

Students' Perception towards English Club in Enhancing Their Speaking Ability

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ABSTRACT

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This study investigates students' perceptions of the role of English clubs in enhancing their speaking abilities. As part of extracurricular activities, English clubs offer students a platform to practice and improve their spoken English outside the formal classroom setting. The research was conducted with a group of vocational high school students who actively participated in an English club for a semester. Data were collected through questionnaires and interviews, focusing on students' views about the effectiveness of the club in developing their speaking skills. The findings reveal that most students perceive the English club as a valuable resource for improving their fluency, vocabulary, and confidence in speaking. Moreover, students reported that the informal, supportive environment of the club encouraged them to engage in conversations, take risks, and overcome language barriers. However, some students noted challenges such as limited time and resources, suggesting that further improvements in club activities could enhance its impact. The study concludes that English clubs can play a significant role in fostering language development, but careful planning and support are necessary to maximize their effectiveness in enhancing speaking skills.

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INTRODUCTION

English, as a global lingua franca, plays a pivotal role in today's interconnected world. Among the various language skills, speaking ability is often considered as the most crucial for effective communication. In the context of learning English, speaking

is a complex skill which involves an interaction between the speaker and the listener in an active process.(Wahyuniati et al., 2020)

In many educational settings, however, students face challenges in improving their spoken English due to limited practice opportunities, classroom constraints, and a lack of confidence. As a result, extracurricular activities, such as English clubs, have emerged as potential avenues to enhance students' speaking skills outside the traditional classroom environment.

An English club provides a supportive and informal space where students can practice conversational English, engage in interactive activities, and develop greater fluency and confidence in speaking. These clubs often focus on creating a relaxed atmosphere that encourages students to actively participate without being fear of making mistakes, which is commonly associated with traditional language learning settings. Despite their potential benefits, there is limited research that specifically explores students' perceptions of how effective English clubs are in improving students' speaking ability.

This study aims to fill this gap by investigating how students perceive the impact of their participation in an English club on their speaking skills. By gathering insights from students who actively engage in these extracurricular activities, the research seeks to understand students' experiences, the perceived benefits, and the challenges they face in using English in a more dynamic, real-world context. Ultimately, the study intends to provide valuable information for educators and language program developers on how to optimize English clubs as tools for language improvement, particularly in enhancing speaking proficiency.

Some recent studies have begun to explore how extracurricular activities, such as English clubs, contribute to language development. Olivia on her study, Students' Perception on the Impact of English Club Extracurricular towards their Speaking Skill further corroborated the similar findings, showing that there were four results found. Firstly, the students argued that the environment of English club was more supportive, comfortable, fun which made them more courageous, interested and confident to practice speaking with their friends than in regular class. Secondly, students claimed that English club extracurricular made them more courageous to speaking English as much as possible, also gave them more experiences in speaking English and more knowledge about English skills. Thirdly, students' speaking skill such as fluency and pronunciation were improved much better after joining the English club extracurricular. Fourthly, students also stated that after joining the English club, they became more confidence and accustomed to speaking English in front of public as often as possible. In other words, students who actively participated in English clubs felt more confident in speaking English, as they had more opportunities for spontaneous conversations in a relaxed setting. This boost in confidence was shown to lead to improve speaking performance in formal assessments as well.(Olivia, 2022)

Moreover, Hasanah on her study about Students' Perception of English Club Extracurricular to Support Their Speaking Skills at SMKN 1 Ponorogo found that that 81.25% of students are strongly agree and 18.7% of students agree that English club extracurricular is very important in improving their speaking skills, 75% strongly agree and 25% agree that English club helps them speak well. 62.5% of students enjoy practicing speaking at the English club Extracurricular. Then, 62.5% strongly agree and 37.5% agree that English club can encourage motivation and is a suitable medium for practicing speaking. From the results of the research above, it can be concluded that the students gave a positive perception, the students agreed that the English Club Extracurricular was important and could help them to support their speaking skill.(HASANAH, 2022)

