

## **Students' Perceptions of English Club in Enhancing Speaking Skills**

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### **Abstract**

This study explores students' perception of English Club as for enhancing their speaking skills. The English Club provides a supportive and interactive environment where students can improve their speaking skills through group discussions, role playing, interactive game, storytelling and presentation. This study was conducted at the English Club of English Study program, Universitas Timor. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the data were collected through observation and interviews with 5 students who actively participate in the English Club. The findings presented students gave positive responses because it helped them in enhancing their speaking skill, particularly vocabulary mastery, pronunciation accuracy and speaking fluency. Additionally, students appreciate the informal learning atmosphere which reduces their fear and anxiety in speaking. This study concludes English teachers can improve students' English language proficiency by implementing or developing the English Club's teaching methodology and creating a more relaxed and enjoyable learning atmosphere.

**Keywords:** English Club, students' perception, speaking skill, language learning

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The existence of English as a foreign language in Indonesia causes the frequency of using English not to be as intensive as Bahasa Indonesia or local languages. English currently has an important role in this era of globalization. The development of science and technology requires individuals to ace English. English not only expands chances for students, but also allows them to engage with different cultures (Haryanti & Yuliana, 2024). Communicating in English is not an option but a necessity (Rihlah et al., 2022). Hence, the wonder of utilizing English is expanding day by day, both in spoken and written form.

Regarding the importance of English, the Indonesian government has determined English a subject from elementary school to university. The policy to introduce English as a subject for elementary school is repetitive. Recently, teaching English for elementary schools in Indonesia has gained great attention since the government recommended learning English for elementary school as arranged in the Merdeka Belajar program. Agreeing to Sadli & Saadati (2023), in Kurikulum Merdeka,

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several things have changed at the elementary school level, including English being one of the optional subjects that can be taught. It is possible to apply English as a subject in elementary school because it can help children gain better language skills from an early age. Furthermore, Septy Lesia & Petrus (2021), stated that children can imitate and remember well. Therefore, the vocabulary and pronunciation they have learned will be kept in their mind easily.

Teaching English for EFL learners has some aspects that need to be considered, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Arjulayana et al., 2018). Even though children can absorb language learning quickly, the learning methods applied must be packaged interestingly and attractively. The success of learning a foreign language is not only determined by age (Aini et al., 2022). However, since it is only a foreign language, there are lots of problems found in teaching English to learners, such as a lack of self-confidence, motivation, and improper teaching methods. Greater than that, English learners need to acquire knowledge on how to use English (Dwi Utami & Wardah, 2015). Therefore, adequate effort is also necessary for success when studying English as a foreign language.

Although English has been widely spoken in Indonesia for a long time and studied from elementary school to high school, many studies indicate that most English learners still lack in speaking English. Since English is a foreign language in Indonesia, learners have less opportunity to communicate in English outside the classroom (Suban, 2021) and use English for educational purposes inside the classroom (Islam et al., 2022). This situation makes speaking skills still challenging for most English learners. In addition, Heriansyah (2012) categorized the difficulties of speaking English into linguistic problems related to aspects of language ability like vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, while non-linguistic problems refer to psychological elements. One of the non-linguistics' problems faced by English language learners is an insecure feeling in speaking (Sahan et al., 2023). This emotional barrier is often caused by internal and external pressure in language learning situations. Fear of making mistakes, low motivation, concerns about criticism, and feelings of embarrassment and nervousness are factors that significantly impact students' speaking skills (Hasanah et al., 2025). These opinions are in line with Leong & Ahmadi, (2017) who pointed out that inhibition is the first problem that students encounter in the classroom.

Universitas Timor has a program at the beginning of the academic year for new students to take part in a guidance period (MABIM) for approximately six months to develop their potential in various fields. As a result, an English study program holding activities aimed at improving English language skills in new students called the English club. Activities at English club are designed as a channel for learning English, especially in improving English speaking skill. According to Virawan et al., (2021), English club is an extracurricular program that is held by school to facilitate students in practicing, increase and to build up students' motivation to learn practicing English beyond the regular class. Relaxed space, comfortable learning atmosphere and new relationships are offered by the English club for the students (Hamadameen & Najim, 2020).

Some of the earlier research shows how English clubs help students to get better at speaking. These findings are supported by Vadriani et al. (2023) that identified the benefits of joining an English club: building students' self-confidence, deepening, and improving English sub-skills such as vocabulary pronunciation and grammatical knowledge. Also Ali E. E. & Hamad E. H. A. (2019), revealed that the English club tries to hide monotonous learning methods in the classroom to reduce students' fear when speaking. About students' perceptions, Quynh (2021) encountered that English club

activities got great attention from students. Most of the students perceived that they prefer practicing in English Club because they can practice English free of intimidated by anxiety as when studying in a general classroom

Based on some points raised in the previous studies, this research aims to explore students' perceptions of the English Club at the English Study program of Universitas Timor and identify the specific aspects of English Club activities that contribute to improved speaking abilities.

## RESEARCH METHOD

Descriptive qualitative method was applied in this research. The participants of this research were the first-semester students of the English Study Program who had joined the English club and consisted of 5 students that were chosen by the purposive sampling technique. The criteria used to choose the participants were having experience speaking in English Club forums and actively participating in English Club activities for at least one semester.

