

## **SPEAKING STRATEGIES IN CROSS CULTURAL ADAPTATION: GORONTALO STUDENTS' PERCEPTION IN IMMERSION CONTEXT OF KAMPUNG INGGRIS KEDIRI**

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**Abstract.** This study aims to investigate how English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in Gorontalo adapt their speaking skills in a cross-cultural learning context, focusing on the strategies used and challenges faced during classroom interactions. This research uses a qualitative approach based on a strategic competence framework, in which data is collected through in-depth interviews with EFL students to explore how they negotiate linguistic, interactional, and cultural demands in communication. The results show that students predominantly utilise metacognitive, cognitive, and socio-affective strategies to manage speaking tasks and control their performance, particularly when interacting with peers from diverse linguistic backgrounds. However, despite the application of these strategies, learners still face significant challenges, such as limited vocabulary in situations that require fluency, difficulty understanding accent differences, and anxiety in multicultural interactions. These challenges result in hesitation in spontaneous communication and a tendency to avoid requesting clarification. These findings confirm that cross-cultural speaking adaptation depends not only on linguistic ability, but also on learners' affective readiness and sociocultural competence.

**Keywords:** Cross-Cultural Adaptation, Perception in Immersion

**Abstrak.** Studi ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki bagaimana *English as a Foreign Language* (EFL) di Gorontalo mengadaptasi keterampilan berbicara mereka dalam konteks pembelajaran lintas budaya, dengan menitikberatkan pada strategi yang digunakan serta tantangan yang dihadapi selama interaksi kelas. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan berlandaskan kerangka kompetensi strategis, di mana data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dengan mahasiswa EFL untuk menggali cara mereka menegosiasikan tuntutan linguistik, interaksional, dan budaya dalam komunikasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa secara dominan memanfaatkan strategi metakognitif, kognitif, dan sosio-afektif untuk mengelola tugas berbicara dan mengontrol performa mereka, khususnya saat berinteraksi dengan teman sebaya dari latar belakang linguistik yang beragam. Namun, meskipun strategi tersebut telah diterapkan, pembelajar masih menghadapi tantangan yang cukup signifikan, seperti keterbatasan kosakata dalam situasi yang menuntut kelancaran, kesulitan memahami perbedaan aksen, serta kecemasan dalam interaksi multikultural. Tantangan-tantangan ini berdampak pada keraguan dalam berkomunikasi spontan dan kecenderungan menghindari permintaan klarifikasi. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa adaptasi berbicara lintas budaya tidak hanya bergantung pada kemampuan linguistik, tetapi juga pada kesiapan afektif dan kompetensi sosiokultural pembelajar.

**Kata Kunci:** Adaptasi Lintas Budaya, Persepsi dalam Imersi

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## INTRODUCTION

Cross-cultural adaptation has become central to English language learning in a context of entering the new environment where EFL learners participate to maintain their English components (Amirovich et al, 2021) where more learners participate in immersion-based programs that require constant interaction in the target language (Kim, 2017). Kim explained that cross-cultural adaptation is also occur in local competence In Indonesia, in this case, the immersion of Kampung Inggris Kediri Inggris has been functioned as an authentic language immersion environment where students from different regions communicate intensively in English while navigating cultural and linguistic diversity. For many learners, especially those from linguistically homogeneous regions like Gorontalo, this environment introduces both opportunities for rapid development and challenges related to communication stress, misunderstandings, and cultural adjustment.

Speaking strategies therefore play a crucial role in helping learners manage these challenges. Previous studies confirm that learners employ a combination of metacognitive, cognitive, socio-affective, and communication strategies to enhance oral performance and navigate social environments (Oxford, 2017; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). In multicultural of immersion contexts, interactional strategies such as clarification requests, comprehension checks, and negotiation of meaning are particularly essential for sustaining communication (Al-Khresheh, 2020). These strategies help learners manage communication breakdowns, respond to unfamiliar cultural cues, and adjust their linguistic choices to diverse interlocutors.

Recent research highlights the emotional dimension of communication difficulties, showing that anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and cultural fatigue significantly influence learners' willingness to speak (Dewaele, 2019; Dewaele et al, 2008). Socio-affective strategies in such as self-encouragement, anxiety control, and seeking peer support have been found to stabilize learners' emotions and create psychological readiness for communication (Mahmood & Iqbal, 2021; Razawi and Mohamad, 2024). However, most studies have focused on international sojourns or urban university contexts, leaving a gap in understanding how Indonesian domestic immersion environments shape strategy use.

