CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Research

Effective learning strategies are widely recognized as essential tools that enable students to navigate the complexities of language acquisition, fostering both fluency and accuracy in their use of English. The role of language learning strategies (LLS) in second language acquisition has been widely acknowledged in applied linguistics and language education (Oxford, 1990; Cohen, 2011). These strategies, which include cognitive, metacognitive, social, and affective approaches, play a crucial role in facilitating learners' ability to acquire, process, and retain linguistic knowledge (Chamot, 2005). Research has shown that effective use of LLS can enhance learners' proficiency and overall academic achievement (Griffiths, 2013; Teng & Zhang, 2016).

In Indonesia, as in many other Southeast Asian countries, English proficiency among university students has become a significant concern for educators and policymakers. The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) has emerged as a standardized framework for assessing language competence, with C1 level representing advanced users who can effectively handle complex academic and professional communication tasks. Achieving advanced proficiency is a crucial milestone for university students, as it directly impacts their academic and professional success in global contexts. At the CEFR C1 level, students are expected to possess a high degree of fluency, accuracy, and independence in using English for both academic and communicative purposes.

Recent studies have shown patterns in English proficiency levels among Southeast Asian university students. Research by Waluyo (2019) revealed that most first-year undergraduate students remain at basic user levels (A1 and A2), highlighting a significant gap between expected and actual proficiency levels. This situation underscores the importance of understanding how successful learners, particularly those at the C1 level, achieve and maintain their advanced proficiency.

Language learning strategies play a crucial role in achieving higher levels of English proficiency. Studies by Mirhassani et al. (2007) and Çimenli & Çoban (2019) have demonstrated strong correlations between strategy use and language proficiency. Their findings indicate that higher-performing students consistently employ more sophisticated

learning strategies, including goal setting, planning, and self-evaluation techniques. However, research specifically examining the strategies used by C1-level students in Indonesian contexts remains limited.

The relationship between language learning strategies and academic achievement has been established in various contexts. Research by Agustin et al. (2021) in Indonesia found a positive correlation between strategy use and academic performance among English Department students. It is important for both teachers and students to know about students' achievement in learning English. According to Aremu and Sokan (2002) in MeenuDev (2016), the outcome of learning demonstrates the scholar's desire in learning and how they adjust to strive to become better learners, especially in academic performance in English. Academic achievement can also be measured through students' scores, which reflect their learning outcomes (Allen, 2005).

While extensive research has been conducted on language learning strategies across varying proficiency levels (Oxford, 1990; Cohen & Griffiths, 2015), there is a noticeable gap in understanding the unique strategies adopted by students at the C1 level—learners who are transitioning from intermediate proficiency to advanced fluency. This is especially true in non-English-speaking regions like North Minahasa, where contextual factors such as limited exposure to native speakers, access to resources, and instructional practices may significantly influence students' strategic approaches to mastering the language (Griffiths & Oxford, 2014; Kormos & Csizér, 2014).

Universitas Klabat offers English courses for students at the C1 CEFR level, with the primary aim of equipping them with advanced linguistic and communicative competencies required in both academic and professional contexts. Before entering the university's academic programs, all incoming students are required to take an English placement test administered in collaboration with Cambridge, ensuring that their proficiency level—including placement into the C1 band— is determined using internationally recognized, standardized, and reliable assessment criteria. At this level, students are expected to demonstrate a high degree of fluency, accuracy, and coherence in their English proficiency, enabling them to engage in complex discussions, produce well-structured written texts, and comprehend sophisticated academic materials (Council of Europe, 2020). However, despite their high language proficiency, students exhibit significant variations in academic achievement; while some students perform exceptionally well,

others struggle to meet course requirements despite being classified under the same CEFR proficiency band.

Several factors may contribute to these disparities. First, Preliminary interviews with students at Universitas Klabat revealed that many were unable to define the learning strategies they used when studying English clearly. students may lack of awareness or training in using appropriate language learning strategies (LLS) that could enhance their academic performance (Oxford, 2017). This lack of metacognitive awareness is a critical issue, as research has shown that learners who consciously select and regulate their learning strategies tend to achieve better academic outcomes (Wenden, 1991; Chamot, 2005). Second, there may be a mismatch between teaching approaches and students' preferred learning strategies, potentially affecting their engagement and performance (Griffiths, 2018). Third, there is limited institutional research on how students' strategy use correlates with their academic success at the C1 CEFR level, making it difficult to implement evidence-based interventions that support struggling students.

Given the critical role of effective learning strategies in language acquisition, it is essential to investigate their impact on academic achievement among C1-level learners. Identifying the most commonly employed strategies and understanding their influence on academic performance can inform pedagogical decisions, curriculum development, and learner training programs. Despite the increasing emphasis on learner autonomy and strategic competence in second language acquisition, there remains a gap in research regarding the relationship between LLS and academic achievement among C1-level students, particularly in non-English-speaking contexts such as North Minahasa. This study seeks to address this gap by examining the learning strategies employed by CEFR C1-level EFL university students at Universitas Klabat and exploring their correlation with academic performance. The findings will provide valuable insights into how educators can enhance instructional approaches to better support advanced EFL learners in achieving academic excellence while strengthening their language competency.

1.2 Scope of the Research

This study focuses on language learning strategies employed by CEFR C1 level of university students and their academic performance in English, and the respondents are CEFR C1 students from Universitas Klabat. The researcher used questionnaire by Oxford (1990) namely Strategy inventory for language learning (SILL). 5-point Likert Scale

to assess respondents' English language learning strategy, and the researcher utilized their English final score to assess students' performance in learning English.

1.3 Research Questions

By focusing on advanced learners, who represent a unique group with specific challenges and opportunities in language mastery, this study formulates the following research questions:

1 What are the profiles of learning strategies used by CEFR C1-level students?
2 What is the most dominant strategy used in English language learning by CEFR C1-level students?
3 How do language learning strategies correlate with English performance?

1.4 Objectives of the Research

This study seeks to investigate the correlation of learning strategies with English performance among CEFR C1-level students. Specifically, the research aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To analyze the profiles of learning strategies employed by CEFR C1-level students.
2. To disclose the most dominant learning strategy used by CEFR C1-level students.
3. To examine the correlation between language learning strategies and English performance among CEFR C1-level students.

