English Learning Strategies in Rural Public Secondary School

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	This study aims to investigate the learning strategies employed by English language students at rural public secondary school in Indonesia. The research examines the navigation of language learning in a resource-limited rural setting. A survey study was used within a quantitative case study design as research methods. Data were collected from 58 rural public secondary school students and analyzed using descriptive analysis by using SPSS applications. The study identified that the students in the rural public secondary school are the medium-strategy users with metacognitive and social strategies as the most frequently used. With the unique environment, the students learn English by applying self-regulation strategy and followed by doing collaboration with other. This research contributes to the understanding of how rural students adapt their learning strategies in challenging environments and provides insights for enhancing English language teaching in similar contexts. Limitations of the research are discussed, along with suggestions for future exploration, including expanding the sample size and examining the role of teachers and resources in supporting language acquisition.

Introduction

Learning strategies are techniques that students use to enhance and facilitate their learning process (Pasupathi & Gosh, 2024; Abulhul, 2021). Because of using the strategy for learning can be useful for the students which have positive correlation with the English learning achievement (Suwanarak, 2019; Khansir et al, 2021). These strategies act as tools that help learners engage more actively with content, making it easier to understand, retain, and recall information. Teng (2023) also described learning strategies as the various actions, behaviors, or techniques learners use to enhance their language skills. These can include practical steps like finding conversation partners or motivating themselves to take on challenging language tasks, all aimed at making their learning more effective. These

strategies range from mental techniques, such as summarizing or visualizing, to practical actions like organizing study materials or seeking clarification from others.

The English learning strategies used by students can vary greatly. Each individual has their own strengths, preferences, and ways of processing information. Sugiharta (2021) supports this idea, noting that the learning strategies employed by English students in online settings also differ. The study identified several strategies, including cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, and social approaches. Some students may prefer visual methods, such as watching movies, while others might learn best through listening and repetition. Some learners are more analytical and focus on grammar rules and structure, whereas others might lean towards social strategies, such as practicing with classmates or native speakers. By choosing and applying the most effective strategies, learners can improve their ability to study efficiently and tackle challenging material with greater confidence, particularly in learning the English language.

Learning strategies employed by rural students can be different significantly from those used by students in urban areas. It can be caused rural students has moderate level of awareness when it comes to using language learning strategies (Pasupathi & Ghosh, 2024; Gani et al., 2018; Bayuong et al., 2019). In addition, there are also the significant challenges and it hinders the development of English language education in rural areas (Akter et al., 2024; Shan et al., 2022). The challenges include insufficient teaching materials, inadequate facilities, and infrastructure. The students at this school also face the challenges. Many students at this school have limitations in access to other resources like book references, learning materials, or technological tools such as computers and stable internet connections. In Indonesia, there are still many public schools which is located in the rural area, for example in Seluma Regency, Bengkulu Province. Geographically, some of public schools in Seluma remote location make it difficult for students to access additional educational facilities, such as English courses or city libraries. Cultural factors play a role as well, with the local language and customs dominating daily interactions, resulting in minimal exposure to or use of English in the community, minimum parental involvement in the teaching-learning process (Shikalepo, 2020). These issues are still faced by rural students, who are forced to be flexible and creative in finding ways to succeed in language learning.
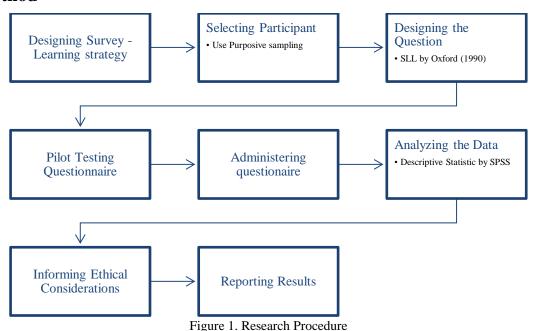
Many previous researches have shown that learning strategies play a critical role in language acquisition in different situations for example in the online classroom in the pandemic covid-19 situation (Sugiartha et al., 2021). Different characteristics of students also make the English Learning Strategies used different from each other as university students (Wang et al., 2023), also studied the English learning strategies of university students in Hong Kong. Some researchers have also conducted studies of learning strategies in different settings, such as rural settings. (William et al., 2023) conducted the preferences language learning strategies by ESL students in Malaysia and they found that memory strategy is mostly used in English acquisition. Another researcher, (Joachim & Shah, 2024) identified ESL students' learning strategies in rural primary schools. (Feng, 2023) Also, they studied learning strategies in rural junior middle schools in China. The findings from these previous studies stated that the various strategies used by EFL and ESL students can be different according to different levels and environments. Based on these findings, there is still limited data on English learning strategies in rural areas at the public secondary school in Indonesia.

