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ENGLISH LEARNING STRATEGIES AMONG STUDENTS IN AN ENGLISH SPECIALIZATION PROGRAM: A STUDY IN AN INDONESIAN EFL CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

Language learning strategies (LLS) are fundamental determinants of academic achievement among EFL learners, particularly within the learner-centered pedagogical framework promoted by the Indonesian Merdeka Curriculum. Several studies have examined EFL instruction in English Language Specialization programs. However, there has been no research on English Language Specialization programs at the high school level. Therefore, this study sought to examine the English language learning strategies used by students in the English Language Specialization program at MAN 8 Jakarta. The research design used a quantitative descriptive approach, with a 30-item questionnaire drawn from the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). The instrument was distributed to a census-based sample of 72 12th-grade students in the 2025/2026 academic year. The findings showed a consistent increase in the level of strategy engagement across all categories. Cognitive strategies emerged as the most frequently used (mean = 4.07), while social strategies recorded the lowest frequency of application (mean = 3.65). The results concluded that students demonstrate high levels of learning autonomy, and teachers should design structured classroom activities that actively enhance social-based learning. These targeted interventions are crucial for developing comprehensive communicative competence.

Keywords: English Specialization Class, Learning Strategies, Merdeka Curriculum.

INTRODUCTION

Within the Indonesian educational landscape, English occupies a mandatory position as a foreign language subject at the secondary school level. Nevertheless, notwithstanding its acknowledged significance and the governmental administration's sustained endeavors to elevate the caliber of English language education, a considerable proportion of students continue to encounter substantial impediments in their language acquisition journey. Indonesian EFL learners are broadly susceptible to difficulties spanning all four foundational language skills. With respect to speaking, students frequently demonstrate an inability to produce grammatically precise and fluent verbal output, ultimately precipitating communicative breakdowns (Payaprom, 2023). In the domain of writing, learners habitually grapple with the coherent organization of ideas and the judicious application of grammatical structures and lexical repertoire across divergent textual genres (Wei et al., 2024). Listening

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comprehension complications similarly manifest when students are tasked with decoding spoken English delivered at native-speaker pace or characterized by diverse phonological accents (Hidayanti & Azami, 2023). Concurrently, reading comprehension is systematically impeded by constrained lexical knowledge and an inadequate capacity to discern inter-ideational relationships embedded within textual discourse (Harianja et al., 2022). These multifaceted linguistic impediments are recurrently compounded by affective determinants, encompassing language anxiety, apprehension toward committing errors, and diminished motivational drive, which may further attenuate learners' language acquisition trajectories (Astuti et al., 2022). To effectively navigate these pervasive challenges, learners are necessitated to harness contextually appropriate strategies that facilitate the systematic management, cognitive processing, and durable retention of linguistic information throughout their educational engagement.

A foundational theoretical construct that elucidates the mechanisms by which learners regulate their language acquisition processes is Language Learning Strategies (LLS). Operationally, language learning strategies encompass the discrete actions, behavioral patterns, and procedural techniques consciously deployed by learners to expedite the acquisition, storage, retrieval, and productive utilization of linguistic knowledge (Zha, 2023). Among the most authoritatively established taxonomies for the systematic classification of language learning strategies is the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), originally conceptualized by Oxford in 1990 (Rebecca L. Oxford, 1990) Within this framework, language learning strategies are delineated into six distinct typologies: memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. The inaugural three categories are subsumed under the designation of direct strategies, given their immediate engagement with target language processing, whereas the remaining three constitute indirect strategies, insofar as they reinforce the acquisition process through self-regulatory planning, affective modulation, and interpersonal interaction (Habók & Magyar, 2022).

Antecedent scholarly investigations have examined language learning strategies across a diverse array of instructional contexts (Damanik, 2022; Mao, Y., & Peng, 2024; Melvina et al., 2020; Syafryadin, 2020; Wang et al., 2023). Notwithstanding this accumulated body of evidence, the preponderance of extant research has concentrated predominantly on tertiary-level students or generalized EFL populations, affording comparatively scant scholarly attention to senior high school students enrolled in English Specialization Classes. This particular cohort exhibits distinguishable characteristics, encompassing amplified motivational orientation, intensified exposure to English language instruction, and elevated academic expectations, all of which may exert considerable influence upon the typology and frequency of strategies these learners preferentially adopt. This tendency is confirmed by several recent international studies conducted between 2023 and 2025. (Wang et al., 2023) surveyed university students in Hong Kong, (Mao, Y., & Peng, 2024) investigated undergraduates in Chinese English-Medium Instruction courses, and (Tahmina, 2024) examined high- and low-proficiency learners at a university in Bangladesh.

