



# Student Perception of English Club in Improving Students' Speaking Skills

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Received: 2023-11-29 Accepted: 2023-12-31

DOI: 10.24256/ideas.v11i2.4769

## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to find out the students' perception of the English club in improving students' speaking ability at institute parahikmah Indonesia. The researchers utilized a qualitative method. The participants of this study were five students from English Education Department, insitusi parahikmah Indonesia, Gowa. Semi-structured interview, documentation, and participant observation were used to collect the data. The collected data were analyzed by using the interactive data analysis of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014). 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.

**Keywords:** *English Club, Students' perception, Speaking skill*

## **Introduction**

English plays an essential role in many fields of life such as in education, economics, politics, business, health, and entertainment. English is a compulsory subject in Indonesian curriculum which is taught from elementary school to university level. The four fundamental language abilities that students must acquire while studying English are reading, listening, speaking, and writing. Speaking is regarded as the most crucial of those four abilities. This is due to the situation in the era of highly competitive globalization.

Speaking is a process of sharing and exchanging information, ideas, and emotions using spoken language. Speaking is an important skill in everyday interaction, as people speak more than write. In everyday life, speaking is the main tool used to share and exchange information. Widdowson (1978) defines speaking as “simply the physical embodiment of abstract systems”. It involves brain activity to transform abstract ideas into sounds and utterances that form meaning (Guebba, 2021). Widdowson (1978) differentiates between two types of speaking, they are speaking in terms of use and speaking in terms of usage. The former is both productive and receptive in nature as it requires the interlocutors to receive, decode, and produce messages. The latter, on the other hand is only productive as it involves phonological and grammatical system independently without reference (Guebba, 2021).

According to Harmer (2007), speaking is characterized by three main criteria: purpose, participation, and planning. The first criterion has two part, namely transactional purpose and interpersonal purpose. Transactional purpose ease the process of transacting and sending information, while interpersonal purpose maintains positive social relationship. The second criterion is participation which is divided into interactive and non-interactive. The former requires participants' reciprocal participation as commonly takes place in dialogue. Meanwhile, the latter describes speaking activities in a situation that is dependent on recording speech. In the third criterion, speaking might by planned or unplanned. Planned speaking such as delivering a presentation or a lecture, necessitates the speaker to plan his/her speech. Conversely, unplanned speaking refers to any impromptu conversation that happened without prior planning or preparation.

Lighthbown and Spada (2006) argue that speaking is pivotal in language classroom for three basic reasons. Firstly, speaking activities gives the teacher insight into students' proficiency levels and the challenges they frequently face. Secondly, speaking tasks afford students the chance to engage in real-life speaking practice. Lastly, involving in speaking activities enable students to activate their knowledge on language structure and function that gradually lead to the acquisition of language elements such as part of speech, word order and tenses. Hence, speaking activities improves students' accuracy and fluency. Similarly, Prastyawan (2021) argued that speaking is useful skill that the students have to learn in that the students can express their feeling, and communicate directly with

others. In addition, he also stated that speaking skill involves some supporting factors such as vocabulary, grammar, and self-confidence that simultaneously help students improve their other language skills.

However, speaking in a foreign language class is a difficult skill to acquire since it involves a variety of abilities including grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competencies (Guebba, 2021). These competencies are referred to as communicative competence. Hyme (1972) as cited in Brown (2007) stated that communicative competence is aspects of competence that enable learners to convey and interpret the messages and to confer the meaning interpersonally within particular contexts. Brown (2001) as cited Wulandari (2014) said that speaking involves some aspects, such as pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency, accent, and grammar. Related to those aspects, Wiharno (2018) found that speaking activities leaves many challenges, such as the lack of vocabulary, the difficulties in pronunciation, the complicated uses of grammar, and the influence of students' mother tongue. In addition, students' anxiety is found to be a prominent factor that impede students to speak fluently. Anxiety is a fearful, anxious, or hesitant state of mind (Putera, 2018). In fact, many students suffer nervousness during the teaching and learning process when they are asked to speak in English through sharing their opinions or answer the teacher's questions. Therefore, more speaking practices are required to form speaking habits that will eliminate students' anxiety and elevate students' communicative competence.

There are many ways to build students' English-speaking habit, one of them is through English club. Salma (2018) stated that English club is one of the alternate options for students to improve their speaking skills. English club serves as a catalyst for students to develop their English-speaking skills as students can take part in many kinds of communicative activities. In the community, students feel more comfortable in learning and can be motivated by other members to learn English as well. Additionally, English club can create well-established engagement by providing interesting topics in more relaxed situation.