Given the unique linguistic and cultural background of Gorontalo students, their immersion experiences in Kampung Inggris Kediri offer a rich context for examining how learners deploy speaking strategies to adapt cross-culturally. Thus, this study addresses two main questions:

- What are the speaking strategies applied by Gorontalo students during their immersion experience at Kampung Inggris Kediri to adapt cross-culturally?
- What are the challenges face in applying speaking strategies during their cross-cultural adaptation in the immersion context of Kampung Inggris Kediri?

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore the speaking strategies used by Gorontalo students during their immersion experience at Kampung Inggris Kediri and to understand the reasons behind their strategic choices. The qualitative descriptive method is particularly suitable for capturing detailed accounts of learners' experiences and perceptions in naturalistic settings; Creswell & Poth, 2018). By using this method, the research aimed to provide a rich, contextualized description of the learners' speaking strategies, including metacognitive, cognitive, socio-affective, and communication strategies, and how these strategies facilitate their cross-cultural adaptation (Oxford, 2017; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). Descriptive analysis allowed for a systematic examination of the processes and challenges encountered by the students during their language immersion, highlighting both individual and collective patterns in strategy use and adaptation behaviors (Kim, 2017; Al-Khresheh, 2020). Data were collected through interviews, observations, and reflective accounts from the students, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon and providing insights into the practical application of speaking strategies in authentic cross-cultural interactions.

### **Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involved coding and categorizing the data into meaningful themes related to speaking strategies and cross-cultural adaptation (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis process followed these steps:

- Familiarization: Reading and re-reading transcripts, field notes, and journals to gain an overall understanding of the data.
- Initial coding: Highlighting segments of data that reflected students' speaking strategies, challenges, and adaptation behaviors.
- Theme development: Grouping codes into broader categories representing metacognitive, cognitive, socio-affective, and interactional strategies.

- Review and refinement: Ensuring that the themes accurately reflected the participants' experiences and were clearly connected to the research questions.

This approach allowed the study to generate a detailed, descriptive account of how Gorontalo students apply speaking strategies to navigate cross-cultural challenges in an immersion context, providing insights for both theory and practice in English language teaching (Oxford, 2017; Kim, 2017).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this research stage, the writer found the analysis of interviews and observation in two categories based on the research problem, they are speaking strategies employed by Gorontalo students and challenges they faced during cross-cultural adaptation. These findings provide insights into how learners navigate linguistic and cultural adaptation in an immersive English environment of kampung Inggris Kediri.

### Speaking strategies applied by Gorontalo students in Kampung Inggris Kediri

The data indicated that Gorontalo students employed a combination of metacognitive, cognitive, socio-affective, and interactional strategies to manage speaking tasks and adapt cross-culturally. These strategies allowed learners to navigate the challenges of an immersive English environment while maintaining effective communication and cultural awareness.

#### *Metacognitive Strategy*

Metacognitive strategies were employed among the most frequently result, including planning conversations in advance, monitoring language use during interactions, and evaluating performance to evaluate their progress. Considering that during the study they had the target to achieve in advancing speaking skills components. One student shared her experience regarding the metacognitive strategy, she said that:

“I try to think about what phrases I will use before talking to new friends, so I don't get stuck.” (students 3)

While the two of her friends applied monitoring due to the lack of confidence and afraid of create mistakes, they answered that:

“It is very difficult for us to create better ideas and I focus to the sentences correctness”.

“Before joining a group discussion, I try to imagine what topics might come up and prepare sentences in my mind. It helps me feel more confident when speaking”.

Such strategies adapted reflect learners' conscious efforts to control and regulate their speaking performance, enabling them to anticipate difficulties and adjust their communication proactively (Oxford, 2017). These behaviors reflect deliberate self-regulatory processes preparing, monitoring, and evaluating that learners use to control and direct their speaking performance, consistent with proposed concept of metacognitive strategy use in SLA. It is also emphasized by Chen et al, (2021) that the immersion and EFL contexts similarly report high frequencies of metacognitive strategy where the learners apply and expand them to better speaking readiness and self-regulated learning.

### *Cognitive Strategy*

The second strategy employed was the cognitive strategies which also played a key role. The data revealed that several students frequently using paraphrasing, repetition, and summarization to convey meaning when their vocabulary was limited. As proposed by O'Malley & Chamot, (1990) that this strategy often reformulated through sentences to ensure clarity, demonstrating flexibility and problem-solving skills in real-time communication (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). One student said that:

“When I forget a word, I usually describe it using other words or examples to make it clear. For example, I said ‘the place where people spent vacation’ instead of ‘holiday,’ and they understood me”.