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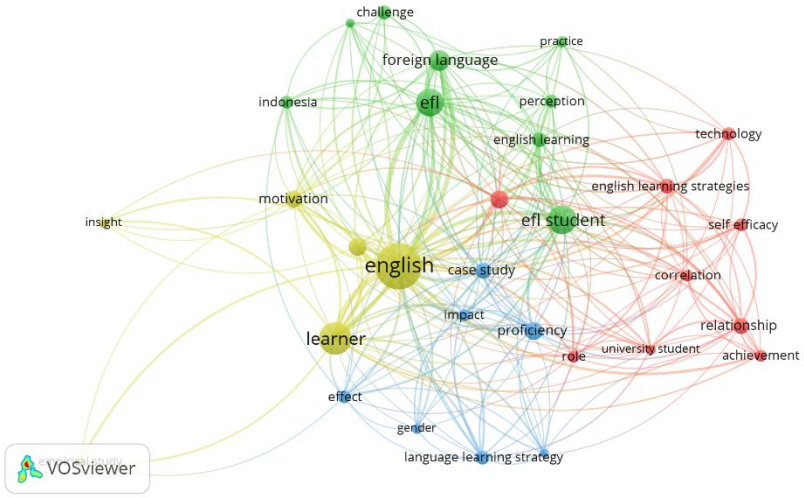
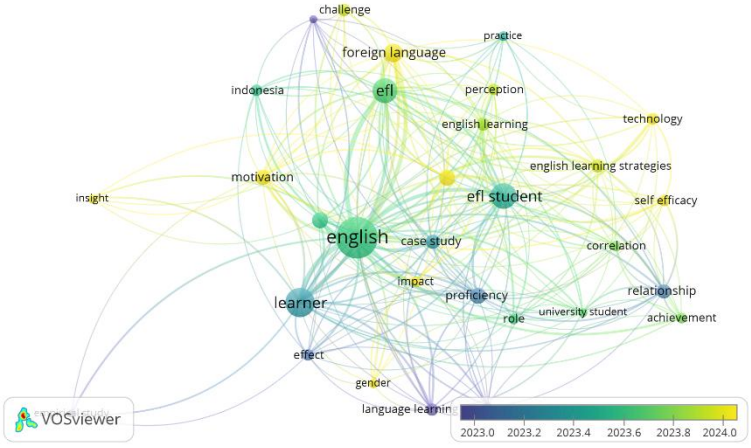


Figure 1. Network visualization of keyword co-occurrences in English learning strategies literature (VOSviewer)

To substantiate this gap empirically consistent with recent bibliometric approaches to justifying research gaps in language education (Chen et al., 2025), a preliminary bibliometric mapping was conducted using VOSviewer to visualize keyword co-occurrences within the extant literature on English learning strategies. As depicted in Figure 1, the resulting network organizes into four thematic clusters: one reflecting the broader Indonesian EFL landscape, one centered on general learner characteristics and strategy use, one addressing proficiency-related variation, and one capturing the correlation between strategy use and academic outcomes. Within this last cluster, the strong centrality of university student confirms that scholarly attention remains disproportionately directed toward tertiary learners, while no keyword in the network reflects curricular differentiation or secondary-level specialization.



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Figure 2. Overlay visualization of keyword co-occurrences by publication year, 2023–2024 (VOSviewer)

Figure 2 extends this picture through an overlay visualization that traces keyword prominence over time (2023–2024). Recent scholarship shows a clear shift toward psychological and technological variables such as self-efficacy and motivation, while more generic themes have receded. Yet this thematic evolution has not been matched by a corresponding shift in learner context—research continues to expand along variable-specific rather than population-specific lines.

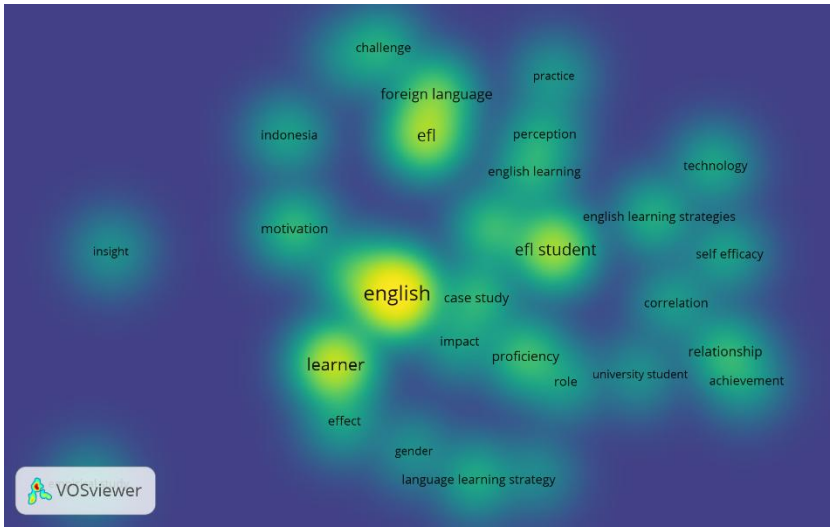


Figure 3. Density visualization of keyword co-occurrences in English learning strategies literature (VOSviewer)

This pattern is reinforced by the density visualization in Figure 3, where research intensity remains heavily concentrated around generic terms such as *english* and *learner*, while keywords tied to more specific or advanced learner populations show markedly lower density. Notably, no density concentration corresponds to secondary-level or specialization-track learners at all, offering visual confirmation that this population remains unexamined in the literature. Collectively, these three bibliometric perspectives converge upon a singular conclusion: notwithstanding an evolving thematic landscape, English learning strategy research within the Indonesian EFL context has yet to attend to learners situated within intensive, differentiated instructional tracks at the secondary level, precisely the population that the present study endeavors to examine.