1.5 Significance of the Research

This study contributes to the theoretical understanding of language learning strategies and their relationship with academic achievement, particularly among advanced English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. By focusing on CEFR C1-level students, the research addresses a gap in the literature, as this proficiency level remains under-researched, especially in the Indonesian context. The findings will enrich the existing body of knowledge on language learning strategies by providing insights into the profiles, dominance, and correlation of strategies used by highly proficient learners. Additionally, the study offers a framework for understanding how advanced learners employ strategies to achieve high levels of English proficiency, which can be compared

to and inform research in other EFL settings. This contributes to a more comprehensive and global understanding of language learning strategies at the highest proficiency levels.

The practical implications of this study are twofold. First, it provides valuable insights into the learning practices of highly proficient EFL students in North Minahasa, Indonesia, which can inform pedagogical approaches and assist educators in designing more effective language instruction programs tailored to the needs of advanced learners. By identifying the most dominant and effective learning strategies, educators can better support students in achieving higher levels of English proficiency. Second, the study examines the link between language learning strategies and academic achievement, offering practical guidance for students on how to optimize their learning processes. This is particularly critical for students' overall academic and professional success, as English proficiency is increasingly important in globalized contexts. The findings can also serve as a reference for curriculum developers and policymakers aiming to enhance English language education in Indonesia and similar EFL settings.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Previous Studies

Numerous studies have explored the relationship between students' English language learning strategies and their academic achievements, revealing significant insights into how these strategies influence performance. For instance, Al-Qahtani's research indicates that students who employ social learning strategies tend to achieve higher levels of proficiency in English. The study involved participants from various educational backgrounds and found a strong correlation between the use of these strategies and academic success in English language learning Al-Qahtani (2013). This finding is consistent with the work of Ermolaev, who also identified a positive relationship between learning strategies and academic performance among adolescents, suggesting that effective learning strategies are crucial for academic success across various disciplines (Ermolaev, 2021).

In a different context, Mulualem et al. examined the impact of prior English achievement on college academic performance, highlighting that students with a strong English background are more likely to exhibit higher motivation and effective learning strategies. Their study involved college students and demonstrated that those with better previous English performance set more attainable academic goals, which in turn positively influenced their current academic achievements (Mulualem et al., 2022). Similarly, Nabizadeh et al. focused on medical students and found that motivational learning strategies significantly impacted academic performance, emphasizing the need for educational interventions that enhance motivation and cognitive strategy use (Nabizadeh et al., 2019).

Furthermore, Hayati and Usman conducted a study utilizing the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) to assess the learning strategies of English department students. Their findings revealed that specific strategies, particularly metacognitive and cognitive strategies, were positively correlated with students' academic achievements in English (Hayati & Usman, 2021). This aligns with the conclusions drawn by Ghorbandordinejad and Ahmadabad, who found that autonomy in learning, mediated by anxiety levels, significantly influenced English achievement among students (Ghorbandordinejad & Ahmadabad, 2015).

While many studies have highlighted the positive impact of language learning strategies on academic performance, some research has found no significant relationship or even a negative correlation between the two. For instance, Wharton (2000) conducted a study on bilingual learners in Singapore and found that the use of language learning strategies did

not significantly predict academic achievement in English. The study suggested that other factors, such as motivation and educational context, might play a more critical role in determining academic success. Similarly, Mullins (1992) investigated the relationship between strategy use and language proficiency among Thai learners of English and found no significant correlation between the two. Mullins argued that the effectiveness of strategies might depend on individual learner differences and contextual factors, which could explain the lack of a clear relationship.

In another study, Vann and Abraham (1990) examined the language learning strategies of unsuccessful learners and found that some learners who employed a high number of strategies still performed poorly academically. The researchers suggested that the ineffective use of strategies or the application of inappropriate strategies could lead to negative outcomes. This finding challenges the assumption that more strategy use always leads to better performance.

Additionally, Riazi and Rahimi (2005) explored the relationship between strategy use and academic achievement among Iranian EFL learners and found that certain strategies, such as memorization, were negatively correlated with academic performance. They argued that over-reliance on less effective strategies could hinder language learning progress.

While some researchers highlighted the significant role of strategies in enhancing language proficiency and academic achievement, others have found no significant relationship or even negative outcomes associated with certain strategies. These conflicting findings underscore the importance of considering contextual factors, individual learner differences, and the specific strategies employed when examining their impact on academic performance.

Against this backdrop, the current study seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse by exploring the relationship between language learning strategies and academic achievement among students at the CEFR C1 level in North Minahasa, Indonesia. This focus is particularly significant given the limited research on advanced proficiency learners, especially in the Indonesian context.

2.2 Theoretical Background

The exploration of English language learning strategies (LLS) among students with high English proficiency scores reveals a complex correlation of factors influencing strategy selection and effectiveness. High proficiency learners often exhibit a diverse range of strategies that enhance their language acquisition processes. For instance, Manchanayaka emphasizes the significance of raising awareness among learners regarding the

appropriateness of various strategies for different contexts, suggesting that effective strategy use is not merely about selection but also about situational adaptability (Manchanayaka, 2019). This aligns with findings from Zhou and Intaraprasert, who note that enjoyment in learning English significantly influences the choice and frequency of strategy use, indicating that affective factors play a crucial role in strategy employment (Zhou & Intaraprasert, 2016).

Moreover, the relationship between LLS and language proficiency is nuanced. Balcı and Üğüten report a low correlation between strategy use and achievement, suggesting that other variables, such as learner motivation and task difficulty, may overshadow the impact of specific strategies (Balcı & Üğüten, 2018). This is echoed by Yustitiasari, who found no significant correlation between the five language learning strategies and English proficiency, contrasting with earlier studies that indicated a positive relationship (Yustitiasari, 2020). Such discrepancies highlight the need for further investigation into the contextual factors that may influence strategy effectiveness.

The type of strategies employed also varies among learners. Research by Dabaghi and Akvan indicates that English learners frequently utilize cognitive, metacognitive, and social strategies, with metacognitive strategies being particularly prevalent among successful students (Dabaghi & Akvan, 2014). This is supported by findings from Javid et al., who assert that proficient learners tend to employ a broader array of strategies, which not only facilitates language acquisition but also fosters independence in learning (Javid et al., 2012). Furthermore, Rustam et al. emphasize the importance of metacognitive strategies, suggesting that these strategies are crucial for enhancing proficiency levels among students (Rustam et al., 2016).

In addition to cognitive and metacognitive strategies, social strategies also play a significant role in language learning. Kaur and Embi highlight that female students tend to be more proactive in utilizing language learning strategies, which may contribute to their higher achievement levels compared to male students (Kaur & Embi, 2011). This gender difference in strategy use underscores the importance of considering demographic factors when examining language learning strategies.