### *Socio-affective Strategy*

In addition, socio-affective strategies were employed to foster smoother interactions and reduce anxiety. Students sought peer assistance, requested feedback, and consciously practiced politeness to build rapport with interlocutors. These strategies were crucial for maintaining positive social interactions and navigating the cultural nuances of a diverse learning environment (Al-Khresheh, 2020). Examining this to the result revealed, students explained:

"When feeling nervous talking to other students, I start smiling after that I try to ask simple questions to begin the conversation”.

“I can start to ask question to break the stiffness by greeting them firstly, so that It makes them friendly and helps me speak more comfortably.”

Finally, interactional strategies were evident in the frequent use of clarification requests, comprehension checks, and negotiation of meaning. Observations revealed that students regularly asked interlocutors to repeat or rephrase statements and confirmed understanding

through back-channeling. These strategies proved essential in managing communication breakdowns and adapting to different accents and cultural norms, thereby supporting effective cross-cultural adaptation (Liu & Jackson, 2020). Many research adapt immersion on the empirical studies Research in Kampung Inggris settings facts that the role of socio-affective strategies has been adapted in lowering speaking anxiety and enhancing participation in communicative activities.

### **Challenges Face in Applying Speaking Strategies During Their Cross-Cultural Adaptation in The Immersion Context of Kampung Inggris Kediri**

Although the immersion setting offered various opportunities for authentic communication, it also remains the conditions that made adaptation difficult for many Gorontalo students who studied in kampung Inggris Pare Kediri. The demand of giving fast respond in speaking environment, exposure to diverse accents, and constant need for spontaneous interaction created barriers that influenced their overall oral performance. The interviews revealed several recurring challenges that shaped their speaking development and affected how they adjusted to the cross-cultural adaptation of Kampung Inggris as the new environment for English fluency and adaptation

#### *Vocabulary Limitation Affecting Real-Time Fluency*

Students' limitation of vocabulary becomes the first challenge when entering a new environment or particularly during spontaneous communication. Although students had learned and practiced the strategies such as taking notes, paraphrasing or using synonyms to maintain speaking, they often found themselves unable to retrieve words quickly enough during the interactions. This challenge is consistent with recent studies showing that lexical access speed is a strong predictor of fluency in second-language communication (Saito, 2020; Tavakoli & Wright, 2020). These processes create new pressure for learners to expand fluency which are able to heightened the students' stress levels, therefore, learners made their selves to get difficult to sustain meaningful communication in immersion context. Students in many times expressed difficulty to recall or expand vocabulary under time pressure. One student admitted from the interview result as follow:

“Sometimes my idea is appeared, but I am difficult in finding the right words fast enough, so I am panic and more stress, then I panic and stop speaking.”

“If the conversation goes too fast, I just freeze because my vocabulary is still limited.”

“I try to paraphrase the text or word every time I want to express something in english, but when I get nervous, all the alternative words disappear from my mind.”

These responses highlight how fluency pressure interacts with lexical limitations, intensifying cognitive load and hampering strategy use. This aligns with De Jong’s (2021) findings that increased cognitive load reduces learners’ ability to access vocabulary efficiently during real-time speaking. Therefore, it is obvious that vocabulary limitations represent both a linguistic and psychological barrier as well as the challenges for learners adapting to immersion environment to be more realize themselves as the component point to adapt and expand.

### *Speaking Anxiety and Fear of Making Mistake*

Speaking anxiety emerged as another significant challenge affecting students’ willingness to communicate and apply strategies effectively. Fear of negative evaluation, especially when interacting with more fluent peers, made students hesitant to speak or take risks. This aligns with research showing that anxiety suppresses cognitive engagement and reduces learners’ use of communication strategies (Jin & Dewaele, 2020). In the culturally diverse environment of Kampung Inggris, many Gorontalo students compared themselves with participants from other regions, contributing to diminished confidence. For instance in research studies findings of Samad and Munir (2022) and Samad result specified findings on Gorontalo students’ limitation (2024) found that students seem more difficult in both retrieving vocabularies and enhance self-confidence. Interview responses reflect these emotional barriers as follows:

“I feel scared to speak because I don’t want other participants to think about my English which is interpreted as a bad performance.”

“Sometimes I stay quiet and keep silent even when I know the answer because I’m afraid of making mistakes.”