Although these studies enrich the SILL literature, they were carried out with tertiary or general EFL learners, so their findings cannot be assumed to describe how intensively taught secondary students in a specialization track deploy their strategies. Rather than treating these studies as isolated cases, it is useful to synthesize what they collectively reveal.

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Across contexts, SILL-based research consistently reports that metacognitive and cognitive strategies dominate while social and compensation strategies tend to be used least (Mao, Y., & Peng, 2024; Melvina et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2023; Zhang & Wang, 2023) a pattern that also appears in strategy-specific studies of memory (Imam nur Aziz, 2024), compensation (Pasumbu & Macora, 2018; Tahmina, 2024), and social strategies (Yunita et al., 2025). What most of these studies share, however, is a focus on the frequency of strategy use rather than on the learning conditions that shape it. This is important because strategy use is closely tied to learner autonomy and self-regulated learning. (Zimmerman, 2002) frames self-regulated learning as a cycle of planning, monitoring, and self-evaluation, which corresponds directly to Oxford's metacognitive strategies, while learner autonomy in the Indonesian setting has been shown to depend heavily on how much control teachers transfer to students (Ahmad Fahrudin et al., 2024; Lengkanawati, 2017). Under the Merdeka Curriculum, which explicitly positions learners as active and independent agents, students are expected to select and regulate their own strategies; yet how this curricular ideal translates into actual strategy use among specialization students remains under-examined.

Crucially, the operational dynamics of the English Specialization Class fundamentally diverge from regular EFL classrooms in terms of instructional volume, curricular depth, and learner expectations. While regular EFL tracks under the Merdeka Curriculum primarily focus on basic functional literacy with limited weekly hours, the specialization program subjects students to double linguistic exposure based on these mandates. This intensive environment demands the active mastery of advanced, abstract text types and complex discursive interactions aligned with the CEFR B2 benchmarks. Consequently, these pedagogical differences warrant a separate, dedicated investigation. Standard EFL research frameworks cannot be broadly applied to this unique demographic, as the increased academic pressure may force these students to orchestrate their cognitive, metacognitive, and social strategies in a substantially different manner than their regular peers. Moreover, the specialization class functions as a tightly knit academic community in which sustained interaction and a strong sense of belonging are theoretically linked to better motivational and academic outcomes in secondary education(Korpershoek et al., 2020). This makes the comparatively low use of social strategies, if it occurs, particularly worth investigating in this specific setting rather than assumed from studies of ordinary classrooms. Investigating this distinct group is therefore vital to understanding how advanced curriculum implementation translates into strategic language processing in secondary education.

The present inquiry is deemed of considerable academic significance, as a comprehensive understanding of the English learning strategies exercised by students in specialization programs is instrumental in augmenting instructional efficacy. Situated within the overarching framework of Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum, which foregrounds differentiated instruction and the cultivation of learner autonomy, the systematic identification of students' strategic repertoires, as informed by Oxford's in 1990 taxonomy, equips educators with actionable insights for constructing pedagogical practices that are congruently aligned with learners' individualized needs and academic profiles.

Building on this significance, the specific contribution of the present study can be stated explicitly. Previous SILL-based research has largely mapped strategy frequency

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among university students or undifferentiated EFL populations (Mao, Y., & Peng, 2024; Melvina et al., 2020; Tahmina, 2024; Wang et al., 2023; Zhang & Wang, 2023). This study extends that line of work in two respects. First, in terms of educational context and curriculum implementation, it documents strategy use inside an English Specialization Class operating under the Merdeka Curriculum, a differentiated, high-exposure track at the senior high school level that previous SILL studies have not addressed. Second, in terms of learner characteristics, it focuses on a purposively intensive cohort, highly motivated twelfth-grade specialization students, whose profile differs from the general secondary learners typically sampled. The new knowledge offered, therefore, is not merely another strategy ranking, but evidence of how a curriculum that promotes autonomy shapes the balance between individually oriented (cognitive and metacognitive) and interpersonally oriented (social) strategies within an advanced secondary program.

Accordingly, the present study is oriented toward investigating the English learning strategies operationalized by students enrolled in the English Specialization Class at MAN 8 Jakarta, with particular emphasis on identifying the most recurrently employed strategies within this demographic. The empirical outcomes of this investigation are anticipated to heighten learners' metacognitive awareness of their own strategic behaviors, thereby enabling them to systematically optimize both the procedural and consequential dimensions of autonomous English language learning. The research addresses the following questions: (1) what types of English learning strategies are used by students in the English Specialization Class, and (2) which strategies are most frequently used by these students.