Some empirical studies highlight the role of English club in enhancing students' speaking skill. Prastyawan (2021) conducted research about students' perception of English One for Twenty (EOT) English club program towards their self-confidence in speaking skills. Employing qualitative method and involving 30 participants, this research revealed that the program increased students' speaking skill and self-confidence. In the same vein, Salma (2018) conducted a study about students' views of English club as an extracurricular activity for speaking Practice at SMP Nasional Makassar of eighth grade. The descriptive qualitative method was used in this study. The participants in this study were 40 students who had engaged in an English club. The result showed that students believe the English club serves an essential role in assisting them in practicing their speaking skills. Applying different approach, Baihaqi (2016) carried out a study on the impact of a speaking club on students' ability to communicate at UPT Ma'had al Jamiah of UIN Banda Aceh. This study involved 28 students and employed three techniques

to collect the data namely questionnaires, observation, and interviews. The results of the study indicated that speaking club improved students' speaking abilities, and encouraged positive perceptions from the participants.

Furthermore, Yanti (2021) conducted research about an analysis of English club activity on helping students' speaking ability at SMK Farmasi Ikasari pekanbau. Using qualitative method and inviting 40 participants, this research aimed to describe how the students improve their ability through an English club. The study found that students were happy in joining English club since it can boost their speaking ability, self-confidence, knowledge, and experience. In contrast to the previous studies mentioned earlier, survey research was conducted by Hasanah (2018) to analyze the impact of joining an English club on students' speaking abilities at SMPN 1 Patikraja. The participants of the research were 20 students in the eighth grade. This research found that English club did not improve the students' speaking skill because of several factors, such as anxiety and lack of vocabulary.

From the previous studies above, it can be inferred that the findings on the role of English club in improving students' speaking skill are two folds. Most studies reported that English club effectively facilitates and improves students' speaking skill, and self-confidence. Meanwhile, one of the studies delineated contradictory results. Therefore, it is worth researching to find out more expanded insights by involving different sample size and various research contexts.

## **Method**

This research was qualitative. Holloway and Gavlin (2017) argue that qualitative research is a type of social science that examines how people or groups make a sense of their lives. It is a tool for analyzing, describing, and interpreting social processes. According to Creswell (2009), the constructivist worldview, ethnographic design, and observation of behavior are examples of qualitative approaches, namely participative worldview, story design, and open-ended interviewing. This research used purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling is one of the most frequent sampling procedures, purposeful sampling, and a group of participants according to pre-selected criteria relevant to a specific research issue. Five students were selected as the participants based on some considerations: 1) The participants are active members who actively take part in English club activities, (2) some of the participants have central roles in founding the English club.

To collect the data, this research utilized interview, participant observation and documentation. Semi-structured interview was employed in eliciting the main data. Miles and Gilbert (2005) explored that semi-structured interviews are simply talks in which the researcher had a list of questions to ask and a general notion of what would be discussed, but the conversation was free to vary and is

likely to differ significantly amongst participants. Subsequently, participant observation was conducted as the secondary data collection method. By using participant observation, the data acquired were more qualified and understandable at the level of meaning of each behavior that arises as a result of the participant's observation. In addition, the researcher employed documentation in the forms of photographs, interview transcript to establish that the data presented in the study was correct. Moreover, the researcher also collected some learning materials or files used in English club.

Miles, Huberman, and Saldana's (2014) technique of data analysis was used to analyze the data. This technique consisted of three steps of analysis: data condensation, data display and conclusion and verification. In data condensation stage, the researchers focused on selecting and clarifying data obtained from interview, observation and documentation. In the second stages, data was displayed in form of narrative. In the last stage, the researchers concluded qualitative data analysis by examining the condensation outcomes, and face-to-face relates to the study objectives to be met. In other words, the goal of this stage is to look for relationships, equations, or differences to come to conclusions.

## Results and Discussion

The findings of this research were divided into three main categories: (1) the reasons of students in joining English club, (2) the benefits of joining English club, and (3) the challenges of joining English club. The reasons of students in joining English club include to practice English a lot especially speaking skill, and to improve all English skills. The benefits of joining English club include building students' self-confidence, deepening students' understanding of diverse issues, improving English sub-skill such as vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar, and practicing speaking English in a more comfortable environment. While the challenges of joining club cover the difficulty in dealing with the topics, and the difficulty of becoming a leader. Below is the elaboration of each category:

### 1. Students' reasons of joining English club

When the students were asked about their reasons of joining English club, all of them agreed that they wanted to practice their English especially speaking. Student 1 who has been attending the English club for two years stated that his willingness to practice his English lead him to join the English club.