Understanding the context and challenges faced by students may provide insights into the effective implementation of adaptable learning strategies in resource-limited settings,

especially in the rural public secondary school in Indonesia. Research on rural learning strategies has the potential to enhance teaching practices, particularly in supporting students' proficiency in learning English despite facing resource constraints. This study seeks to identify the specific methods utilized by rural students to address their challenges in language learning. The findings as research significancy are expected to illuminate the adaptive strategies employed by rural learners, which could assist educators in developing targeted interventions to meet these students' needs. Furthermore, this research aims to contribute to the broader field by emphasizing the flexibility of learning strategies and their applicability in various educational contexts.

In summary, this study aims to address a significant gap in language learning research by examining the types of learning strategies employed and identifying the most frequently utilized English learning strategies among EFL students at the public secondary school in Indonesia, situated in a rural setting. However, questions persist regarding the effectiveness of each specific strategy in enhancing language proficiency and the applicability of these findings in various rural environments. Future research may build upon this study by investigating how individual differences, such as motivation and learning preferences, shape the selection and effectiveness of strategies in rural language learning contexts. Based on the background of the study, the research questions have been formulated as follows: What are the most frequently used strategies by English language learning students in rural public secondary school?

Method

Figure 1. Research Procedure

This research employed a descriptive survey approach in a quantitative design. This design was used to investigate the English learning strategies employed by English as foreign language (EFL) students at SMP Negeri 32 Seluma. It focused on the types of English learning strategies and the most dominant learning strategy used by the students of SMP Negeri 32 Seluma in the Academic year 2024-2025. To select the participants of this research, the purposive sampling technique was used. According to Creswell (2014), purposive sampling is recommended to be used for a study, which has fewer than 100

participants. Because SMP Negeri, 32 Seluma only has 58 students, the participants were all of the students, which consisted of 18 students in Class 7, 24 students in Class 8, and 16 students in Class 9.

The primary instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire which adapted from (Alrashidi, 2022) which based on the six categories of learning strategies from the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) developed by Oxford (1990) which categorized into direct strategies and indirect strategies. Direct strategies involve actions that directly engage with the language being learned, focusing on memory, cognitive processing, and compensation techniques. These strategies help learners store, retrieve, and effectively utilize language. In contrast, indirect strategies support the learning process in a less direct way by concentrating on overarching skills and attitudes. This includes metacognitive strategies, which involve planning and evaluating learning; affective strategies, which deal with managing emotions and motivation; and social strategies, which encourage interaction with others to facilitate learning. Together, these strategies provide a comprehensive framework for effective language acquisition.

There will be two sections in the questionnaire. The first section was demographic Information which consist basic information such as age, gender, language proficiency level. The second section was learning strategies survey which each question was responded by the students using a 5-point Likert scale. The scale ranged on 1 (Never), 2 (Rarely), 3 (Sometimes), 4 (Often) and 5 (Always), to see how often the students used each strategy. High-strategy user of learning strategy has an average score between 3.5 and 5.0, medium-strategy users have an average score between 2.5 and 3.4, and low-strategy users have an average score between 1.0 and 2.4.

The questionnaire was translated into Bahasa Indonesia in order to reduce the chance of participants misunderstanding questions. Before collecting the data, the questionnaire was spread to the 30 respondents for increasing the validity and reliability. After checking the validity and reliability by using SPSS, the questionnaire was revised and some questions were deleted based on the validity of the questionnaire. The finalized questionnaire was administered to the participants in the classroom setting to maintain consistency and minimize external influences. The students were provided with instructions to complete the questionnaire independently and honestly. A brief explanation of each type of strategy will be given beforehand to ensure all students understand the terms and categories used.