METHODS

The present study was conducted within a quantitative research paradigm, operationalized through a descriptive survey design. The adoption of a quantitative orientation was methodologically justified on the grounds that the data yielded are inherently numerical in nature and, as such, amenable to statistical analysis for the purpose of systematically delineating patterns of English learning strategy utilization among the target student population. In alignment with (Creswell & Creswell, 2023), a quantitative research framework is epistemologically appropriate when the overarching objective entails the measurement of variables and the systematic characterization of population-level trends or attributes.

Furthermore, the descriptive survey design has been extensively employed within the domain of language learning strategy research as a methodological apparatus for identifying the typologies and frequency distributions of strategies exercised by learners, as operationalized through numerical indicators including mean scores and percentage distributions. Through the deployment of psychometrically standardized instruments such as the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), investigators are systematically positioned to delineate learners' strategic behavioral repertoires and facilitate cross-categorical comparisons of strategy utilization within EFL instructional contexts (Rebecca L. Oxford, 1990).

Data and Sources of Data

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The dataset underpinning this investigation comprised numerical scores derived from students' responses to the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) questionnaire. These scores functioned as quantifiable representations of the frequency with which students operationalized diverse English learning strategies across six delineated categories: memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. The principal data source encompassed students enrolled in English Specialization classes at the twelfth-grade level at MAN 8 Jakarta throughout the 2025/2026 academic year. The aggregate participant counts totaled 72 students consisting of 36 students from class 12-1 and 36 students from 2 classes, with the entirety of the eligible population incorporated into the study via a census-based (total) sampling procedure, thereby ensuring exhaustive data representativeness and precluding the introduction of sampling bias.

Table 1. Learning strategies

Items	Name		Strategies
1-5	Memory Strategies	Direct strategies	Storing and remembering language information.
6-14	Cognitive Strategies		Processing and manipulating language.
15-18	Compensation Strategies		Coping with vocabulary and structure limitations.
19-24	Metacognitive Strategies	Indirect Strategies	Planning, monitoring, evaluating learning.
25-27	Affective Strategies		Managing emotions and motivation.
28-30	Social Strategies		Learning through social interaction.

Instrument

The research instrument deployed in this investigation constituted a questionnaire adapted from the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), originally conceptualized and developed by Oxford in 1990. The SILL instrument is specifically engineered to quantify the frequency with which learners engage various strategic behaviors throughout their English language learning processes across heterogeneous learning configurations. The utilization of this psychometrically standardized instrument enabled the researcher to elicit objective and empirically measurable data pertaining to students' strategic dispositions (Rebecca L. Oxford, 1990; Zou & Lertlit, 2022). The instrument encompassed 30 discrete items systematically distributed across the six established categories of English learning strategies, wherein each item encapsulated specific learning behaviors potentially operationalized by learners within their language acquisition process. Respondent feedback was calibrated utilizing a five-point Likert scale, spanning from 1 (never or almost never true of me) to 5 (always or almost always true of me), thereby rendering the data amenable to rigorous quantitative analysis. With regard to instrument adaptation, the 30 items were

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adopted directly from Oxford's (1990) SILL and then contextualized for the participants: the statements were translated into Bahasa Indonesia and lightly reworded so that the examples referred to everyday English-learning situations familiar to Indonesian senior high school students, while the six-category structure and the five-point Likert scale of the original inventory were retained. This adaptation follows the common practice of using a translated SILL with Indonesian learners to reduce comprehension bias (Melvina et al., 2020)

Prior to the principal data analysis, the adapted instrument was subjected to validity and reliability testing using SPSS. Item validity was examined through Pearson product-moment correlation between each item score and the total score, with an item regarded as valid when its r-count exceeded the r-table value. At a significance level of 0.05 with 72 respondents, the r-table value was 0.232. The analysis showed that all 30 items obtained an r-count greater than 0.232 (ranging from 0.439 to 0.866), so every item was declared valid and suitable for use. Reliability was then assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, with the criterion that the instrument is reliable when the coefficient exceeds 0.60. The test produced a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.972, which is well above 0.60 and indicates a very high level of internal consistency. Based on these results, the instrument was confirmed to be both valid and reliable for measuring the English learning strategies of the specialization students.

Data Collection Technique

The principal data collection modality employed in this investigation was a structured questionnaire. This instrument was systematically administered to the entirety of students enrolled in the English Specialization classes with the overarching objective of eliciting comprehensive information pertaining to the typologies and frequency distributions of English learning strategies operationalized by the participants. The respondents' reactions to these items serve as quantifiable indicators of the frequency with which each strategy is deployed, thereby furnishing an unambiguous operational representation of English learning strategies within the present research context (Rebecca L. Oxford, 1990; Zou & Lertlit, 2022).

