

THE IMPACT OF REFLECTIVE SELF-ASSESSMENT JOURNALS ON ENHANCING METACOGNITIVE IN SPEAKING CLASSES

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Abstract. This study aims to investigate how the use of reflective self-assessment journals influences the development of students' metacognitive awareness in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), particularly in speaking skills. This study used a qualitative approach with a classroom-based research design involving eleventh-grade students at a high school in Indonesia. Data were collected through classroom observations, students' reflective journals written in two meetings, and in-depth interviews with eight students. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis through the stages of data reduction, coding, grouping themes, and interpreting patterns of students' metacognitive awareness development based on the data sources obtained. The results of this study indicate that consistent use of reflective journals encourages the development of students' metacognitive awareness, moving from basic awareness to more complex metacognitive regulation. Students are not only able to recognize their errors and thought processes, but also begin to plan speaking strategies, monitor performance, and conduct more critical self-evaluations. These findings indicate that reflective journals serve as an effective tool for developing self-regulated learning and enhancing students' reflective abilities in English speaking. This research contributes to strengthening metacognitive-based EFL learning practices and developing more independent speaking skills.

Keywords: Metacognitive Awareness, Reflective Journal, EFL Speaking, Self-Regulated Learning

Abstrak. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki bagaimana penggunaan jurnal penilaian diri reflektif memengaruhi perkembangan kesadaran metakognitif siswa dalam pembelajaran *English as a Foreign Language* (EFL), khususnya dalam keterampilan berbicara. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain penelitian berbasis kelas yang melibatkan siswa kelas XI di salah satu sekolah menengah atas di Indonesia. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi kelas, jurnal reflektif siswa yang ditulis pada dua pertemuan, dan wawancara mendalam dengan delapan siswa. Data dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik melalui tahapan reduksi data, pengodean, pengelompokan tema, serta interpretasi pola perkembangan kesadaran metakognitif siswa berdasarkan sumber data yang diperoleh. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan jurnal reflektif secara konsisten mendorong perkembangan kesadaran metakognitif siswa dari tahap kesadaran dasar menuju regulasi metakognitif yang lebih kompleks. Siswa tidak hanya mampu mengenali kesalahan dan proses berpikirnya, tetapi juga mulai merencanakan strategi berbicara, memantau performa, serta melakukan evaluasi diri secara lebih kritis. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa jurnal reflektif berperan sebagai sarana efektif untuk mengembangkan *self-regulated learning* dan meningkatkan kemampuan refleksi siswa dalam pembelajaran berbicara bahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi terhadap penguatan praktik pembelajaran EFL berbasis metakognitif dan pengembangan keterampilan berbicara yang lebih mandiri.

Kata kunci: Kesadaran Metakognitif, Jurnal Reflektif, Berbicara EFL, Pembelajaran Yang Diatur Sendiri

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INTRODUCTION

Speaking is one of the most important competencies in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning because it enables learners to communicate ideas, opinions, and information effectively. Despite its importance, speaking remains one of the most challenging language skills for Indonesian EFL learners. Previous studies have reported that many secondary school students experience difficulties in expressing ideas fluently, maintaining confidence during oral communication, and applying appropriate vocabulary and grammatical structures in speaking tasks (Fitrianingsih et al., 2025; Syam et al., 2025). In addition, speaking anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and limited opportunities for meaningful practice often reduce students' willingness to participate in classroom communication. These challenges suggest that difficulties in speaking are not solely linguistic but also involve learners' ability to manage and regulate their own learning processes.

In this regard, metacognitive awareness plays a crucial role in speaking development. Metacognitive awareness refers to learners' ability to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning activities, enabling them to become more independent and self-regulated learners (Stanton et al., 2021). In speaking contexts, metacognitive awareness helps learners identify communication difficulties, evaluate their speaking performance, recognize recurring errors, and select appropriate strategies for improvement. Therefore, speaking proficiency and metacognitive awareness are closely interconnected because effective speaking development requires learners not only to use language but also to reflect on and regulate how they learn and perform during communication. Previous studies have reported positive relationships between metacognitive strategies and speaking achievement in EFL settings (Dangin & Hartati, 2022; Syam et al., 2025).

One pedagogical approach that may foster metacognitive awareness is the use of reflective self-assessment journals. Through reflective writing, learners can document their speaking experiences, identify strengths and weaknesses, evaluate learning progress, and formulate plans for improvement. Reflective practices have been shown to enhance self-regulation and learning awareness in language learning contexts (Hanifa et al., 2025). Nevertheless, reflective activities remain underutilized in speaking instruction, where assessment practices continue to emphasize linguistic performance rather than reflective learning processes.