The data that has been collected from quantitative survey was analyzed in using descriptive statistical methods in SPSS. This method was used to investigate the English learning strategies used by the students in SMP Negeri 32 Seluma. According to Kaur et al (2018), descriptive statistics help organize and summarize data by outlining the relationships between variables within a sample or population. Descriptive statistical was useful for observing the means, standard deviations and the most frequency of learning strategy used by the students in SMP Negeri 32 Seluma. This design provided valuable insights into the unique learning strategies that rural students develop in response to environmental constraints, offering a basis for educational interventions that can enhance English instruction in similar rural contexts because SMP Negeri 32 Seluma is public school in Indonesia which is in the rural setting. For ethical considerations, informed consent obtained in the opening of questionnaire from participants, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity by not collecting personally identifiable information, and securing data storage, which is in line with Cohen et al (2018) ethical guidelines for maintaining privacy and protecting participants' identities in educational research.

Results and Discussion

This study analyzed the data gathered from the survey by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) application. It was conducted the descriptive statistics to observe the means, standard deviations, and rankings of the language learning strategies used by the students (see Table 1).

Table 1. English Learning Strategy used in rural public secondary school

No	Learning Strategy Category	Mean	SD	Rank
1	Memory strategy	2,81	1,151	4
2	Cognitive Strategy	2,72	1,106	5
3	Compensation Strategy	2,62	1,145	6
4	Metacognitive Strategy	3,07	1,101	1
5	Affective Strategy	2,84	1,130	3
6	Social Strategy	2,96	1,097	2

Based on the table 1, it was revealed that students' English learning strategies in rural public secondary school was metacognitive strategies as the most frequently used, which reflect students' efforts to plan, monitor, and evaluate their own learning. This was closely followed by social strategies, which the students tend to interact with others to enhance learning, such as asking for help, practicing with peers, or seeking clarification from teachers. Affective strategy as managing emotions, reducing anxiety, or staying motivated and memory strategies, such as using associations, repetition, or visualization to remember information were moderately used by the students. Their moderate use suggests that students occasionally rely on these strategies but may prefer other methods. The students tend to rarely rely on cognitive strategies and compensation strategies for learning English.

Students in rural public secondary school are categorized as medium strategy users in using English learning strategy. Because the average score (mean) in the six learning categories is between 2,5 and 3,4 which considered as medium strategy users. It means that students in rural public secondary schools sometimes use English learning strategies but not consistently. The English learning strategy used by the students is moderate. It indicates that the students apply some strategies in learning English but the strategies are not applied frequently or extensively. The table 1 also revealed that the standard deviation (SD) of around 1.1 which indicates moderate variability in responses. This means that while some students may use the strategies more frequently, others use them less often.

Here are the data from the analysis of each category of English language learning strategies used by students in rural public secondary school.

Memory strategy

Table 2 shows the students' responses to questions about how they use memory strategies to learn English at rural public secondary school. It includes the percentage of students who answered "Never," "Rarely," "Sometimes," "Often," and "Always" for each item, along with the average score (mean) and the variation in responses (Standard Deviation). This data helps us understand which memory techniques students use the most and how consistent their habits are.

Table 2. Memory Strategy used in rural public secondary school

Item	N %	R %	S %	O %	A %	M	SD
X1.1. I create sentences using new English words to help me remember them.	5,2	32,8	31,0	19,0	12,1	3,00	1,108
X1.2. I link the sound of a new English word with an image or picture of it to make it easier to remember.	20,7	22,4	29,3	19,0	8,6	2,72	1,240

Item	N %	R %	S %	O %	A %	M	SD
X1.3. I remember new English words by imagining a situation where I can use them.	12,1	27,6	36,2	19,0	5,2	2,78	1,060
X1.4. I use flashcards to learn new English words.	22,4	31,0	20,7	19,0	6,9	2,57	1,230
X1.5. I remember new English words or phrases by recalling where they are on the page, board, or street sign.	10,3	22,4	34,5	24,1	8,6	2,98	1,116
MEAN TOTAL MEMORY STRATEGY						2,81	1,151

Note: N=Never; R=Rarely; S= Sometimes; O= Often; A=Always; M= Mean; SD=Standard Deviation

The data from table 2 shows that students generally use memory strategies at a moderate level, with an average score of 2.81. The most popular in memory strategy is creating sentences with new English words, which helps students remember them. This approach is used quite often, reflecting that students find it helpful to practice new vocabulary in context. Another commonly used strategy is remembering where words appear on a page, a board, or even a street sign, which suggests that students rely on visual cues to reinforce their memory of words.