2.2.1 Six learning strategies Oxford

Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) is one of the most widely used frameworks for classifying and measuring language learning strategies. The SILL is a self-report questionnaire designed to assess the frequency with which learners use various strategies in their language learning process. Oxford's taxonomy categorizes strategies into six main groups, each serving a distinct purpose in the learning process:

2.2.1.1 Metacognitive Strategies

Metacognitive strategies involve self-regulation and self-awareness in the learning process. They enable learners to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning activities. Research indicates that proficient language learners often employ metacognitive strategies to enhance their language acquisition. For instance, studies have shown that learners who actively engage in planning their learning processes tend to achieve higher proficiency levels (Bremner, 1999; Balcı, 2017). Furthermore, the use of metacognitive strategies is linked to improved outcomes in language learning, as they foster greater autonomy and self-directed learning (Saefurrohman, 2021; Jabbari & Golkar, 2014).

Metacognitive strategies represent higher-order executive processes that enable learners to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning activities. These strategies are central to successful language learning because they involve awareness and control over one's own cognitive processes. According to Oxford (1990), metacognitive strategies are those that "allow learners to coordinate the learning process," helping them to become self-directed rather than teacher-dependent. By engaging in metacognitive behaviors, learners consciously decide what to learn, how to learn it, and how to assess their own progress. This active regulation of learning not only enhances efficiency but also fosters greater autonomy, a trait closely linked with academic success at advanced proficiency levels.

The concept of metacognition was first introduced by Flavell (1979), who defined it as "knowledge and regulation of one's own cognitive processes." This includes both *metacognitive knowledge*—understanding how one learns—and *metacognitive control*—the ability to apply that understanding to regulate learning. In the context of language acquisition, metacognitive strategies involve planning study schedules, setting goals, selecting appropriate methods, monitoring comprehension during learning activities, and evaluating outcomes after completion (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). These strategies thus operate across three key phases of the learning cycle: planning, monitoring, and evaluating (Wenden, 1998).

1. Planning involves determining learning objectives and identifying suitable resources or strategies. For instance, a student might set a goal to improve listening comprehension and choose to practice with English podcasts daily.
2. Monitorin**g** refers to ongoing awareness of performance—checking whether comprehension is occurring and whether the chosen strategy is effective.
3. Evaluating entails reflecting on what has been learned and how effectively it was achieved, leading to strategy adjustments if necessary.

Through these cycles, metacognitive strategies act as the *manager* of all other learning strategies, orchestrating cognitive, memory, affective, and social processes toward effective goal attainment.

Research consistently highlights the vital role of metacognitive strategies in academic and language learning success. Vandergrift (2005) emphasizes that metacognitive awareness enables learners to allocate attention efficiently and to identify comprehension breakdowns early. Similarly, Anderson (2002) argues that metacognition is what distinguishes skilled learners from less successful ones; proficient learners continually monitor their understanding and adapt their strategies accordingly. Studies by Zhang and Goh (2006) and Griffiths (2008) also support the claim that students who engage in metacognitive reflection demonstrate stronger performance in both receptive and productive language skills. Metacognition thus serves as both a regulatory and motivational mechanism, encouraging learners to take responsibility for their progress and to persist when faced with challenges.

From a pedagogical perspective, metacognitive strategies are closely aligned with the principles of self-regulated learning (SRL) (Zimmerman, 2000). In SRL theory, learners are viewed as proactive agents who plan, observe, and evaluate their actions to optimize achievement. This self-regulation process enhances motivation and fosters deeper cognitive engagement, which in turn leads to better learning outcomes. In advanced EFL contexts, such as with CEFR C1 learners, metacognitive strategies become increasingly important because learners must handle complex input and manage independent study. They are expected not only to master the language but also to refine their learning processes—a task that requires continuous self-assessment and strategy adjustment.

Empirical studies consistently show that metacognitive strategies correlate positively with academic achievement. For instance, Purpura (1997) found that metacognitive strategy use was a strong predictor of test performance, even after controlling for cognitive strategies. Similarly, Rahimi and Katal (2012) demonstrated that learners who actively planned and evaluated their learning achieved significantly higher proficiency scores. These findings are echoed in the results of the present study, where metacognitive strategies had both the highest mean score (M = 3.64) and a significant positive correlation with academic performance (r = .256, p = .020). This suggests that students who frequently plan, monitor, and evaluate their English learning tend to perform better academically. Their success likely stems from effective time management, goal-setting, and continuous self-assessment—core components of metacognitive behavior.

The importance of metacognitive strategies also lies in their integrative function. As Oxford (2011) emphasizes, metacognitive strategies “orchestrate the use of other strategies,”

guiding learners in selecting and combining techniques based on task demands. In this sense, metacognitive regulation is not merely one strategy type among others but the *executive system* that ensures all other strategies function efficiently. Advanced learners, such as those in this study, may particularly benefit from such orchestration, as they already possess sufficient linguistic competence but must manage increasingly complex learning tasks. However, while the correlation was statistically significant, its strength remained moderate—indicating that metacognition interacts with other variables such as motivation, anxiety, or prior knowledge. This suggests that even though metacognitive awareness is a strong advantage, it is most effective when supported by other factors within the learning environment.

In summary, metacognitive strategies represent the cornerstone of autonomous and effective language learning. They empower students to take control of their learning through systematic planning, constant monitoring, and reflective evaluation. Their strong link with academic performance confirms that success in language learning depends not only on cognitive processing but also on the ability to regulate and manage one's learning process. As learners progress to advanced proficiency levels, metacognitive strategies become indispensable for maintaining growth, fostering self-directedness, and sustaining motivation. Hence, the findings of this study reaffirm Oxford's (2011) assertion that metacognitive regulation is "the heart of successful language learning," guiding learners toward both academic excellence and lifelong learning competence.

2..2.1.2 Affective Strategies

Affective strategies pertain to managing emotions and attitudes towards language learning. These strategies help learners cope with anxiety and maintain motivation. Research has demonstrated that positive attitudes and motivation significantly correlate with the effective use of affective strategies (Ardayati & Ramasari, 2021; karina, 2023). For example, learners who utilize strategies to manage their emotions, such as positive self-talk or relaxation techniques, report better engagement and success in language learning (Sari et al., 2019; Khosravi, 2012). The importance of affective strategies is further underscored by their role in creating a conducive learning environment that fosters emotional well-being (Rachmawati, 2016; Amjusfa et al., 2021).