Data acquisition was effectuated through the systematic dissemination of the questionnaire to all designated participants. The instrument was formally distributed to students during the even semester of the 2025/2026 academic year, subsequent to the procurement of official institutional authorization from the school administration. The data collection procedure was executed in a rigorously structured and methodologically consistent manner, wherein participants were explicitly instructed to respond to each item in direct accordance with their authentic personal learning experiences.

Data Analysis Technique

The analytical framework adopted in this investigation was grounded in descriptive statistical analysis. The aggregated dataset was subjected to analytical processing through the computation of mean scores and percentage distributions for each designated category of English learning strategies, with the express purpose of ascertaining the frequency and intensity of strategy utilization among the learner population. The resultant mean scores were subsequently interpreted in accordance with predetermined classification criteria,

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wherein elevated mean values were construed as indicative of more recurrent engagement with particular learning strategies. Interpretive classifications were operationalized according to the following scalar ranges: 4.21-5.00 (Very Good), 3.41-4.20 (Good), 2.61-3.40 (Fair), 1.81-2.60 (Poor), and 1.00-1.80 (Very Poor). The resultant empirical outcomes were subsequently rendered in tabular and graphical formats to facilitate a lucid and comprehensive visual illustration of students' English learning strategy utilization profiles across all designated categories.

RESULTS

The empirical outcomes of the present investigation are derived from a rigorous quantitative analysis of the Language Learning Strategy (LLS) questionnaire administered to students enrolled in the English Specialization Class. The data acquisition process was oriented toward delineating the most recurrently operationalized strategies among this learner cohort, thereby furnishing a comprehensive behavioral profile of their strategic learning dispositions. Prior to the examination of the principal findings, the psychometric properties of the instrument, encompassing both validity and reliability, were systematically evaluated. The outcomes of this assessment corroborate that the English learning strategy questionnaire demonstrates considerable methodological efficacy, with r-count values for the 30 items ranging from 0.399 to 0.855—well exceeding the critical r-table threshold of 0.232 (N= 72, α = 0.05) - all items are confirmed as highly valid. Furthermore, the instrument demonstrated exceptional internal consistency, yielding a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.972, thereby substantiating its function as a consistent and accurate measurement apparatus for evaluating learners within the English language specialization context.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of learning strategies

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Memory Strategies	72	1.00	5.00	3.88	.99
Cognitive Strategies	72	1.00	5.00	4.07	1.00
Compensation Strategies	72	1.00	5.00	3.86	1.05
Metacognitive Strategies	72	1.00	5.00	4.03	1.01
Affective Strategies	72	1.00	5.00	3.97	1.01
Social Strategies	72	1.00	5.00	3.65	.98

Table 3. Frequency and percentage distribution of language learning strategies

Strategy Categories	Dominant Classification	Percentage (%)
Memory Strategies	Good	36.1
Cognitive Strategies	Very Good	41.7
Compensation Strategies	Good	36.1
Metacognitive Strategies	Good	45.8
Affective Strategies	Very Good	37.5

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Social Strategies	Fair	41.7

The percentage distribution of the Language Learning Strategies is further illustrated in the Bar Chart below to provide a clearer visual representation of the frequencies of learning strategies used in English Specialization Class in MAN 8 Jakarta.