Although research on metacognitive awareness has expanded considerably, several gaps remain. First, most studies have focused on university students or adult learners, while empirical investigations involving secondary school students are still limited. Second, previous research has predominantly examined the relationship between metacognitive strategies and

overall language achievement rather than exploring how reflective self-assessment journals specifically support metacognitive awareness in speaking instruction. Third, few studies have investigated the reflective processes through which students evaluate and regulate their own speaking performance in Indonesian EFL secondary school contexts.

To address these gaps, this study explores the use of reflective self-assessment journals in developing students' metacognitive awareness in speaking classes at SMA Negeri 4 Jeneponto. The novelty of this study lies not merely in its educational context but in its focus on reflective self-assessment journals as a metacognitive intervention for speaking instruction and its examination of students' reflective processes in planning, monitoring, and evaluating their speaking performance. By investigating both the development of metacognitive awareness and the nature of students' reflections, this study provides a more nuanced understanding of how reflective practices can support speaking development among secondary-level EFL learners.

METHOD

This research employed a qualitative case study design to examine students' metacognitive awareness in speaking classes through reflective self-assessment journals. Qualitative research is appropriate for investigating participants' experiences and interpretations within their natural learning contexts. Creswell and Poth (2018) argue that qualitative inquiry seeks to understand how individuals make sense of their experiences in specific social settings. A case study approach was adopted because it allows an in-depth exploration of a particular educational phenomenon within a bounded system (Yin, 2018). The bounded system in this study was a senior high school speaking class in which reflective self-assessment journals were implemented as a reflective learning strategy. The study focused on understanding how students experienced reflective journaling and how it contributed to the development of their metacognitive awareness in speaking activities rather than measuring its effectiveness quantitatively.

The study was grounded in metacognitive theory, which emphasizes learners' awareness and regulation of their cognitive processes. Metacognitive awareness consists of three key components: planning, monitoring, and evaluating (Teng, 2020). Data were collected through reflective journals, classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews, enabling methodological triangulation to enhance the credibility of the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the procedures proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). First, all reflective journals, observation notes, and interview transcripts were transcribed and organized for analysis. Second, the researcher conducted repeated readings of the data to gain familiarity with participants' experiences. Third, initial codes were generated by identifying statements related to metacognitive planning, monitoring, and evaluation. Fourth, similar codes were grouped into broader themes representing patterns of metacognitive awareness development. Fifth, the emerging themes were reviewed and refined by comparing findings across data sources to ensure consistency and credibility. Finally, the themes were interpreted in relation to the metacognitive framework to explain how reflective self-assessment journals supported students' awareness and regulation of their speaking learning process. Data triangulation across journals, observations, and interviews was employed to strengthen the trustworthiness and validity of the findings.

RESULTS

This study involved 16 students of grade XI.1 in two speaking learning meetings with the topic: (1) *My Most Memorable Experience* and (2) *The Impact of Social Media on Students*. Data were collected through observation sheets, *reflective self-assessment journals*, and semi-structured interviews with eight students. All data were analyzed using a thematic qualitative approach referring to John W. Creswell and Cheryl N. Poeh (2018). The presentation of results was carried out sequentially and comparatively between *Meeting 1* and *Meeting 2* to see the dynamics of the development of students' metacognitive awareness in learning to speak English. The results of the study show that there is a gradual development in the three main aspects of metacognitive awareness, namely *planning*, *monitoring*, and *evaluating*, after students carry out the reflection process repeatedly through reflective journals and interviews. This development can be seen from the increase in students' ability to plan ideas before speaking, monitor performance during the speaking process, and evaluate their strengths and weaknesses after learning activities take place.

Meeting 1: Initial Metacognitive Awareness in Speaking Activities

The findings from the first meeting on the topic *My Most Memorable Experience* indicate that students were at the initial stage of developing metacognitive awareness in speaking activities. Data from reflective journals, classroom observations, and interviews consistently showed that most students experienced nervousness, limited confidence, pronunciation difficulties, and restricted vocabulary. Despite these challenges, students demonstrated an

emerging awareness of the importance of preparation before speaking. Most students reported planning their speaking performance by selecting topics, organizing ideas, reviewing vocabulary, and preparing themselves mentally. Classroom observations confirmed that many students brought prepared notes and appeared to rehearse their presentations before speaking. This pattern suggests the emergence of metacognitive planning strategies aimed at reducing anxiety and improving speaking performance. As one student explained:

“Sebelum saya mengucapkan materi, saya memikirkan kembali apa yang akan saya bahas atau bicarakan.”