Affective strategies are the techniques learners use to manage their emotions, motivation, and attitudes throughout the language learning process. Oxford (1990) defines affective strategies as those "used to regulate emotions, motivation, and attitudes," emphasizing their role in maintaining an optimal emotional climate for learning. Unlike cognitive or metacognitive strategies, which involve mental processing and self-regulation of learning activities, affective strategies deal with the emotional conditions that enable learning

to take place effectively. They help learners lower anxiety, build self-confidence, and sustain motivation—factors that are often as crucial to language success as intellectual ability.

The theoretical foundation of affective strategies can be traced to Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, which posits that emotional variables such as anxiety, motivation, and self-confidence act as filters that either facilitate or hinder language acquisition. When learners are relaxed, confident, and motivated, the affective filter is low, allowing language input to be fully processed by the brain. Conversely, when learners are anxious, fearful of mistakes, or unmotivated, the affective filter is high, blocking the intake of linguistic input. Therefore, affective strategies—such as self-encouragement, relaxation, and positive self-talk—serve to lower the affective filter and create favorable emotional conditions for learning.

Oxford (1990) classifies affective strategies into three subgroups: (1) Lowering anxiety, which includes activities like deep breathing, meditation, or listening to music before study; (2) Encouraging oneself, such as giving self-rewards, setting positive expectations, or affirming one's ability to succeed; and (3) Taking emotional temperature, which involves becoming aware of one's emotional state, identifying negative feelings, and addressing them constructively. These strategies are deeply personal and reflect the learner's emotional intelligence, as they require awareness of and control over one's affective responses to learning challenges.

The importance of emotions in language learning has been widely acknowledged by second language acquisition researchers. Arnold and Brown (1999) stress that emotional factors can either enhance or obstruct learning, arguing that successful language acquisition depends not only on cognitive ability but also on emotional stability and motivation. Similarly, Dörnyei (2001) identifies motivation as a primary driving force that determines the extent of effort learners invest in language learning. Motivated learners are more likely to engage actively, persist through difficulties, and adopt effective strategies. In this sense, affective strategies are not merely emotional reactions but intentional efforts to maintain the psychological balance necessary for sustained engagement and perseverance.

Empirical studies have consistently shown that affective factors are associated with learning persistence and overall satisfaction, even if their direct link to academic performance is less evident. For example, MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) found that foreign language anxiety negatively correlates with language achievement, while positive emotions such as enjoyment and confidence contribute to more productive learning behaviors. Tran (2012) also observed that students who consciously used affective strategies reported higher motivation and lower anxiety, leading to better participation and attitude toward English learning. However, in quantitative terms, affective strategies often show weaker correlations with test

scores, because their effects are indirect—they influence how learners engage with language tasks rather than the measurable outcome itself.

This pattern is reflected in the present study, where affective strategies demonstrated a positive but non-significant correlation with academic performance (r = .130, p = .245*). Although students moderately used affective strategies, their use did not directly predict higher exam scores. This may be due to the advanced proficiency level of the participants (C1), who may already possess confidence and low anxiety in using English. For such learners, affective strategies may have become internalized as part of their general learning attitude rather than explicit, conscious actions. Another explanation may lie in the nature of academic assessments, which primarily measure linguistic competence rather than emotional regulation. Thus, while affective strategies create conditions conducive to learning, their impact may be more visible in long-term engagement and motivation than in immediate test performance.

Nevertheless, the role of affective strategies remains essential in sustaining learners' motivation and psychological resilience. In EFL contexts such as Indonesia, where opportunities for authentic communication in English are limited, maintaining motivation and reducing language anxiety are crucial for continued learning success. Teachers and learners alike benefit from recognizing the importance of emotional well-being as part of language education. As Oxford (2011) points out, "language learning involves the whole person—mind, heart, and body," and neglecting the affective dimension can hinder overall progress. Learners who consciously manage their emotions are better equipped to face linguistic challenges with confidence and persistence.

In conclusion, affective strategies serve as the emotional backbone of successful language learning. While they may not show a strong direct correlation with academic performance, they significantly influence the learner's willingness to engage, confidence to communicate, and perseverance in overcoming difficulties. These strategies help sustain intrinsic motivation and emotional balance, which are vital for continuous learning and improvement. Ultimately, affective strategies remind educators and learners that mastering a language is not only a cognitive or metacognitive endeavor but also a profoundly emotional journey.

2.2.1.3 Social Strategies

Social strategies involve interaction with others to facilitate language learning. These strategies include seeking help from peers or teachers and engaging in collaborative learning. Studies indicate that learners who actively participate in social interactions tend to develop

better communicative competence (Yayla et al., 2016; Yunus et al., 2022). The use of social strategies not only enhances language skills but also builds a supportive learning community, which is crucial for language acquisition (Wharton, 2000; Kolber, 2023). Additionally, social strategies have been linked to increased motivation and a sense of belonging among language learners (Kiram et al., 2015; Park, 1997).

Social strategies refer to the actions learners take to interact with others in order to enhance their language learning. According to Oxford (1990), social strategies are “activities learners engage in to learn with and from other people.” These strategies emphasize the social nature of language learning, recognizing that communication is not only the goal of language study but also one of its most effective tools. By engaging in interaction, asking questions, seeking clarification, and cooperating with peers or teachers, learners can increase both their linguistic input and their confidence in using the language.

The theoretical foundations of social strategies stem from Vygotsky’s (1978) Sociocultural Theory, which posits that learning is a socially mediated process occurring through interaction and collaboration within a community. Language acquisition is not merely an individual cognitive process but also a shared social activity in which learners co-construct meaning through communication. Within this framework, learners develop their linguistic and cognitive skills through guided participation in social contexts—what Vygotsky called the *Zone of Proximal Development* (ZPD). Hence, when learners actively engage in conversations, group discussions, or peer feedback, they not only practice language but also internalize new forms and functions of expression through social exchange.

Oxford (1990) identifies three main subtypes of social strategies: (1) Asking questions, which involves requesting clarification, verification, or correction to better understand the language; (2) Cooperating with others, including working with classmates, teachers, or native speakers to solve problems or complete tasks; and (3) Empathizing with others, which requires understanding others’ feelings, cultural perspectives, and communicative intentions. These strategies enhance not only linguistic competence but also intercultural awareness and emotional intelligence—essential components for communicative success.