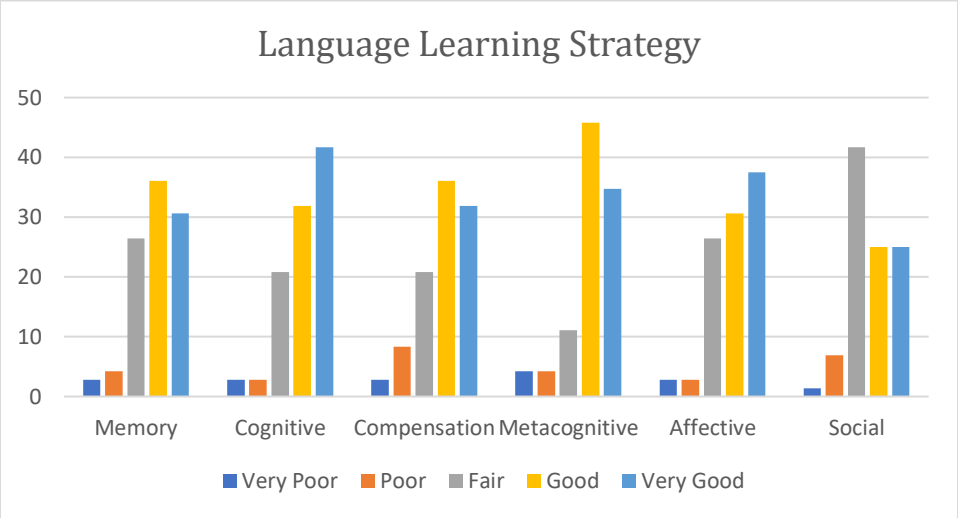


Figure 4. Distribution of language learning strategies usage

The result in the Table 2, 3, and figure 4 presents the descriptive statistical outputs, encompassing mean scores and percentage distributions, across the six delineated language learning strategy categories. The aggregated data furnishes a holistic overview of the strategic learning orientations exhibited by 72 respondents enrolled in the English Specialization Class. The descriptive analysis reveals that students broadly manifest an elevated degree of strategic engagement, with the preponderance of categories situated within the "Good" to "Very Good" classificatory parameters. A particularly salient empirical finding pertains to the supremacy of Cognitive Strategies, which registered the highest mean score of 4.07 (SD = 1.00). With 41.7% of participants classified within the "Very Good" category. Metacognitive Strategies yielded the second-highest mean score of 4.03 (SD = 1.01), with a substantial 45.8% of respondents classified within the "Good" category. Affective Strategies attained a mean score of 3.97 (SD = 1.01) where 37.5% of the respondents classified under the “very good” parameter. Furthermore, Memory Strategies, (Mean = 3.88, SD= .99) and Compensation Strategies (Mean = 3.86, SD= 1.05) both sustain a "Good" classificatory standing with identical density of 36.1. In contrast to the internal mental strategies, a critical divergence in the distribution pattern is observable within Social Strategies. This category yielded the lowest central tendency, with a mean score of 3.65 (SD = .98) within 41.7% clustered strictly within the “Fair” parameter.

Table 4. Full Frequency distribution across classification levels

Category	Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Mean	SD

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Memory	2 (2.8%)	3 (4.2%)	19 (26.4%)	26 (36.1%)	22 (30.6%)	3.88	0.99
Cognitive	2 (2.8%)	2 (2.8%)	15 (20.8%)	23 (31.9%)	30 (41.7%)	4.07	1.00
Compensation	2 (2.8%)	6 (8.3%)	15 (20.8%)	26 (36.1%)	23 (31.9%)	3.86	1.05
Metacognitive	3 (4.2%)	3 (4.2%)	8 (11.1%)	33 (45.8%)	25 (34.7%)	4.03	1.01
Affective	2 (2.8%)	2 (2.8%)	19 (26.4%)	22 (30.6%)	27 (37.5%)	3.97	1.01
Social	1 (1.4%)	5 (6.9%)	30 (41.7%)	18 (25.0%)	18 (25.0%)	3.65	0.98

To provide a more informative picture than category means alone, Table 4 breaks down each category across all five classification levels. This finer distribution clarifies where the strengths and gaps actually lie. Cognitive Strategies had the largest share of "Very Good" responses (30 students, 41.7%), item P10 ("I watch English-language movies or shows.") registered a highly prominent strategic role with an exceptional psychometric correlation coefficient of 0.814, indicating a robust targeted drive toward direct language manipulation through authentic multimedia exposure. Conversely, item P14 ("I don't always translate English word for word.") demonstrated a much weaker conceptual integration within this subscale, scoring a correlation value of 0.523.

Metacognitive Strategies had the largest share of "Good" responses (33 students, 45.8%) item P20 ("I recognize my mistakes in English and learn from them.") demonstrated a highly pervasive operational presence with a robust item correlation of 0.833, reflecting strong executive control and self-reflective capacity and the smallest combined "Very Poor" and "Poor" share (8.4%) item P22 ("I set aside specific time to study English.") was the least integrated resource within the self-regulatory domain, yielding a lower item correlation of 0.567, which shows how consistently these two categories were endorsed.

In contrast, Social Strategies were the only category whose modal response fell in the "Fair" band (30 students, 41.7%) rather than in "Good" or "Very Good," confirming that this category is the least frequently used, not simply the lowest on average. Compensation Strategies showed the widest spread (SD = 1.05) and the highest "Poor" share (6 students, 8.3%), indicating that students varied more in how they coped with vocabulary and structure gaps. At the item level, the reliability analysis is informative as well: within the social cluster (items 28–30), item 30, "I ask questions in English in class," produced the lowest corrected item-total correlation (0.399) of the whole instrument, which is consistent with the questionnaire's overall picture that classroom-based, spoken interaction is the strategy these learners rely on least.

DISCUSSION

The empirical dominance of cognitive strategies within the dataset underscores, it is unequivocally apparent that these students are profoundly implicated in the direct manipulation of the English language through the active rehearsal, analytical deconstruction, and synthesis of linguistic information. Within the operational context of the four language skills, this pronounced cognitive engagement signifies that students are actively engaged in the identification of contextual keywords and inferential meaning-construction in listening (Wahyuni & Inayati, 2022), as well as the iterative rehearsal of phonological patterns to

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refine pronunciation and accent acquisition in speaking (Alsaraireh, 2022). Furthermore, the recurrent deployment of cognitive strategies is congruent with students' endeavors in reading to identify thematic propositions and synthesize textual content (Husna et al., 2025; I Made Hendra Sukmayasa et al., 2023) in writing through iterative drafting and revision cycles oriented toward the production of coherent and cohesive discourse (Hapsari et al., 2025). This pronounced dependence upon cognitive processing mechanisms is epistemologically fundamental to the transformation of linguistic input into durable and retrievable mental representations.