“When I hear others speak better and influence than me, I lose confidence and stop trying.”

These statements underscore that affective factors do not merely accompany speaking performance but actively constrain learners’ ability to deploy available strategies. Even when learners possess sufficient linguistic knowledge and strategic awareness, anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and low self-confidence can suppress real-time strategy use, leading to silence, hesitation, or reliance on minimal responses. This aligns with evidence that emotional

variables often override cognitive readiness in communicative situations, particularly in multilingual or intercultural classrooms, where learners perceive higher social risk (Dewaele & Li, 2022). Related studies further show that speaking anxiety reduces working memory capacity and attentional control, which are essential for monitoring speech and selecting appropriate strategies during interaction (MacIntyre, 2017; Teimouri, Goetze, & Plonsky, 2019). As a result, learners may avoid clarification requests, limit participation, or disengage altogether, despite recognizing the potential communicative value of these strategies. Addressing this constraint therefore requires pedagogical interventions that directly target affective readiness, such as low-stakes speaking tasks, structured peer mentoring, and gradual confidence-building activities, which have been shown to lower anxiety and increase strategic engagement in EFL speaking contexts (Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2014; Oga-Baldwin & Fryer, 2020).

### **Accent Difficulties in Cross- Cultural Interaction**

The new speaking styles in new environment needs an accent and pronunciation variations which symbolized the difference styles of speaking. This is as one of the most prominent difficulties students faced during their cross-cultural speaking adaptation. As they interacted with peers from various provinces, they encountered diverse English accents shaped by each speaker's linguistic and regional background. This differentiation created comprehension gaps, especially when accents differed significantly from their own. Such difficulties often disrupted students' ability to follow the flow of classroom discussions, respond appropriately, and participate confidently in group interactions. These findings reinforce Saito and Ahn's (2022) argument that accent variability can directly influence listeners' processing load and overall comprehension, particularly in multilingual learning environments. The participants' reflections illustrated these challenges in a concrete manner. One student shared,

“Sometimes I cannot understand what my friends said and explained because their accent is very different from mine,”

Highlighting the impact of accent unfamiliarity. Another student admitted,

“If someone speaks too fast with a strong accent, I just pretend like I understand because I don't know how to respond,”

Pointing to the social pressure and communicative discomfort that arise from misunderstanding. A third student explained,



“It’s difficult to join discussions when I need extra time to understand their pronunciation,”

“Several friends taking course in speaking camp with British and American accent that make me not confidence and nervous when facing them in conversation”

Those result of interview indicating how accent influence the way learners interact with the respond that can hinder in immediate engagement. Collectively, these responses suggest that difficulties with accent comprehension constrained students’ ability to use interactional strategies such as clarification requests, turn-taking, or negotiation of meaning behaviors essential for successful communication in cross-cultural contexts. This aligns with Zheng and Park’s (2022) findings that learners often avoid asking for clarification due to embarrassment or fear of negative judgment, particularly in multicultural groups.

Given these challenges, pedagogical interventions become crucial. The literature emphasizes that strategic exposure to a wide range of English accents can strengthen learners’ perceptual adaptation and reduce anxiety when encountering unfamiliar speech patterns. Ballard and Winke (2023), for instance, recommend integrating structured listening activities, accent diversity modules, and guided interaction tasks into instructional design to help learners build confidence and improve their processing of varied pronunciation patterns. Applying these approaches in ELT settings would likely enhance students’ preparedness for authentic cross-cultural communication and support their development of more flexible listening and interactional skills.

## CONCLUSION

Overall, the findings indicate that Gorontalo EFL students experienced notable challenges when adapting their speaking practices in cross-cultural settings particularly in Kampung Inggris Immersion context. Limited lexical resources, accent-related comprehension difficulties, and interactional anxiety emerged as the most prominent obstacles affecting their fluency, confidence, and communicative engagement. These challenges were reinforced by the participants’ own accounts, which revealed hesitation to ask for clarification, difficulty processing unfamiliar accents, and pressure to maintain smooth conversation despite limited linguistic readiness. The results suggest and examine that cross-cultural communication requires not only linguistic competence but also strategic, sociocultural, and affective readiness. The challenges faced by students demonstrate the need for targeted pedagogical support such as structured vocabulary enrichment, exposure to diverse English accents, and

guided interactional practice to help learners navigate intercultural speaking demands more effectively. By addressing these areas, English language instruction can better prepare students to participate confidently and competently in multilingual and multicultural communication environments

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