“Before I present the material, I think through what I’m going to discuss or convey.”

Regarding monitoring processes, triangulated evidence from observations, reflective journals, and interviews revealed that students had begun to recognize difficulties encountered during speaking, particularly related to pronunciation, vocabulary retrieval, and anxiety. However, most students were not yet able to regulate these difficulties effectively. Observational data showed that students frequently paused, repeated words, switched to Bahasa Indonesia, or remained silent when they encountered communication problems. Interview data further indicated that although students were aware of their mistakes, they often relied on external assistance rather than self-regulatory strategies. For example, one student reported:

“Saat saya lupa kosakata, saya meminta tolong kepada teman saya.”

“When I forget a word, I ask my friend for help.”

Nevertheless, a few students demonstrated early forms of compensation strategies, such as substituting forgotten vocabulary with simpler expressions they could recall. The strongest evidence of metacognitive awareness emerged in the evaluation phase. Reflective journals consistently showed that students were able to identify weaknesses in their speaking performance, particularly in pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, and self-confidence. These findings were supported by interview data, in which students described how reflective journals helped them recognize areas requiring improvement and develop greater awareness of their learning process. One student stated that:

“Jurnal reflektif membantu saya karena menemukan solusi dan membantu saya fokus memperbaiki bagian yang paling sulit seperti kosakata.”

“The reflective journal has helped me find solutions and stay focused on improving the most challenging areas, such as vocabulary.”

Similarly, classroom observations indicated that several students became more attentive to their speaking difficulties after completing reflective entries. Overall, the triangulation of journal, observation, and interview data suggests that while substantial behavioral changes had

not yet occurred during the first meeting, students had begun to develop metacognitive awareness through the processes of planning, monitoring, and evaluating their speaking performance. These findings indicate that reflective self-assessment journals served as an important catalyst for fostering early metacognitive development in EFL speaking instruction.

Meeting 2: Development of Metacognitive Awareness through Reflective Journals

The findings from the second meeting on the topic *The Impact of Social Media on Students* indicate a noticeable development in students' metacognitive awareness compared to the first meeting. Triangulated data from classroom observations, reflective journals, and interviews consistently showed improvements in planning strategies. Students no longer relied solely on memorizing vocabulary but began organizing ideas systematically through outlines, key points, and structured presentations. This development is reflected in the following student statement:

"Saya mengatur ide-ide dengan membuat kerangka."
 "I organize my ideas by creating an outline."

"Saya membuat poin-poin penting agar penyampaian tetap terarah."
 "I've outlined the key points to keep the presentation on track."

"Saya menyusun ide menjadi tiga bagian: pembukaan, isi, dan penutup."
 "I organized my ideas into three parts: the introduction, the body, and the conclusion."

Evidence of development was also found in the monitoring dimension. Observation data revealed that students were increasingly able to maintain communication when encountering speaking difficulties. Instead of remaining silent or switching to Bahasa Indonesia, many students employed alternative strategies such as paraphrasing, using simpler vocabulary, or selecting synonyms. This is illustrated by the following statement:

"Ketika saya lupa kosakata, saya menggantinya dengan kosakata lain atau menjelaskan dengan cara lain."
 "When I forget a word, I replace it with another word or explain it in a different way."

"Saya mencoba menggunakan kata-kata yang lebih sederhana atau menjelaskan dengan cara lain."
 "I try to use simpler words or explain it in a different way."

"Saya mencoba menjelaskannya dengan kata-kata yang lebih sederhana."
 "I'll try to explain it in simpler terms."

The most substantial development occurred in the evaluation dimension. Reflective journals and interviews showed that students became more capable of identifying weaknesses, monitoring progress, and planning future improvements. One participant explained:

“Jurnal reflektif membantu saya melihat kesalahan dan kemajuan saya dengan jelas.”

“Reflective journals help me see my mistakes and progress clearly.”

“Saya belajar bahwa persiapan sangat penting dan tidak takut melakukan kesalahan.”

“I’ve learned that preparation is very important and that you shouldn’t be afraid to make mistakes.”