Other strategies, using flashcards in learning new English vocabulary is the least frequently used in memory strategy by the students. This strategy has 2.57 mean scores which showed that while they are helpful, students may not rely on them as much as creating sentences. The variation in how often students use these strategies suggests that each student has their own preferred way of remembering new English word which prefer learning methods that integrate vocabulary into real-life contexts rather than rote memorization techniques.

Cognitive Strategy

Table 3 provides an overview of students' use of cognitive strategies to improve their English skills at rural public secondary school. The table shows the percentage of responses for each frequency category (Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always) for various activities, such as practicing English sounds, using known words in different ways, and summarizing information. It also includes the mean scores (M) and standard deviations (SD) for each strategy, helping to identify which cognitive strategies are most commonly used and how consistent students are in applying them.

Table 3. Cognitive strategy used in rural public secondary school

Item	N %	R %	S %	O %	A %	M	SD
X2.1. I repeat new English words many times by speaking or writing them.	19,0	32,8	20,7	22,4	5,2	2,62	1,182
X2.2. I practice English sounds.	6,9	22,4	29,3	31,0	10,3	3,16	1,105
X2.3. I use the English words I know in various ways.	8,6	36,2	29,3	19,0	6,9	2,79	1,072
X2.4. I begin talks in English.	15,5	36,2	32,8	10,3	5,2	2,53	1,047
X2.5. I watch TV shows or movies in English.	15,5	37,9	22,4	22,4	1,7	2,57	1,061
X2.6. I read English for fun.	19,0	36,2	17,2	22,4	5,2	2,59	1,185
X2.7. I find words in my language that are like new English words.	17,2	27,6	32,8	13,8	8,6	2,69	1,173
X2.8. I break down an English word into parts I know to understand its meaning.	12,1	37,9	22,4	24,1	3,4	2,69	1,079
X2.9. I summarize information I hear or read in English.	10,3	31,0	29,3	25,9	3,4	2,81	1,051
MEAN TOTAL COGNITIVE STRATEGY						2,72	1,106

Note: N=Never; R=Rarely; S= Sometimes; O= Often; A=Always; M= Mean; SD=Standard Deviation

The data in the table 3 show that students tend to use cognitive strategies at a moderate level. The most commonly used strategy is practicing English sounds which indicate that students often focus on pronunciation as part of their learning. Additionally, strategies like

summarizing what they hear or read in English and using the words they already know in different ways are also frequently used. It is considered that students actively engage with English in varied ways to reinforce their learning.

However, some strategies, like starting conversations in English, watching English TV shows or movies, and reading English for fun are used less often by the students in rural public school secondary. This may indicate that students are not as inclined to engage with English outside of academic settings. With the standard deviation of 1.106, it suggests that there's some variation in how students apply these strategies, with some using them more regularly than others, depending on their personal preferences and learning styles.

Compensation Strategy

Table 4 presents the students' responses regarding their use of compensation strategies to overcome language gaps while learning English at rural public secondary school. It includes the percentage of responses for each frequency category (Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always) for strategies like guessing word meanings, using gestures, or substituting words with similar meanings. The table also provides the mean scores (M) and standard deviations (SD), giving insights into how often these strategies are applied and the consistency of their use among students.