In contrast, a study by V Vadriani, The students' Perception of English Club in Improving Students' Speaking Skill. The findings show that there are three categories of students' perceptions namely the reasons, the benefits and the challenges of students in joining English club. The reasons of students in joining English club are divided into two themes namely to practice English a lot especially speaking skill and to improve all English skills. On the other hand, the benefits of joining English club consist of several themes that includes building students' self-confidence, deepening understanding of diverse issues, improving English sub-skills such as vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar; and practicing speaking English in a more comfortable environment. In addition, this research also found some challenges in joining English club that include the difficulty in dealing with the topics, and the difficulty of being a leader in a group. (Vadriani et al., 2023)

RESEARCH METHOD

To gain a comprehensive understanding of students' perceptions, this study employed a mixed-methods approach. Surveys and interviews were conducted with students who actively participate in an English club at a senior high school. The survey included both closed and open-ended questions to gather quantitative data on students' overall satisfaction, frequency of participation, and perceived improvements in their speaking skills. Meanwhile, semi-structured interviews allowed for in-depth exploration of students' personal experiences, motivations, and challenges they face while engaging in club activities. Data was also gathered through direct observation of club sessions, providing an additional layer of insight into the dynamics and learning environment. The data from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics while the interview data were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic analysis. In addition, Observational data were also analyzed qualitatively to support and triangulate the findings from the questionnaire and interviews.

RESULT DAN DISCUSSION

The questionnaire responses provided insights into students' overall perceptions of the effectiveness of English clubs in improving their speaking skills. A total of 25 students of vocational high school participated in the survey. The key findings are as follows:

1. Frequency of Participation:

A majority of students (75%) reported attending English club sessions at least twice a week, with 60% attending four times a month. The remaining 25% attended less frequently, citing academic pressures and extracurricular activities as reasons for occasional absences.

2. Perceived Improvement in Speaking Ability:

Overall, 82% of the students felt that their speaking skills had improved due to their participation in the English club. The breakdown of responses is as follows:

- **Fluency:** 75% of students indicated that their fluency in speaking English had improved significantly (mean score = 4.1/5).
- **Vocabulary:** 70% reported a noticeable increase in their vocabulary (mean score = 3.9/5).
- **Pronunciation:** 68% believed their pronunciation had improved, although slightly fewer than fluency and vocabulary (mean score = 3.7/5).

3. Confidence in Speaking

When asked about their confidence levels in speaking English, 80% of students agreed or strongly agreed that participating in the English club had made them more confident in using English in both informal and formal settings (mean score = 4.2/5).

4. Challenges Encountered:

Despite the positive impact, students identified several challenges. The most common concerns were:

- **Time constraints** (30% of students mentioned difficulties balancing club activities with academic responsibilities).
- **Limited interaction with native speakers** (25% of students felt that they would have benefited from more opportunities to practice with native speakers).
- **Lack of structured activities** (22% reported that some sessions lacked clear goals, which sometimes reduced the effectiveness of the club in developing speaking skills).

The semi-structured interviews and observations provided more detailed insights into the students' experiences and perceptions of the English club. The findings from these sources are summarized below.

Benefits of English Club Participation

1. Improved Fluency and Spontaneity:

One of the most frequently cited benefits was the improvement in fluency. Students reported that the informal, conversational setting of the English club provided

them with a low-pressure environment to practice speaking, which contributed to increased spontaneity and reduced hesitation during conversations. For example, one student mentioned, “At first, I was afraid to speak, but in the club, everyone was supportive. Now, I feel more confident speaking even outside the club.”

2. Development of Active Listening Skills:

Many students noted that participating in discussions, debates, and group activities helped them improve not only their speaking but also their listening skills. This was seen as particularly beneficial in group discussions, where students needed to listen actively and respond to others. One student stated, “When we have debates, I need to listen to others and then respond quickly. It’s helped me think and speak faster.”