Researchers have long acknowledged the value of interaction in second language acquisition. Long’s (1983) Interaction Hypothesis asserts that conversational interaction facilitates language learning by providing opportunities for negotiation of meaning, which helps learners notice gaps in their comprehension and production. Swain’s (1985) Output Hypothesis complements this view by suggesting that interaction encourages learners to produce language and thus test their hypotheses about linguistic forms. Together, these

theories explain why learners who frequently employ social strategies often demonstrate greater fluency, confidence, and communicative competence.

Social strategies also play an important motivational and affective role. Interaction fosters a sense of belonging and shared purpose, which can enhance motivation and reduce anxiety (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003). When learners work collaboratively, they benefit not only from linguistic feedback but also from emotional support, encouragement, and modeling from peers. This social reinforcement strengthens self-efficacy and promotes sustained engagement. Particularly in contexts where English is a foreign language, such as Indonesia, social strategies help overcome the limited availability of authentic communication opportunities by creating meaningful practice within the classroom or online communities.

Empirical studies support the positive influence of social interaction on learning outcomes. Griffiths (2003) found that higher-proficiency learners reported more frequent use of social strategies, particularly in seeking opportunities to communicate with others in English. Similarly, Oxford (2011) noted that social strategies facilitate deeper learning by connecting cognitive and affective processes through interaction. Seker (2016) also observed that cooperative learning environments encourage learners to use language more spontaneously and creatively, resulting in improved communication skills and greater learner autonomy.

In the present study, the results indicated that social strategies showed a positive but statistically non-significant correlation with academic performance (r = .172, p = .122*). This finding suggests that while students moderately used social strategies, their use did not directly translate into higher test scores. This may be because academic assessments primarily measure individual performance, whereas social strategies function best in interactive and communicative settings. For C1-level learners, who already possess advanced language skills, the benefits of social interaction may manifest more in fluency, pragmatic competence, and confidence than in measurable academic outcomes. Furthermore, the cultural context of North Minahasa may limit opportunities for English communication outside the classroom, reducing the observable impact of social strategies on exam results.

Nonetheless, the presence of moderate use indicates that students recognize the value of collaboration and interaction in learning English. Social strategies are essential in promoting communicative competence, cultural empathy, and learner engagement—skills that extend beyond academic testing. Teachers can encourage greater use of these strategies by incorporating more interactive activities such as group projects, peer reviews, and role plays, which simulate authentic communication contexts. As Oxford (2017) emphasizes, “language learning thrives when it is social, contextualized, and collaborative.”

In conclusion, social strategies represent the interpersonal dimension of language learning. They connect the learner to others, transforming language acquisition from a solitary pursuit into a shared communicative experience. While their direct statistical relationship with academic performance may be limited, their indirect contributions to confidence, fluency, and cross-cultural understanding are invaluable. In EFL settings, fostering these strategies can lead to more engaged, communicative, and autonomous learners who are prepared not only to pass exams but also to use English effectively in real-world interactions.

2.2.1.4 Memory Strategies

Memory strategies are techniques that aid in the retention and recall of information. These strategies include the use of mnemonic devices, visualization, and association techniques. Research has shown that effective use of memory strategies can significantly enhance vocabulary acquisition and retention (Ahmadishokouh & Derikvand, 2015; Sun et al., 2014). For instance, learners who employ mnemonic devices report higher levels of recall and understanding of new vocabulary (Purwanto, 2022; Tee et al., 2021). The role of memory strategies is particularly vital in the early stages of language learning, where foundational vocabulary is crucial for further language development (Anthony & Ganesen, 2012; Paniagua et al., 2021).

Memory strategies constitute one of the foundational categories in Oxford's (1990) taxonomy of language learning strategies. They refer to the specific actions and cognitive techniques learners employ to store and retrieve new linguistic information efficiently. These strategies help learners encode language material—such as vocabulary, grammar rules, and expressions—into long-term memory through association, imagery, and structured review. Oxford (1990) describes memory strategies as "mental linkages that enable learners to enter new information into memory and retrieve it when needed." In essence, they act as mental scaffolding that supports the retention and recall of linguistic input.

From a cognitive psychological perspective, memory strategies operate through semantic and episodic encoding, where new information is connected to preexisting cognitive structures (Craik & Lockhart, 1972). Learners who use these strategies attempt to make sense of language rather than memorizing it mechanically. For example, a learner might connect the new English word *"generous"* with a personal memory of a kind friend, thereby deepening the associative link. Oxford (1990) divides memory strategies into several subcategories, such as *creating mental linkages* (grouping, associating, elaborating), *applying images and sounds* (using imagery, rhymes, and sounds), *reviewing well* (structured repetition), and *employing action* (using physical movement or dramatization). Each sub-strategy supports the mental organization of information, facilitating the transition of linguistic input from short-term to long-term memory.

According to O'Malley and Chamot (1990), the success of memory strategies lies in their ability to activate *rehearsal* and *elaboration* processes—two mechanisms crucial for retaining language input. Rehearsal involves repeated exposure to or practice of new material, while elaboration requires integrating the material into existing knowledge structures. Together, these processes enhance the depth of processing, making memory retrieval more automatic and stable. Cohen (1998) adds that memory strategies are particularly important for vocabulary development because they promote personal involvement and meaningful learning, which are key to long-term retention.

However, scholars also emphasize that memory strategies have limitations, especially for advanced learners. While beginners rely heavily on rote memorization and associative learning, proficient learners tend to shift toward more analytical and self-regulated strategies (Griffiths, 2008). For example, a C1-level learner may no longer need to use mnemonics or grouping techniques frequently because much of the vocabulary and grammar knowledge has become automatized through repeated communicative use. This theoretical observation corresponds with the results of the present study, which found a positive but non-significant correlation between memory strategies and academic performance. Although students continued to employ memory-based techniques moderately, these strategies did not significantly predict higher academic scores. This implies that at advanced proficiency levels, the *quality* and *context* of language use may outweigh the mere frequency of memorization techniques.

Another possible explanation for this weaker relationship lies in the nature of academic performance measurement. Standardized or formal assessments typically evaluate comprehension, analytical reasoning, and production skills rather than memorization alone. Memory strategies, by contrast, are more beneficial for building lexical foundations than for performing high-level cognitive tasks. As Oxford (2011) notes, memory strategies are most effective when integrated with other categories—particularly cognitive and metacognitive strategies—forming a synergy between remembering, processing, and regulating learning. Thus, their isolated use may contribute less directly to test performance but still play a supportive role in overall language competence.