Table 4. Compensation strategy used in rural public secondary school

Item	N %	R %	S %	O %	A %	M	SD
X3.1. I guess the meaning of unfamiliar words to understand them.	17,2	29,3	32,8	20,7	0,0	2,57	1,011
X3.2. I use gestures when I can't think of a word in English.	19,0	25,9	27,6	20,7	6,9	2,71	1,200
X3.3. I create new words if I don't know the correct ones in English.	20,7	29,3	32,8	10,3	6,9	2,53	1,143
X3.4. I try to predict what the other person will say next in English.	22,4	25,9	25,9	20,7	5,2	2,60	1,199
X3.5. If I can't remember an English word, I use a word or phrase with the same meaning.	15,5	32,8	27,6	15,5	8,6	2,69	1,173
MEAN TOTAL COMPENSATION STRATEGY						2,62	1,145

Note: N=Never; R=Rarely; S= Sometimes; O= Often; A=Always; M= Mean; SD=Standard Deviation

The data shows that students use compensation strategies moderately (M=2,62) which is the least strategy used by the students in rural public secondary school. The students chose this strategy ten to use gestures when they cannot think of the right word in English. This indicates that students often rely on nonverbal communication to overcome the language gap as alternative. When they struggle to recall or find the right English word, they use gestures to convey meaning and keep the conversations flowing. Other strategy, like making up new words when they do not know the correct ones is used less frequently. It means that students are less likely to use creative word formation when they face vocabulary gaps. Instead of inventing words, they may prefer other strategies, such as using gestures, synonym words, or switching to their native language. This suggests that they might feel less confident or uncertain about making up words, possibly due to concerns about accuracy or being misunderstood.

Metacognitive Strategy

Table 5 highlights the use of metacognitive strategies by students at rural public secondary school to enhance their English learning. The table displays the percentage of students' responses across five frequency categories for activities such as identifying mistakes to improve, creating study schedules, and finding opportunities to use English. It

also includes the mean scores and standard deviations, providing insights into how frequently these strategies are used and the variation in their application among students.

Table 5. Metacognitive Strategy used in rural public secondary school

Item	N %	R %	S %	O %	A %	M	SD
X4.1. I try to find many ways to use my English.	12,1	32,8	24,1	22,4	8,6	3,24	1,097
X4.2. I see my English mistakes and use them to improve.	3,4	25,9	27,6	29,3	13,8	3,26	1,250
X4.3. I try to learn how to improve my English.	12,1	13,8	27,6	29,3	17,2	2,86	1,067
X4.4. I make a schedule to have enough time to study English.	8,6	29,3	37,9	15,5	8,6	2,83	1,094
X4.5. I try to find chances to read more in English.	8,6	34,5	31,0	17,2	8,6	3,17	1,045
X4.6. I have specific goals to improve my English skills.	5,2	22,4	31,0	32,8	8,6	3,12	1,044
X4.7. I reflect on how I'm doing in learning English.	3,4	25,9	37,9	20,7	12,1	3,04	1,110
MEAN TOTAL METACOGNITIVE STRATEGY						3,07	1,101

Note: N=Never; R=Rarely; S= Sometimes; O= Often; A=Always; M= Mean; SD=Standard Deviation

The data shows that students use metacognitive strategies at a moderate level based on the average score. This strategy is the most commonly used by students in rural public secondary schools. The students tend to see the mistakes in using English and use them to improve (M=3,26). It means that the students are engaging in self-monitoring and self-evaluation, which are key metacognitive strategies. They recognize their English mistakes, reflect on them, and use that awareness to improve their language skills. This strategy helps students take control of their learning by identifying weaknesses and making conscious efforts to correct them.

Other strategies, like creating the schedule for learn English and putting new vocabulary in sentences to remember them are used less frequently but still important in students' overall approach to learning. It means that students do not rely heavily on structured planning or memory-enhancing techniques as part of their learning process. While these strategies can be effective for improving organization and retention, students may prefer other methods or find them less necessary in their approach to learning English. The standard deviation of 1.172 reveals some variation in how often students use these strategies, meaning that while some students actively plan and reflect on their learning, others may benefit from more guidance in these areas.

Affective Strategy

Table 6 presents the use of affective strategies by students at rural public secondary school in their English learning. The table shows the percentage of responses across five frequency categories (Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always) for actions such as rewarding themselves for success, recognizing feelings of nervousness, keeping a language diary, and sharing emotions about learning English. Additionally, the mean scores (M) and standard deviations (SD) provide insights into how often these strategies are employed and the variability in their usage among students.

