted learners to engage in structured preparation, such as writing notes or rehearsing key points, and to apply alternative expressions when facing limitations in vocabulary or fluency. Metacognitive strategies, such as planning and self-evaluation, were also common, reflecting their inclination toward internal control and reflective learning. Memory strategies were utilized by some participants, especially to recall vocabulary through repetition and association. These findings suggest that introverted students rely heavily on individual cognitive efforts rather than interaction-based learning to develop speaking proficiency.

In contrast, affective and social strategies were not employed by any participant. This absence reinforces the idea that introverted students tend to avoid learning approaches that require emotional regulation or active peer collaboration. The consistency between interview insights and questionnaire results confirms that introverted learners prioritize mental rehearsal and solitary practice over socially driven strategies. These findings emphasize the importance of designing speaking instruction that accommodates the introspective and independent learning preferences of introverted students. Educators should consider offering alternative formats that allow for preparation time, self-paced expression, and minimal pressure from real-time social interaction, in order to support equitable language development.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that introverted students predominantly rely on four types of speaking learning strategies: memory, cognitive, compensatory, and metacognitive. Among these, cognitive and compensatory strategies were used consistently by all participants, demonstrating their importance in the speaking development of introverted learners. This result aligns with Oxford's theory, which states that cognitive strategies help learners process and manipulate language meaningfully, while compensatory strategies assist in overcoming linguistic gaps during communication (Gani et al., 2015; Lestari & Wahyudin, 2020; Rachmawati, 2013). The frequent use of these strategies among introverted students suggests a strong preference for internal preparation and strategic adjustment in real-time speaking

situations, allowing them to manage speaking tasks despite their reserved disposition (Arip et al., 2017; Travolta, 2018).

The use of metacognitive strategies by most participants also reinforces the introspective nature of introverted learners. Planning before speaking, monitoring performance, and reflecting afterward are all indicative of learners who prefer structured and self-regulated learning processes. This is consistent with emphasizes that introverted individuals are more inclined to engage in reflective thought and self-evaluation (Astuti, 2021; Zeichner, 2019). That introverts tend to internalize their experiences and rely on personal judgment rather than external interaction (Colley, 2019; Hadi et al., 2019). In the context of speaking, this internalization supports the use of metacognitive strategies as a way to maintain control over verbal output while minimizing exposure to unpredictable or socially demanding situations.

While memory strategies were employed by some respondents, they were not as dominant as cognitive or compensatory strategies. Nonetheless, their presence illustrates how introverted students attempt to connect new information with prior knowledge to improve retrieval during speaking tasks. Techniques such as associating new vocabulary with sounds or concepts previously learned were commonly reported. The use of these strategies by introverted learners likely stems from their tendency to learn in solitude and to store knowledge mentally before applying it verbally (Emirza & Sahril, 2021; Han & Kim, 2018; Hasan & Yulianti, 2019). A notable finding is the absence of affective and social strategies among all participants. This absence underscores a key challenge faced by introverted learners: the discomfort in managing speaking anxiety through emotional regulation and social engagement. Unlike extroverted students who may use peer interaction as a motivational tool, introverted students appear to avoid such exposure. That introverts are less inclined to seek external stimulation and prefer environments that do not demand immediate social interaction (Hadi et al., 2019). As such, the lack of social strategy use may limit opportunities for oral practice in communicative settings, making it imperative for instructors to provide alternative pathways for speaking development that respect these personality traits (Thao, 2023).

These findings carry important pedagogical implications. Educators should not assume that introverted students are disengaged or less capable, but instead recognize their reliance on internalized strategies that are equally valid in language learning. Teachers can design speaking activities that allow for pre-task planning, written rehearsal, or one-on-one speaking formats rather than spontaneous group discussions. Furthermore, instructional design should consider integrating low-stress speaking tasks that minimize performance pressure. By aligning classroom practices with the strategic preferences of introverted learners, educators can foster more inclusive and effective speaking development. Future research is also encouraged to explore how specific teaching interventions might support introverted students in gradually integrating social and affective strategies without compromising their psychological comfort.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that introverted students in the English Education Study Program tend to rely on internal, self-regulated strategies to develop their speaking skills. From the six types of speaking learning strategies identified by Oxford (1990), four were actively used by participants cognitive, compensatory, metacognitive, and memory strategies. Among these,

cognitive and compensatory strategies were the most dominant, reflecting a consistent pattern in which introverted students prefer structured thinking, mental preparation, and alternative expression to manage speaking challenges. Metacognitive strategies also played a significant role, as students planned, monitored, and evaluated their speaking performances independently. In contrast, affective and social strategies were absent, suggesting that introverted learners are less inclined to engage in emotionally or socially interactive approaches, which may stem from discomfort in public speaking contexts or peer-based learning environments.

These findings emphasize the importance of understanding students' personality traits when designing language instruction, particularly for speaking activities. Educators are encouraged to adopt more personalized, flexible methods that align with introverted learners' preferences, such as allowing time for preparation, reducing pressure from spontaneous interaction, and offering individual or small-group speaking opportunities. Recognizing and validating the different ways introverted students approach language learning can contribute to more equitable, inclusive, and effective speaking instruction. Future studies may expand on this research by involving more diverse participant groups, integrating longitudinal observations, or testing the impact of pedagogical adjustments on introverted students' speaking performance and confidence over time.

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