In close alignment with the high cognitive processing, this empirical finding underscores a robust capacity for self-regulatory metacognitive awareness, signifying that students transcend the role of passive knowledge recipients and are capable of exercising executive regulatory control through the systematic planning, ongoing monitoring, and reflective evaluation of their own learning trajectories (Melvina et al., 2020; Rebecca L. Oxford, 1990) As corroborated by (Wahyuni & Inayati, 2022), metacognitive strategies constitute an indispensable apparatus for the deliberate orchestration and evaluative appraisal of listening practice. The elevated scores observed in the present investigation reflect students' demonstrable capacity to coordinate their cognitive faculties toward the autonomous planning of speaking practice and the reflective appraisal of reading performance outcomes(Husna et al., 2025; Siti Nandiah et al., 2025). From an empirical standpoint, the elevated frequency of both cognitive and metacognitive engagement collectively characterizes this cohort as autonomous learners, individuals endowed with the capacity to navigate complex linguistic undertakings while simultaneously exercising strategic goal-management. This dual strategic proficiency is widely recognized as a distinguishing hallmark of high-achieving language learners within intensive academic programs.

The respectable classification of Affective Strategies suggesting that respondents demonstrate a commendable capacity for the self-regulation of affective states, encompassing the deliberate modulation of emotional responses, motivational orientation, and attitudinal dispositions the language learning endeavor (Melvina et al., 2020). Through the effective governance of their emotional conditions, students are enabled to sustain concentrated focus and unwavering perseverance notwithstanding the considerable anxiety frequently engendered by oral performance before an audience or the cognitive demands inherent in complex writing tasks (Hapsari et al., 2025; Payaprom, 2023).

The investigation further ascertained that Memory Strategies effectively harness mnemonic associations and mental imagery as cognitive tools for the acquisition and consolidation of discrete linguistic elements such as vocabulary items and grammatical structures on students (Damanik, 2022). This result is consistent with (Imam nur Aziz, 2024), who found that the deliberate use of memory strategies significantly improved learners' vocabulary acquisition in an Indonesian English course, reinforcing the interpretation that memory techniques support the retention needed for the specialization program's heavier lexical load. Concurrently, Similar situated within a favorable threshold, the operationalization of compensation strategies enables students to circumnavigate knowledge deficiencies through the strategic deployment of paralinguistic gestures, lexical

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substitution via synonymy, or first-language mediation when confronted with productive impediments in writing or oral communicative performance (Alsaraireh, 2022; Hapsari et al., 2025). Comparable behaviour has been documented by (Tahmina, 2024) and (Pasumbu & Macora, 2018), who reported that intelligent guessing and using a word or phrase of similar meaning are among the most common ways EFL learners overcome gaps in the four skills, which helps explain the "Good" standing of this category in the present data.

A critical methodological divergence within the dataset is discernible with respect to Social Strategies, which yielded the lowest score among all delineated categories. Social strategies are theoretically conceptualized as mechanisms designed to facilitate interpersonal engagement through the active solicitation of clarification, collaborative participation, and the procurement of evaluative feedback from interlocutors (Melvina et al., 2020). The comparatively attenuated deployment of social strategies intimates a prospective deficiency in the extent to which students harness interpersonal resources, encompassing peer-to-peer collaborative engagement and pedagogical assistance from instructors, as catalytic mediators for language acquisition (José & Rica, 2021).

Although social strategies are epistemologically oriented toward the augmentation of learning through discursive exchange and the collective mobilization of shared linguistic resources (Wei et al., 2024), the learners constituting this particular cohort appear to demonstrably prioritize internally-directed cognitive processes, specifically cognitive and metacognitive engagement, over communicative interpersonal interaction. This interpretation, however, should be advanced with caution. Because the present study relied solely on a quantitative SILL survey, the data can establish that social strategies were used least frequently, but they cannot explain why. In particular, the earlier suggestion that students prefer digitally-mediated interaction instead of classroom collaboration goes beyond what the present findings can demonstrate. It is true that prior work reports positive learner attitudes toward social media in EFL contexts (Ekawati, 2022), and it is plausible that some interaction has shifted to online spaces; however, the current instrument did not measure students' use of digital platforms, so any claim that web-based engagement has replaced face-to-face collaboration remains a hypothesis rather than an established result. A more defensible reading of the data is simply that classroom-based, spoken interaction, most clearly reflected in the low endorsement of asking questions in English in class, is under-utilized relative to the other five categories, and that the reasons for this pattern (anxiety, habit, task design, or a genuine move toward digital interaction) would need to be examined through interviews or observation in future research (Korpershoek et al., 2020; Siti Nandiah et al., 2025). This empirical finding implies that, whilst students exhibit considerable learner autonomy and cognitive proficiency, their propensity to acquire language competence through interaction remains a subordinate preference, a disposition that may consequently exert deleterious implications upon their holistic oral fluency and real-world communicative competence (Siti Nandiah et al., 2025). This observation is congruent with the emergent paradigmatic shift characterizing contemporary learners, who may increasingly extend their social and communicative boundaries beyond the confines of conventional classroom environments.