Table 6. Affective strategy used in rural public secondary school

Item	N %	R %	S %	O %	A %	M	SD
X5.1. I reward myself when I do well in English.	8,6	25,9	36,2	24,1	5,2	2,91	1,031
X5.2. I realize when I feel tense or nervous while studying or using English.	10,3	22,4	19,0	41,4	6,9	3,12	1,156
X5.3. I write my feelings in a language diary.	22,4	25,9	25,9	17,2	8,6	2,64	1,252
X5.4. I share my feelings about learning English with someone.	13,8	29,3	37,9	12,1	6,9	2,69	1,079
MEAN TOTAL AFFECTIVE STRATEGY						2,84	1,130

Note: N=Never; R=Rarely; S= Sometimes; O= Often; A=Always; M= Mean; SD=Standard Deviation

The data suggests that students use affective strategies to a moderate extent, with an average score of 2.84. The most commonly used strategy is recognizing when they feel tense or nervous while studying or speaking English, with a mean score of 3.12. This indicates that many students are quite aware of their emotional state, which can impact their learning and performance. This awareness is important because it allows them to manage anxiety and develop strategies to cope with language-related stress.

Other strategies, like writing down their feelings in a language diary or sharing their feelings about learning English with someone, are used less often. This may indicate that students prefer to manage their feelings internally rather than expressing them through writing or discussion. The standard deviation highlights some variation in how students approach these emotional aspects of learning, meaning that while some students regularly manage their emotions and reward themselves, others may need more support in dealing with feelings of stress or frustration in their language learning journey.

Social Strategy

Table 7 illustrates the use of social strategies by students at rural public secondary school in learning English. It includes the percentage of responses across five frequency categories (Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always) for activities such as asking English speakers for help, practicing with classmates, and seeking corrections for mistakes. The table also provides the mean scores (M) and standard deviations (SD), offering insights into how often these strategies are employed and the consistency of their usage among students.

Table 7. Affective strategy used in rural public secondary school

Item	N %	R %	S %	O %	A %	M	SD
X6.1. I ask English speakers to fix my mistakes when I speak.	17,2	27,6	29,3	22,4	3,4	2,84	1,121
X6.2. I practice English with my classmates.	10,3	32,8	25,9	24,1	6,9	3,12	1,201
X6.3. X6.3. I ask English speakers for help.	6,9	27,6	29,3	19,0	17,2	2,98	0,964
X6.4. X6.4. I ask in English	5,2	25,9	39,7	24,1	5,2	2,91	1,100
MEAN TOTAL AFFECTIVE STRATEGY						2,96	1,097

Note: N=Never; R=Rarely; S= Sometimes; O= Often; A=Always; M= Mean; SD=Standard Deviation

The data suggests that students use social strategies in a moderate way, with an average score of 2.96. The most common approach is practicing English with classmates (mean score of 3.12). It means that students frequently engage in peer collaboration as a key strategy for learning English which indicates that they actively practice speaking, listening, and exchanging ideas with classmates to enhance their language skills. This approach highlights the importance of social interaction in language learning, as students benefit from mutual support, feedback, and increased exposure to English through communication with their peers. It was also followed by the activity that the students asking for help in English (mean score of 2.98) is also fairly common, showing that students are open to seeking support when they need it. Some students also ask English speakers to correct their mistakes (mean score of 2.84), which suggests that they value feedback as a way to improve their speaking skills.

Other strategies, such as putting new words into sentences to remember them (mean score of 2.67) and asking English speakers for helping (mean score of 2.98), are used less frequently. The standard deviation of 1.114 reflects the variation in how students use these strategies, meaning that some students are more proactive in seeking social interactions to practice English, while others may not rely as much on others for help or feedback.

Learning Strategies and the Most Frequently Strategy Used Employed by English Language Learning Students in rural public secondary school

The findings from this study showed that students applied all the strategies however in the level moderate-strategy users. This might be due to students' lack of awareness about the use of learning strategies, even though these strategies are highly beneficial for English language learning. As stated by Pasupathi and Gosh (2024), students' awareness of using learning strategies in rural areas was at a moderate level. It can be the reason the level of using English language learning strategies at rural public secondary school in Bengkulu, Indonesia. It can also be caused by a limited-resources environment, which makes students less motivated to learn English, whereas motivation has a significant influence on language learning (Akter et al, 2024; Anggela et al, 2024; Hariri et al, 2021).