*"I decided to join English club because I will practice my English direcly"*

The same statement was also highlighted by Student 2 dan Student 3 who mentioned that they can improve their speaking skill by joining English club. Similarly, Student 4 added that she joined the English club because she wanted to enhance her speaking ability.

*"I join an English club because I feel like I can improve my speaking skill"*

*"I join an English club because I want improve my speaking skill"*

*"I join and English club because English club is one of the places for students to improve their speaking"*

Additionally, Student 5 also declared that she joined the English club because she believed that English club could enhance her overall language skills.

*"I decided to join English club because it can help me improve my English skills such us speaking, reading, listening, and writing".*

Refers to all of the students' perception above, it can be concluded that English club is one of the ways to practice English skills, especially speaking skill. They decided to join English club in that they want to practice and improve their speaking performances. This finding is in line with Wardatun (2020) who concluded that the students decided to join English club in that they wanted to improve their speaking skill. In the same vein, Salma (2018) declared that students believe the English club serves an essential role in assisting them in practicing their speaking skills. In addition, Melviza (2017) also claimed that English club was crucial in encouraging students to practice speaking.

## **2. The benefits of joining English club.**

Based on the results of semi structured-interview, there are several benefits of joining English club mentioned by the participants such as building self-confidence, deepening understanding of diverse issues, improve English sub-skills such as vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar; and practice speaking in more comfortable environment. English club provides a supportive and encouraging environment where students can practice their speaking skills without fear of judgment. This constant exposure to speaking English helps students overcome their initial hesitation and become more confident in expressing themselves. Student 1, 2 and 3 expressed the same views:

*"I have gained many benefits in joining English club, one of them is I can build my self-confidence"*

*"By joining English club I can train my self-confidence to speak English"*

*"the benefit that I get in English club is I become confident in speaking"*

Umar (2021) stated that an English club can inspire students to feel more confident and eager to share new information and practice speaking English with their friends. After joining the English club activities, students gain new vocabulary and self-confidence; they communicate about something connected to their everyday activities, see their friends while they speak English, and think about the usual things about how to speak properly in front of the public. In addition, this statement is in line with Yanti (2021) who stated that the students were happy in joining English club in order the students can boost their ability to speak, not only about speaking but also confidence, knowledge, and experience.

Furthermore, joining in the English club also can aid students in expanding their knowledge and comprehension of diverse issues and updated information. Members of the English club frequently talk about a range of subjects, including politics, society, and education, in which every student is required to share their thoughts on the subject being covered. It is proved by the result of interview with Student 5 below:

*“English club provided many topics such as: politics, social, education that can improve our knowledge”*

One of the most crucial things a speaker needs to possess is a strong vocabulary because a limited vocabulary will cause one to stumble over their words when speaking. All of the participants agreed that English club can improve their vocabulary. Moreover, some participants also believed that they can improve their pronunciation after joining an English club. Pronunciation is a fundamental aspect of language learning, particularly in terms of speaking ability. It plays a crucial role in speaking since it helps the listener understand what the speaker said. Practicing and listening during the discussion sessions in English club helps students learn how to pronounce words correctly, which is one technique to develop their pronunciation in English.

*“I like studying in English club because I could find a lot of new vocabularies”*

*“I like joining English club because I can increase my pronunciation”*

This finding corroborate to Glanes and Adams (2013) as cited in Wardatun (2020) who claimed that one of the advantages of joining English club is increasing vocabulary and knowledge. According to Armita (2019), vocabulary is defined as a collection or whole stock of words in a language that are used in a certain context; yet, vocabulary is crucial and required in any language competence. Umar (2021) stated that a certain diction employed in communication is referred to as vocabulary. One cannot properly communicate or explain their ideas in both oral and writing form without a sufficient vocabulary. On the other hand, Pronunciation is a fundamental aspect of language learning, particularly in terms of speaking ability. It has to do with how we pronounce, enunciate, assimilate, intonate, and stress words. Poor pronunciation can make communication difficult and prevent us from expressing meaningful statements. According to Hornby (1995) pronunciation is the way a word spoken, or the way a person says the language's words.