Overall, the convergence of observation, journal, and interview data indicates that reflective self-assessment journals contributed to a gradual shift from basic metacognitive awareness toward more explicit metacognitive regulation. By the second meeting, students were not only aware of their speaking difficulties but were also beginning to actively plan, monitor, and evaluate their performance in ways that supported more effective speaking development. In terms of planning, students initially demonstrated limited preparation before speaking activities and tended to focus only on completing the assigned task. However, after engaging in reflective journaling, students became more aware of the need to prepare vocabulary, organize ideas, practice pronunciation, and build confidence before performing speaking tasks. This finding suggests that reflective journals encouraged students to become more intentional and strategic in preparing their speaking performance.

The development was particularly evident in the monitoring dimension. During the initial stage, students frequently experienced difficulties when encountering unfamiliar vocabulary, often relying on Indonesian, assistance from peers, or prolonged pauses. In the later stage, students demonstrated greater self-regulation by employing alternative communication strategies such as using synonyms, simplifying expressions, self-correcting errors, and maintaining communication despite linguistic difficulties. These findings indicate that students became increasingly capable of monitoring and controlling their speaking processes while performing.

Similarly, substantial improvement was found in the evaluating dimension. Early reflections were generally descriptive and limited to identifying whether students performed well or poorly. Over time, students developed more analytical reflections by identifying specific weaknesses, recognizing the causes of errors, evaluating their progress, and formulating strategies for future improvement. This progression reflects the emergence of

deeper metacognitive awareness and self-evaluation skills. Overall, the findings demonstrate that reflective self-assessment journals functioned not merely as reflective writing activities but as tools that facilitated self-awareness and self-regulated learning. Through continuous reflection, students became more prepared, more capable of monitoring their performance, and more critical in evaluating their own learning process. These findings highlight the important role of reflective journaling in fostering metacognitive development in EFL speaking classrooms.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that reflective self-assessment journals contributed positively to the development of students' metacognitive awareness in EFL speaking classes. Across the two meetings, students showed progressive growth in the three dimensions of metacognition proposed by Flavell (1979), namely planning, monitoring, and evaluating. However, the development was not equally distributed across these dimensions. Planning and evaluation appeared more prominently from the beginning, whereas monitoring developed more gradually. This pattern suggests that students found it easier to think about their performance before and after speaking activities than to regulate their performance during the speaking process itself.

One important finding is that reflective journals functioned as a mechanism that encouraged students to externalize their thinking processes. Through regular reflection, students became more aware of how they prepared for speaking tasks, responded to difficulties, and evaluated their performance. Rather than focusing solely on linguistic outcomes, students began to pay attention to the learning processes underlying successful speaking performance. This finding supports Flavell's (1979) argument that metacognitive awareness develops when learners consciously examine and regulate their own cognitive activities. In the planning dimension, students demonstrated increasingly systematic preparation strategies between the first and second meetings. Initially, preparation was largely limited to memorizing vocabulary, writing short texts, and attempting to reduce nervousness before speaking. By the second meeting, however, students were organizing ideas into outlines, identifying key points, selecting appropriate vocabulary, and structuring presentations more carefully. This shift indicates that students were becoming more strategic in approaching speaking tasks rather than relying solely on spontaneous performance or memorization.

The development of planning skills can be interpreted as evidence of increasing metacognitive knowledge. According to Flavell (1979), effective learners possess knowledge about themselves, learning tasks, and strategies that can facilitate successful performance. Reflective journals appeared to strengthen this awareness by encouraging students to analyze the effectiveness of their preparation methods. These findings are consistent with studies by Rahimi and Katal (2021) and Zhang and Zhang (2022), which reported that planning strategies help EFL learners reduce anxiety, organize ideas more effectively, and improve speaking performance.

A different developmental pattern was observed in the monitoring dimension. Although students demonstrated improvements between meetings, monitoring remained the most challenging aspect of metacognitive awareness. During the first meeting, most students recognized when they made mistakes but lacked the ability to respond strategically. They often paused, repeated words, switched to Indonesian, or depended on assistance from peers and teachers. Such responses indicate that awareness of a problem does not automatically translate into effective regulation of performance.

The slower development of monitoring may be explained by the complexity of real-time speaking. Unlike planning and evaluation, which occur before or after a task, monitoring requires learners to manage multiple processes simultaneously, including vocabulary retrieval, pronunciation, grammatical accuracy, fluency, and audience interaction. From the perspective of Zimmerman's (2000) self-regulated learning theory, effective monitoring requires both awareness and strategic action. Therefore, it is not surprising that monitoring emerged as the most difficult dimension to develop because it demands immediate cognitive and metacognitive control during communication.