Despite these limitations, memory strategies remain a vital component of language learning. They help learners build a linguistic repertoire that can later be activated through higher-order strategies. In contexts like Indonesia, where English exposure is often limited to classroom instruction, memory techniques such as association, visualization, and verbal repetition are essential for vocabulary expansion and maintenance. Moreover, the continued moderate use of these strategies among C1-level learners, as found in this study, suggests

that even advanced students occasionally return to foundational learning techniques when faced with unfamiliar language content.

In essence, memory strategies represent the cognitive foundation of language acquisition. They provide learners with structured ways to store and recall information, forming the basis upon which more complex strategies operate. While their direct influence on academic performance may diminish as learners advance, their integrative function in supporting other strategic behaviors remains significant. Effective language learners, therefore, do not abandon memory strategies but use them flexibly, adapting them to complement cognitive and metacognitive processes that promote deeper understanding and active language use.

2.2.1.5 Cognitive Strategies

Cognitive strategies involve direct manipulation of the language material. These strategies include summarizing, note-taking, and practicing language skills through various exercises. Studies highlight that cognitive strategies are essential for developing language proficiency, as they engage learners in active processing of the language (Saeb & Zamani, 2013; Hapsari, 2019). For example, learners who frequently use cognitive strategies demonstrate better performance in language assessments, as these strategies facilitate deeper understanding and application of language concepts (Saefurrohman, 2021; Sari et al., 2019). The effectiveness of cognitive strategies is further supported by their ability to enhance critical thinking and problem-solving skills in language learning contexts (Balcı, 2017; Ardayati & Ramasari, 2021).

Cognitive strategies are at the core of language learning because they involve the direct manipulation and transformation of linguistic material. Oxford (1990) defines cognitive strategies as “those used for understanding and producing the language,” emphasizing that they enable learners to process information more deeply through reasoning, practice, and analysis. Unlike memory strategies that focus primarily on storing information, cognitive strategies engage learners in *using* language, thereby bridging comprehension and production. They include actions such as repetition, summarizing, analyzing, translating, taking notes, and applying rules to new contexts. These strategies activate the mental processes responsible for internalizing linguistic input, leading to greater fluency and accuracy in communication.

From a theoretical standpoint, cognitive strategies are closely linked to Anderson’s (1985) information processing model, which posits that learning occurs through three stages: cognitive, associative, and autonomous. During the cognitive stage, learners consciously

process new information through understanding and rehearsal. In the associative stage, the performance becomes more fluent as errors are reduced, while in the autonomous stage, knowledge becomes automatic. Cognitive strategies operate most prominently in the first two stages, where active engagement—such as analyzing grammar or practicing pronunciation—converts declarative knowledge ("knowing that") into procedural knowledge ("knowing how"). O'Malley and Chamot (1990) also associate cognitive strategies with "active manipulation" of input, such as inferencing, deducing, or summarizing information to construct meaning. This hands-on mental involvement helps learners develop the ability to apply learned concepts flexibly and creatively.

Several empirical studies underscore the significance of cognitive strategies in language success. Naiman et al. (1996) identified cognitive strategies as the most frequently used by good language learners, particularly those who consciously analyze and practice linguistic patterns. Similarly, Griffiths (2003) found that successful EFL learners reported high use of strategies such as practicing new structures, monitoring speech, and drawing inferences from context. These behaviors not only enhance accuracy and fluency but also strengthen learners' ability to integrate new knowledge with prior linguistic experience. Chamot (2004) further argues that cognitive strategies form the "working core" of learning, serving as the foundation upon which metacognitive regulation is built. Without active cognitive engagement, metacognitive planning and evaluation remain superficial.

In practical terms, cognitive strategies can manifest in various forms. Learners may engage in *repetition* to reinforce patterns, *summarization* to retain key ideas, *translation* to connect L1 and L2 structures, or *analysis* to identify grammatical rules. Advanced EFL learners at the C1 level often employ higher-order cognitive strategies, such as inferencing meaning from complex texts, applying rules flexibly in communication, and critically evaluating the use of language in authentic contexts. These behaviors align with what Oxford (2011) calls "strategic competence," where learners integrate knowledge, thought, and practice to use language effectively across different situations.

The relationship between cognitive strategy use and academic performance has been widely acknowledged. Cognitive engagement is strongly correlated with task achievement and proficiency gains because it directly influences how learners comprehend and produce language (Griffiths, 2008; Chamot, 2004). In the current study, the positive and statistically significant correlation between cognitive strategy use and English test performance ($r = .268$, $p = .015$) supports this theoretical claim. Students who reported higher use of cognitive strategies tended to achieve better academic results, likely because these strategies involve active processing and problem-solving—skills directly applicable to test tasks. This finding

resonates with O'Malley and Chamot's (1990) argument that effective language learners "manipulate and transform" linguistic information rather than memorizing it passively.

However, it is also important to consider that the strength of the correlation, while significant, was relatively modest. This suggests that although cognitive strategies are important contributors to performance, they work best when complemented by metacognitive regulation. As Rubin (2001) notes, "strategies do not function in isolation; rather, their effectiveness depends on the learner's ability to select and coordinate them appropriately." In other words, the success of cognitive strategies depends on the learner's capacity to plan, monitor, and evaluate their use—a process governed by metacognitive control. This interconnectedness between strategy types may explain why metacognitive strategies emerged as the most dominant in the study, even though cognitive strategies maintained a strong role in determining academic success.

In essence, cognitive strategies are central to language learning because they facilitate the transformation of linguistic input into usable knowledge. They enable learners to engage meaningfully with language materials through reasoning, analysis, and practice, ultimately fostering deeper comprehension and improved production. The evidence from this study reinforces the idea that active mental engagement leads to better academic outcomes. Nevertheless, cognitive strategies are most effective when integrated within a broader self-regulatory framework, where learners consciously plan, monitor, and reflect on their learning process. Thus, the correlation between cognitive and metacognitive strategies represents a dynamic mechanism that supports sustained language proficiency and academic achievement.

2.2.1.6 Compensatory Strategies

Compensatory strategies are employed to overcome gaps in knowledge or skills. These strategies include using synonyms, gestures, or circumlocution when learners encounter difficulties in communication. Research indicates that the use of compensatory strategies is crucial for maintaining communication and fluency, especially in real-life language use situations (Yayla et al., 2016; Sari et al., 2019). Learners who effectively utilize these strategies are often more confident in their speaking abilities, which contributes to overall language proficiency (Ardayati & Ramasari, 2021; Bremner, 1999). The ability to compensate for language deficiencies not only aids in communication but also encourages learners to take risks and engage more fully in the language learning process (Wharton, 2000; Rachmawati, 2016).