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As substantiated by (Ekawati, 2022), students frequently harbor affirmative epistemic orientations toward the integration of social media within EFL learning contexts, perceiving such platforms as facilitative instruments that engender autonomous linguistic engagement and furnish alternative interactional spaces beyond institutionalized settings. Consequently, the comparatively diminished mean score observed in social strategies within the present investigation may not be construed as an unequivocal indicator of interactional deficiency; rather, it is more plausibly attributable to a learner predisposition favoring digitally-mediated and web-based social engagement over conventional face-to-face classroom collaboration. It is accordingly inferred that, whilst the overarching strategic engagement profile of this cohort is commendable, a compelling curricular imperative nonetheless subsists for the deliberate integration of more systematically structured collaborative and socially-mediated pedagogical activities into the instructional framework, an intervention deemed indispensable for cultivating a more comprehensive and equilibrated strategic learning profile among English Specialization students.

CONCLUSION

The present investigation has substantiated that students enrolled in the English Specialization Class constitute active and engaged strategic learners who demonstrate a commendably elevated degree of intentional engagement in the self-directed management of their language acquisition processes. Cognitive Strategies emerged as the most recurrently deployed category, succeeded in close proximity by Metacognitive Strategies. This pattern of findings collectively suggests that students enrolled in specialization programs are distinctively characterized by their pronounced capacity to directly manipulate target language materials and their robust aptitude for self-regulated learning.

These learners function as genuinely autonomous agents who not only process linguistic information with considerable efficacy but also engage in the systematic planning and reflective evaluation of their own learning trajectories. Conversely, Social Strategies were identified as the least recurrently operationalized category among all six. Notwithstanding their continued placement within a statistically affirmative range, the considerable prevalence of "Fair" classifications within this category signals a discernible deficiency in collaborative learning engagement and interpersonal communicative interaction. This finding implies that, whilst students demonstrate considerable internal cognitive proficiency, they may not yet be fully capitalizing upon the prospective benefits of social mediation mechanisms, encompassing peer evaluative feedback and collaborative problem-solving, as instrumental conduits for English language acquisition.

Whilst the present study furnishes substantive insights into the strategic behavioral repertoires of EFL learners situated within a specialized academic track, several inherent limitations warrant explicit acknowledgment. With respect to sample scope and generalizability, this investigation was executed utilizing a census-based sampling of 72 students drawn from a singular institutional context (MAN 8 Jakarta). As a consequential implication, the resultant findings may not attain full representational adequacy with regard to the broader population of English Specialization students distributed across heterogeneous geographical regions or diverse institutional typologies throughout

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Indonesia. Pertaining to methodological constraints, the study was exclusively reliant upon a quantitative survey design operationalized through the SILL questionnaire instrument. Whilst demonstrably efficacious in identifying strategic trends and frequency distributions, self-reported data remain inherently susceptible to social desirability response bias and are epistemologically incapable of furnishing an in-depth qualitative comprehension of the underlying rationales governing students' strategic preferences or the contextually-specific modalities through which they deploy particular strategies in discrete learning tasks. With regard to contextual scope, the study adopted a cross-sectional research design, capturing strategic utilization patterns at a singular temporal juncture during the even semester, thereby precluding the systematic accounting of prospective longitudinal shifts in strategy deployment as learners encounter progressively diversified textual genres or escalating levels of linguistic complexity across time.

In light of the Merdeka Curriculum's foundational emphasis upon the cultivation of learner autonomy and the advancement of communicative competence, the empirical findings of the present investigation suggest that pedagogical interventions ought to be deliberately oriented toward bridging the discernible gulf between individual cognitive proficiency and productive social interaction. Educators are accordingly encouraged to conceptualize and implement instructional activities that transcend individually-oriented task structures, thereby fostering a more equitably balanced strategic profile that systematically incorporates robust social engagement as an indispensable constituent of holistic language mastery attainment.

More specifically, the findings translate into concrete implications for two audiences. For English teachers, it is recommended that they embed structured, low-anxiety collaborative tasks, such as think-pair-share, small-group discussion, peer feedback on writing, information-gap activities, and role-plays, into routine lessons so that asking questions and negotiating meaning in English become normal classroom behaviour rather than optional. Because the weakest item concerned asking questions in class, teachers can also model help-seeking explicitly and provide sentence frames that lower the social risk of speaking, and can deliver brief, explicit strategy training that shows students how social strategies complement the cognitive and metacognitive strategies they already use well (Yunita et al., 2025). For curriculum developers, the results suggest that the English Specialization syllabus should state interaction and collaboration as explicit learning outcomes, allocate part of the assessment weight to collaborative and spoken-interaction performance rather than to individual written products alone, and provide teachers with ready-made collaborative task templates aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum's project-based and differentiated-instruction principles. Building these structured social opportunities into both classroom practice and curriculum design would help specialization students develop a more balanced strategic profile and, ultimately, more well-rounded communicative competence.

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