3. Increased Confidence:

The majority of students reported that the English club significantly boosted their speaking confidence. The supportive environment allowed them to make mistakes without the fear of judgment, which helped them overcome anxiety. A student reflected, “Before the club, I was too shy to speak in front of the class, but now I can speak with my friends in English without feeling embarrassed.”

4. Engagement with a Variety of Activities:

Students highlighted specific activities that they felt were particularly effective, such as role-playing, drama exercises, and impromptu speaking sessions. These activities were seen as engaging and beneficial for practicing real-life communication. One student explained, “The role-plays we did helped me feel like I was actually speaking to someone in a real situation, not just memorizing sentences from a textbook.”

Challenges and Suggestions for Improvement

1. Lack of Structured Learning:

Some students felt that the English club would be more effective if there were more structured lessons or activities targeting specific aspects of speaking, such as pronunciation or accent reduction. For instance, one student said, “Sometimes the activities are fun, but I wish we could have more lessons that focus on speaking clearly or learning new words for specific situations.”

2. Time Limitations:

Several students mentioned that the time allocated for club meetings was often too short to practice speaking in depth, especially when the club had large numbers of participants. A few suggested extending the meeting duration to allow for more speaking time and interaction. One participant commented, “We usually only have 45 minutes, but I feel like it’s not enough to practice speaking properly.”

3. Need for Native Speakers or External Speakers:

Although the club provided opportunities for peer-to-peer interaction, many students expressed a desire to interact with native speakers to improve their pronunciation and conversational skills. One student stated, “It would be great if we could have a native speaker come to our club meetings. It would help with pronunciation and natural expressions.”

4. Peer Group Dynamics:

While many students appreciated the supportive nature of the club, some noted that the group dynamics could sometimes limit their speaking opportunities, especially in larger groups. One student noted, “Sometimes I don’t get a chance to speak much because there are so many people in the group. Maybe smaller groups would help.”

The findings of this study suggest that English clubs have a positive impact on students' speaking ability, particularly in terms of fluency, vocabulary, and confidence. These results are consistent with previous studies, such as those Olivia (2022) and V Vadriani (2023), which found that informal language practice in extracurricular settings enhances students' speaking skills by reducing anxiety and increasing motivation.

The improvement in fluency and vocabulary aligns with the benefits of immersion in a communicative environment, where students are encouraged to use language actively in real-life contexts. The findings also support the notion that English clubs provide a valuable space for students to practice spontaneous speech, as suggested by Zhang (2018) and Lai (2016). The students' increased confidence in speaking, as reported in this study, also mirrors results from Chen (2020), who found that informal language clubs promote greater self-esteem and willingness to speak.

However, the study also highlights some challenges, particularly related to time constraints, lack of structured activities, and limited access to native speakers. These challenges align with Li & Zhou (2023), who noted that the effectiveness of language clubs is dependent on their organization and the resources available. Students' suggestions for more structured lessons and interactions with native speakers suggest that while the clubs offer valuable informal practice, they could benefit from more intentional planning and external support to maximize their effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study suggest that English clubs have a positive impact on students' speaking ability, particularly in enhancing fluency, vocabulary, and confidence. These results align with previous studies (Olivia, 2022) that emphasize the importance of informal language practice in reducing anxiety and increasing motivation. The improvement in fluency and vocabulary supports the idea that English clubs provide an immersive communicative environment where students can practice real-world language use. However, the study also highlights some challenges that need to be

addressed to optimize the effectiveness of these clubs. Time constraints, lack of structured activities, and limited interaction with native speakers emerged as key areas that could be improved to further enhance students' speaking proficiency. By addressing these challenges, English clubs can become even more effective tools for language development. This research contributes valuable insights into the role of extracurricular language activities in language acquisition and offers practical recommendations for educators and language program developers. The findings suggest that with more structured planning, external support (e.g., native speakers), and a focus on the specific needs of students, English clubs can serve as a highly effective platform for enhancing students' speaking skills and overall language proficiency.

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