Compensation strategies are techniques learners employ to overcome gaps in their linguistic knowledge and to maintain communication despite limited vocabulary, grammar, or comprehension. Oxford (1990) defines these strategies as “behaviors used to compensate for missing knowledge in the language,” emphasizing their essential role in sustaining communication flow when linguistic resources are insufficient. In practical terms, these strategies enable learners to continue using the target language even when they cannot recall or do not know specific words or structures. Common examples include guessing meaning from context, using synonyms, paraphrasing, employing gestures, or applying circumlocution. Through these compensatory behaviors, learners exhibit communicative flexibility and resilience, which are crucial components of communicative competence.

Theoretically, compensation strategies are rooted in Canale and Swain’s (1980) model of *communicative competence*, which identifies strategic competence as the ability to cope with breakdowns in communication. According to this framework, language users draw upon strategic resources to repair, reformulate, or replace missing linguistic elements, thereby sustaining interaction and conveying intended meaning. These strategies are also closely related to Faerch and Kasper’s (1983) concept of *communication strategies*, which involve both avoidance (e.g., steering away from complex language) and achievement behaviors (e.g., improvising or coining new words). Compensation strategies belong to the achievement category, as they reflect learners’ active attempts to make communication successful rather than abandoning it.

In language learning contexts, compensation strategies serve several important functions. First, they foster *risk-taking* in communication, encouraging learners to use English even when their competence is incomplete. Second, they promote *language discovery*, as guessing meaning from context often leads to incidental vocabulary acquisition. Third, they cultivate *confidence and fluency*, as learners realize they can maintain interaction without perfect accuracy. Oxford (1990) groups compensation strategies into two main types: (1) Compensating for missing knowledge in speaking and writing, such as circumlocution, code-switching, or using gestures; and (2) Compensating for missing knowledge in listening and reading, such as inferring meaning or predicting content based on linguistic and contextual clues. Both types play an important role in enabling learners to function effectively in real communicative settings.

Empirical evidence supports the importance of compensation strategies in developing communicative ability. For example, Nakatani (2006) found that learners who frequently employed oral communication strategies, including compensation techniques, achieved higher fluency and confidence in speech. Similarly, Dörnyei and Scott (1997) argued that

compensation strategies form an essential part of strategic competence, helping learners manage both comprehension and production challenges in real time. However, while such strategies enhance communicative success, they do not always translate directly into improved academic performance, especially in test-oriented environments. Academic assessments often emphasize grammatical accuracy, vocabulary range, and comprehension rather than adaptive communication. As a result, compensation strategies may appear less influential in formal test outcomes even though they are crucial for everyday language use.

This theoretical perspective aligns with the findings of the current study, where compensation strategies showed a positive but non-significant correlation with academic performance (r = .130, p = .244*). Students moderately used these strategies, reflecting their adaptive nature as advanced learners, but this use did not strongly predict higher test scores. One possible reason is that the participants, being at the C1 proficiency level, already possess sufficient linguistic competence and therefore rely less on compensatory tactics. As Ellis (2008) notes, advanced learners tend to internalize language systems more deeply, reducing the need to guess or approximate meaning. Moreover, compensation strategies are situationally driven—they are more useful in spontaneous communication than in structured academic testing, where learners have time to plan responses and rely on explicit knowledge.

Nevertheless, the value of compensation strategies in language learning should not be underestimated. They encourage learners to remain communicatively active and to develop strategic flexibility, both of which contribute to long-term language competence. Rubin (2001) asserts that successful learners are those who can use strategies adaptively to meet diverse communicative demands. In the Indonesian EFL context, where authentic exposure to English is relatively limited, the ability to compensate for knowledge gaps can sustain motivation and promote independent learning. Even when these strategies do not directly improve academic scores, they foster a more confident, communicative, and self-reliant learner—qualities essential for real-world language use.

In brief, compensation strategies represent learners' adaptive responses to linguistic limitations. They embody strategic competence, allowing communication to continue despite gaps in knowledge. Although their statistical relationship with academic performance may be weak or non-significant, their pedagogical and communicative importance is undeniable. These strategies contribute to learners' confidence, fluency, and resilience, particularly in authentic communication. Thus, while they may not strongly predict formal test success, they remain vital in promoting the broader goal of communicative effectiveness and lifelong language learning.

2.2.2 Academic Performance in English

Academic performance refers to the level of achievement students attain in their educational activities, often assessed through measurable indicators such as grades, test results, and overall academic standing. Chamorro-Premuzic and Furnham (2005) define academic performance as "the outcome of education—the extent to which a student, teacher, or institution has achieved their educational goals." In the context of language learning, academic performance reflects a learner's proficiency in using the target language effectively across skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing, as well as their ability to apply linguistic knowledge in academic settings. Thus, in this study, academic performance represents the measurable result of students' English proficiency as demonstrated in their final test scores.

The theoretical foundation for understanding academic performance is grounded in educational psychology and cognitive theory, which emphasize that achievement results from the interaction of cognitive abilities, learning strategies, motivation, and environmental factors. Bloom's Taxonomy (1956) highlights learning as a hierarchical process encompassing knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Students who employ higher-order thinking skills tend to perform better academically because they are able to apply learned information to new contexts. Similarly, Bandura's (1997) Social Cognitive Theory underscores the role of self-efficacy—the belief in one's ability to succeed—as a critical determinant of academic achievement. Learners with strong self-efficacy persist longer, take greater initiative, and use more effective strategies, which ultimately improve their performance.

In second language acquisition (SLA), academic performance is often conceptualized as *language achievement* or *language proficiency*, measured through tests or assessments that evaluate learners' communicative competence. Bachman (1990) proposed that language ability encompasses both organizational competence (grammar, vocabulary, and cohesion) and pragmatic competence (functional and sociolinguistic use). Therefore, academic performance in EFL contexts should be viewed not merely as grades but as an indicator of overall language mastery and the ability to use English appropriately in academic and real-world settings. In this study, the students' academic performance was operationalized through their final English examination scores, consistent with the Universitas Klabat grading system, which classifies achievement into categories ranging from *Very Low* to *Excellent*.

A variety of factors influence academic performance in language learning. Cognitive factors such as working memory, attention, and processing speed affect how well students understand and retain information (Ellis, 2008). Affective factors, including motivation, anxiety, and attitude, also play a significant role (Gardner, 1985). Environmental and instructional factors—such as teacher quality, classroom interaction, and access to learning resources—

can either facilitate or impede performance. Dörnyei (2005) emphasizes that academic success in language learning is a dynamic interaction of these internal and external influences, which shape how learners approach, process, and internalize linguistic input.