The main findings also revealed that students mostly used metacognitive and social strategies. The students tend to have self-awareness in learning English which manage their learning, track their progress, and improve their language skills by interacting and working with others. This awareness is important because it allows them to manage anxiety and develop strategies to cope with language-related stress. In addition, they also need collaboration and communication with others which engage with others allows them to gain feedback, build confidence, and practice language in real-life contexts. These strategies are categorized as indirect strategy (Oxford, 1990). It possibly due to the students tends to use indirect strategies help regulate and support the learning process rather than direct strategies.

The indirect strategy was also found in another learning strategy study in rural area. The case study of indigenous Papuan student of Indonesia and female ESL learners of Vellore district mostly used metacognitive strategies because of the limitation-resource setting; she tried to manage on the learning process by focus on planning and monitoring the progress (Leba et al, 2021; Feleciya & Meenakshi, 2016; Gani et al, 2018). It also found in primary school ESL students in Sarawak, Malaysia, which is an effective strategy (Ahmad et al., 2023). This can be because the students in primary school and middle school still need affection for learning English as non-native English speaker students. Whether in different settings and different level of English proficiency, metacognitive strategies are used mostly successful students (Sartika et al, 2019). This shows that students are self-aware, which is a good start for rural students to become successful English learners. According to Alrashidi (2022), high-proficiency English learners use learning strategies effectively.

It is different to the study learning strategy used in another country which has rural area settings such as Malaysia and China. The strategy found in their studies was memory strategy which was categorized as direct strategy (William et al, 2023; Joachim & Shah, 2023; Feng 2023). Even though the setting of the school in the rural public secondary school is similar to the school setting in the previous study, which is in the rural area, the strategy used is different. It can be caused by the rural setting in different countries such as Malaysia and China can be different from the rural setting in Indonesia. They have different cultural factors, which also play a role, as the local language and customs dominate daily life, limiting students' exposure to English outside the classroom and also limitations in facilities and funding for language education, (Shikalepo, 2020; Cuong, 2021)

Another research on learning strategies in rural settings showed that students in these environments tend to use different strategies compared to those in urban areas. For example, studies by Wang et al. (2023) found that university students in Hong Kong mostly used cognitive strategy which is different strategy than rural students. The learning strategy studied by Sugiartha et al (2021) in the online classroom in the pandemic covid-19 situation found that the students only used four strategies in learning English, which are cognitive, compensation, metacognitive and social.

Given these challenges, students at rural public secondary school have developed creative ways to succeed in language learning. The focus on Affective and Metacognitive strategies helps students manage feelings of frustration and anxiety that often arise in language learning, especially in environments with limited exposure to the target language. This finding aligns with previous studies that emphasize the importance of emotional regulation and self-reflection in language acquisition. For students in rural areas, these strategies help them stay motivated and engaged, even when external resources and opportunities for practice are scarce.

Conclusion

This study explored the learning strategies used by English language learners at rural public secondary school in Bengkulu, Indonesia. Key findings revealed that students applied all learning strategies in English learning. However, students primarily rely on metacognitive and social strategies which enable them to take control of their learning process, monitor their progress, and enhance their language skills through interaction and collaboration with others. The study identified challenges such as limited access to resources like books and technology and geographic isolation, which restricts exposure to English outside the classroom. These obstacles align with previous research indicating that rural students often face resource limitations compared to urban peers. Despite these challenges, students demonstrated adaptability in their learning strategies. Teachers should focus on strengthening these strategies, particularly in rural settings. While this research provides valuable insights, it was limited to one school, so the findings may not be generalizable. Future studies could include multiple rural schools and explore the roles of teachers and the community in supporting language learning. In conclusion, while rural students show resilience in learning English, enhancing their cognitive and compensation strategies is essential for improving their educational experience in resource-limited environments.

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