Another language sub-skill which can be developed through English club is grammar. Grammatical knowledge enables a speaker to convey their meaning correctly and exchange information accurately. Some participants of this study believed that joining English club can improve their grammatical knowledge. Two out of the five participants stated that English club help him improve their grammatical knowledge. They added that in the English club, their friends helped

them correct their grammar when they made mistakes. Hence, students can learn grammar from their peers during the club activities that enhance their grammatical knowledge.

*"By joining English club, I can improve my grammar because my friends help me to fix my grammar when I make mistake".*

*"I can study about structure, we can correct our sentences each other if we make mistake"*

Harmer (2001) stated that a language's grammar is the description of how words in that language can change their forms and be integrated into sentences. From the preceding statement, it can be concluded that strong grammar allows a speaker to correctly convey or create words or share information. Meanwhile, according to Irianti (2011) grammar is highly crucial in speaking because if the speakers do not learn grammar, they will not be able to communicate effectively in English.

The last benefit mentioned by the participants of this study was practicing English in more comfortable environment. Formal classes tend to be more evaluative that sometimes make students feel anxious and intimidated. In contrast, In English club students feel more relaxed and comfortable because they are not judged by their teacher and their friends when speaking English. In addition, English club also provides a casual situation that is different from regular or formal classrooms.

*"I really like studying in English club because my friends never judge me if I make mistakes in speaking and I feel comfortable to study there"*

*"Practicing speaking in English club is less formal and we can choose the topic"*

Virawan et al. (2021) on their research found that students feel relax, nice, respectful, more confidence and motivated when learned in the English club. they emphasized that English clubs support students by created a good atmosphere, supportive learning environment, and supportive practice activities. The club's positive atmosphere encourages students to learn and practice English that support students' speaking performance.

### **3. The challenges of joining English club**

The participants in this research mention two challenges in joining the English club, they are difficulty in dealing with topics, and difficulty of being a leader. Some students stated that in the English club, the members discuss various topics such as education, politics, social, and others. However, some participants stated that they find challenges when the topic was hard to be understood since the explanation of the discussion materials was presented fully in English. This difficulty is resulting from their linguistic problems such as limited vocabulary



and lack of listening skill and background knowledge deficiency. Student 2 highlighted:

*"I found challenges when the topic is too difficult. Sometimes, I don't really know what to say and I don't know the information about the topic"*

Similarly, Student 3 and Student 1 also stated:

*"Sometimes I don't understand about the topic"*

*"Sometimes, I got stuck and I don't know what I am going to say"*

This finding is related to Galanes and Adam (2013) who stated that the materials or topics offered in the English club sometimes do not make students excited. Generally, in classroom context, teachers provide students with background knowledge before discussing difficult topics and also list of glossaries to ease students in comprehending the topics. This is not applied in the English club, where the members apparently still have lack of pedagogical knowledge.

Furthermore, in the English club, there should be a leader who is appointed to direct the members in every meeting. The leader should manage and ensure that all the activities are running well. Some participants highlighted that they encounter difficulties when they are appointed as the leader of a group in the club regular activities. Student 1 maintained that he could not control the meeting when he was assigned as the leader.

*"I got challenges when I was a leader since I did not know how to control the meeting"*

Assigned leaders have almost the same roles as teachers. the leader should control, manage and organize the meeting and ensure conducive learning environment for all members. This role can be associated as teacher's role in classroom management. Classroom management is defined as the actions teachers or instructors take to provide supportive environment for academic, social and emotional learning (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006). In English meeting club context where all students have the same status, it is more challenging for the leader to control or manage their own peers. However, the role of becoming a leader will give a good and practical experience for students in managing and controlling the class as the prospective teachers that can be applied in their real teaching practices in the future.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, there are three categories of students' perception of English club in improving students' speaking skill, namely the reasons of students to join English club, the benefits of joining English club, and the challenges of joining English club. The reasons of student 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 categories, including building students' self-confidence, deepening

understanding of diverse issues, improving English sub-skills such as vocabulary pronunciation and grammatical knowledge, 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 difficulty of being a leader in a group.

Based on the findings of this research, it is recommended that teachers should provide more comfortable and less anxious provoking environment, so that the students feel more relaxed to be actively involved in the process of teaching and learning in the classrooms. In addition, teachers also can use various techniques in teaching such as storytelling, debate, speech and group discussion to make students more interested and enthusiastic in learning English. However, due to the limitation in the sample size in this study, the future researchers are suggested to conduct more in-dept investigation on the same topic by involving greater numbers of samples or participants.

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