In connection with learning strategies, a strong body of research indicates that students who consciously and effectively use learning strategies tend to perform better academically. Oxford (1990) and O'Malley and Chamot (1990) both found that strategic learners—those who plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning—achieve higher levels of proficiency and test performance. Strategic learners not only memorize or practice language but also reflect on their learning processes, identify weaknesses, and adapt their techniques accordingly. Griffiths (2008) further observed that higher-achieving students use a wider range of strategies more frequently and appropriately than lower-achieving ones. This suggests that learning strategies mediate between motivation and achievement: they are the tools that transform effort into measurable academic outcomes.

At the CEFR C1 level, students are described as "effective operational proficiency users," capable of understanding complex texts and expressing themselves fluently and spontaneously (Council of Europe, 2001). However, even at this advanced level, individual differences remain evident in academic performance, often influenced by how effectively learners apply their strategies. Advanced learners may no longer struggle with basic linguistic forms but may differ in their ability to apply strategies for refining accuracy, expanding vocabulary, and sustaining motivation. Consequently, examining the correlatoin between learning strategies and academic performance at the C1 level offers insight into how autonomous, strategic behaviors continue to influence achievement even beyond foundational proficiency.

In sum, academic performance in language learning is a multidimensional construct that reflects not only linguistic competence but also cognitive, affective, and strategic dimensions of learning. It is the tangible outcome of the complex interaction between what learners know, how they learn, and the strategies they employ to enhance understanding and retention. This study's focus on the relationship between learning strategies and academic performance among C1-level EFL students contributes to a deeper understanding of how advanced learners sustain high levels of achievement through strategic engagement with the learning process.

In the context of this study, academic performance specifically refers to students' measurable achievement as reflected in their final English examination scores. These scores represent a quantitative indicator of the students' English language proficiency and serve as the dependent variable in this research. The use of final test results as the measure of academic performance aligns with prior studies in second language acquisition (e.g., O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Griffiths, 2008), which commonly associate language

achievement with performance on standardized or institutional assessments. The Universitas Klabat grading system categorizes these scores into levels ranging from *Very Low* (<75) to *Excellent* (91–100), thereby providing a structured framework for evaluating students' English proficiency. Using this objective measure allows for a valid and reliable statistical analysis of the correlation between language learning strategies and academic performance, as explored through the Pearson correlation in Chapter 4.

2.3 Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is an international standard developed by the Council of Europe to describe and measure language proficiency in a comprehensive, transparent, and comparable manner. First published in 2001, the CEFR provides a unified system to assess learners' ability to understand and use a foreign language, regardless of their educational background or the context in which learning takes place (Council of Europe, 2001). Over the years, CEFR has become one of the most influential frameworks in language education worldwide, utilized by schools, universities, curriculum designers, language teachers, and international testing bodies. The CEFR divides language proficiency into six levels; A1 (Beginner), A2 (Elementary), B1 (Intermediate), B2 (Upper Intermediate), C1 (Advanced),C2 (Proficient/near-native). These levels describe language ability using "can-do statements," which outline what learners are capable of doing in reading, listening, speaking, and writing. The framework emphasizes practical communication skills rather than merely grammatical or structural knowledge. For example, an A1 learner can understand simple phrases and introduce themselves, while a C2 learner can express themselves precisely and effortlessly in complex situations.

At the A1 level, learners can understand and use everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at satisfying immediate needs. They can introduce themselves and engage in simple interactions when the interlocutor speaks slowly and clearly. A2 users can understand frequently used expressions related to areas of immediate relevance, such as basic personal information, shopping, or employment. They can communicate in simple, routine tasks requiring direct exchange of information. At the B1 level, learners can handle most situations encountered while traveling, produce simple connected text, and describe experiences, events, or dreams. At B2, users can understand the main ideas of complex texts, interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity, and produce clear, detailed text on a range of subjects. They can also explain their viewpoints on topical issues and discuss advantages and disadvantages of various options. These levels represent increasing autonomy and communicative competence.

The C levels represent the most advanced stages of proficiency. C1 learners can understand demanding, longer texts and recognize implicit meaning. They can express ideas fluently and spontaneously with minimal searching for expressions. Their language use is flexible and effective for academic, social, and professional purposes. In writing, they can produce clear, well-structured, detailed texts on complex subjects while showing controlled use of organizational patterns and cohesive devices (Council of Europe, 2020). At the highest level, C2 users can understand virtually everything heard or read with ease. They can summarize information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments coherently. They can express themselves spontaneously, very fluently, and precisely, even in more complex situations. This level is often compared to near-native proficiency. The CEFR was designed to serve multiple purposes. First, it provides a common reference for describing language proficiency, which enables learners, educators, and institutions to understand language levels in the same way. Second, it allows for consistent curriculum development, as instructors can design lessons targeting specific CEFR competencies. Third, CEFR supports assessment and certification, making it useful for standardized tests, placement decisions, and academic admissions (North & Piccardo, 2016).

One of the most important characteristics of CEFR is that it is descriptive, not prescriptive. This means that the framework does not dictate how languages must be taught or assessed, but instead describes what learners at each level can do. This flexibility allows CEFR to be used in various contexts, from primary education to higher education and professional training. Although CEFR originated in Europe, it has increasingly gained relevance in Indonesia. Many universities and English programs refer to CEFR levels to standardize their language learning outcomes, evaluate students' English abilities, and align their curricula with international standards. In addition, some institutional English tests in Indonesia now adopt CEFR-based score interpretations, helping educators understand students' proficiency relative to global benchmarks. The present study focuses on university students at the C1 level, meaning they have already achieved advanced proficiency. At this level, students can engage in complex academic discourse, read and analyze sophisticated texts, and produce clear, coherent writing. Understanding their proficiency level is essential because it helps interpret their learning behaviors and the strategies they use as advanced EFL learners.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

This study is grounded in Oxford's (1990) Theory of Language Learning Strategies (LLS), as outlined in her Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). Oxford's framework categorizes language learning strategies into six main groups: memory strategies, cognitive

strategies, compensation strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies. These strategies are considered essential tools that learners use to enhance their language acquisition process, and their effective use is often linked to improved language proficiency and academic performance. The participants in this study are CEFR C1-level students in North Minahasa, Indonesia. These students are considered advanced learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The study aims to investigate the correlation between language learning strategies and academic performance among C1-level students.