Nevertheless, significant progress in monitoring was evident during the second meeting. Students increasingly used compensation strategies such as paraphrasing, employing synonyms, simplifying expressions, and using gestures to maintain communication. This change suggests a shift from passive awareness toward active regulation. Rather than focusing exclusively on avoiding mistakes, students began prioritizing communication effectiveness. Such behavior reflects a more advanced form of metacognitive regulation because learners actively adjusted their strategies in response to emerging communication challenges.

The strongest development was observed in the evaluation dimension. Students demonstrated an increasing ability to identify weaknesses related to pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency, confidence, and grammar. More importantly, they were able to formulate specific goals and strategies for future improvement. This finding suggests that reflective journals

encouraged learners to move beyond simple recognition of mistakes toward deeper reflection on how learning could be improved. Evaluation became a process of strategic decision-making rather than merely a description of performance outcomes. This indicates that reflective journaling was particularly effective in fostering students' capacity for self-reflection, enabling them to transform awareness of weaknesses into concrete plans for future learning improvement.

These findings are closely related to Schön's (1983) concepts of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Reflection-in-action was evident when students recognized difficulties during speaking and attempted to modify their communication strategies. Reflection-on-action emerged through journal writing, where students analyzed completed performances and identified areas for improvement. The reflective journal therefore served as a bridge connecting immediate speaking experiences with longer-term learning development. This interpretation is further supported by studies conducted by Hanifa et al. (2025) and Fitrianiingsih et al. (2025), which found that reflective practices strengthen self-awareness and self-regulated learning in language education.

Overall, the findings suggest that the primary contribution of reflective self-assessment journals lies not only in supporting speaking development but also in fostering the transition from metacognitive awareness to metacognitive regulation. Students gradually moved from anxiety-driven participation toward more strategic, reflective, and self-directed learning behaviors. This transformation supports Brookfield's (2017) view that reflection promotes critical awareness of learning experiences and aligns with Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle, in which learning develops through experience, reflection, conceptualization, and experimentation. The study also extends previous research by demonstrating that secondary school students are capable of developing sophisticated metacognitive skills through structured reflective practices, highlighting the value of reflective journals as a pedagogical tool in Indonesian EFL speaking classrooms.

CONCLUSION

The result of this study showed that the use of reflective self-assessment journals was very important in enhancing the students' metacognitive awareness in learning speaking English in the EFL classroom. The findings were derived from triangulation of data from classroom observations, students' reflective journals and in-depth interviews in two meetings. At the first meeting the student's meta-cognitive awareness was still developing. This is reflected in the dominance of simple planning activities such as preparing texts or memorising vocabulary

while the monitoring and evaluating aspects have not developed in the best way. Most students still have speech anxiety, limited vocabulary and use non-adaptive strategies such as silence, repeating words or switching to Indonesian.

However, at the second meeting, there was a substantial development of the three metacognitive aspects, namely, planning, monitoring and evaluating. Students begin to acquire skills in organising ideas systematically, correcting mistakes during their performance, and thinking more critically and reflexively about their oral performance. In addition, students' communication strategies are changing with an increase in the use of compensation strategies, such as paraphrasing, using synonyms, and simplifying language. Furthermore, the findings from the interviews showed that the students were highly aware of the benefits of reflective journaling to help them understand their strengths and their weaknesses and encourage them to improve continuously. Thus, this study shows that not only are reflective journals a tool of evaluation, but also an effective pedagogical tool to develop students' self-regulation and metacognitive awareness in language learning.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the use of reflective self-assessment journals continuously can help students to develop metacognitive awareness in speaking English. The reflection process makes students more aware of their own learning, their speaking, their mistakes, and what they need to do to improve their speaking skills in the future. The results show that reflective journals are an effective medium to facilitate students' reflective thinking, self-regulation and metacognitive awareness in learning to speak English.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of this study, the researcher recommends that English teachers, especially in the context of EFL learning in secondary school, integrate reflective self-assessment journals as part of their regular speaking learning activities. The use of reflective journals has been shown to help students improve metacognitive awareness through the process of planning, monitoring, and evaluating their own speaking abilities. In addition, teachers are advised to provide clear guidance on how to conduct effective reflection so that students can more easily identify weaknesses and improvement strategies in the process of learning to speak.

Further research is expected to develop this study by involving a larger number of participants, longer research time, or using a mixed methods approach to obtain more comprehensive results. Subsequent researchers may also explore the use of reflective journals on other language skills such as listening, reading, and writing in the context of EFL learning.

In addition, research on the influence of reflective journals on quantitative speech skills improvement also needs to be conducted to strengthen the findings of this study.

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