In collecting data, observation and interviews are required. In observation, the researcher gains the data by direct observation of English Club activities, such as role-playing, speaking practice sessions, or group discussions; taking notes on students' speech patterns, including intonation, confidence, and language structure; documenting students' reactions to the methods or activities used in the English Club; and, with permission, taking supporting materials like images and videos. The observations were conducted four times during weekly meetings on various topics. For the interviews, the researcher asks questions according to the interview guide but remains flexible to explore further based on the informant's answers, record videos, and take notes on important points during the interview.

In analyzing the data, the researchers employed data analysis based on Miles & Huberman (1994) theory that consists of data reduction, data display and drawing conclusion. During the data reduction phase, the researchers choose, filter and compile the relevant data from the findings of observations and interviews. To make it easier to analyze, the researcher is using coding with the aim of simplifying and organizing the data. After that, the data is presented narratively for comprehension and interpretation. Final conclusions are obtained by analyzing data patterns, assembling preliminary conclusions, and validating findings.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Code qualitative data were employed to facilitate the interpretation, organization, and structuring of observations and interpretations into insightful ideas. Observations were made for around two months with a new theme every week. English club is one of the extracurricular activities that is popular for students. According to the findings of the interviews, students' opinions are split into three categories that listed below:

### 1. Students' impressions of English Club

Interview results show that most students define an English club as a place to enhance their English language proficiency. Some students stated that the English Club was a place to practice their English outside the classroom.

*"It is difficult to practice my English outside the classroom because the environment is not very supportive due to the intervention of my mother tongue and Bahasa Indonesia. I'm happy because the English club provides a solution for me". (P1)*

*"English Club is important for students because it helps students use English in real situations, not just learn theory in the classroom". (P3)*

The rest of them said that they found partners to practice their English skills at the English Club.

*"English club is a community for students who wish to get better at English. I feel lucky because I found friends who I can study with". (P4)*

*"So far I have only practiced my English through mirror practice. I want to take an English course outside but I have difficulty dividing my time. With the English Club I can learn from friends and from mentors". (P2)*

*"It's a good experience. I learn not just English, but also teamwork and leadership". (P5).*

Considering the students' opinions about the English Club as stated above, it showed that the English Club draws students since it's a casual setting for learning English. Because they are surrounded by people who share their desire to learn without fear of making mistakes, students are more at ease while they are studying. In addition, Virawan et al. (2021), revealed that English Club is not only a place to practice, but it is a place for students to get new knowledge, find new friends, and of course, practice English. Quynh (2021) also found that in English Club, students may feel more comfortable practicing English around people they trust and have fun with.

## **2. The advantages of Joining English Club**

There were various answers obtained when researchers asked about the benefits of being an English Club member. Some of them declared that English Club helps them improve their speaking skills, especially in vocabulary mastery and pronunciation practice. This is because in English Club participants are encouraged to speak through various types of activities such as group discussions, storytelling, role play, or simulations of everyday conversations. These activities encourage participants to speak and improve their speaking pronunciation in various contexts. Students gave similar views about the benefits of joining the English Club.

*"I can get better at pronouncing words correctly by joining an English club, which gives me more chances to practice speaking in role-plays, presentations, and conversations". (P1)*

*"The mentors at English Club offer helpful advice for improving tone and pronunciation in addition to correcting pronunciation errors". (P5)*

*"I like the reading running text practice session because it is also a challenging session. Here, we practice pronouncing words correctly in addition to learning how to read. (P4)*

*"At English Club, we often play games that focus on pronunciation. This makes the learning atmosphere more relaxed and fun while improving students' pronunciation skills". (P3)*

*Role Playing**Reading running-text**Conversation Practice**Interactive Game*

Figure 1. English Club activities for improving pronunciation

Focused on students' perception above, students experienced improvement in their pronunciation when they joined the English Club. In their study, Yuliandasari & Kusriandi, (2015) discovered that English Club improves students' speaking abilities, particularly in pronunciation. Additionally, according to (Melviza et al. 2017), 52.5% of students thought that English clubs help them become better speakers. Most of students concurred that the English club improved their speaking skills.

In addition, English club offers a more laid-back and pleasurable learning environment. Students argue that, in the English club, they are not afraid to make mistakes in speaking because the English club focuses on the process, not the result (Arjulayana et al., 2021).

*"In the English club, we often share experiences and mistakes in speaking. This increases my awareness that making mistakes is a necessary part of learning". (P1)*

*"I don't feel like I'm studying in class but more like having fun because activities like games and discussions make the learning atmosphere more enjoyable. (P3)*

*"I feel more at ease studying with friends because we are all on the same page and nobody feels rushed or superior". (P4)*





Debate



Group Discussion

Figure 2. Enjoyable learning activities

According to the students' prior perspectives, the learning environment plays a significant role in the educational process. Virawan et al. (2021) found that students feel relaxed, nice, respectful, more confident and motivated when learning in the club because the good atmosphere created by the club affects the students to get more knowledge in the club especially speaking performance. (Harzanah et al., 2024) also mentioned in their research that most of the students preferred meeting with an English club rather than a typical classroom environment because it increases their self-confidence. Therefore, it may be claimed that because they are not burdened, students feel free to learn in an English Club setting.

Furthermore, students say that English Club teaches them vocabulary in a fun, relevant, and useful manner. They are more motivated to expand their English vocabulary by using a variety of ways and receiving community assistance.

*"Learning vocabulary using games such as word games, crossword puzzles, and word association is so enjoyable that I forget I'm learning". (P5)*

*"When I use new vocabulary during discussions, conversation exercises or presentations, I will remember better how the word is used. This aids me greatly in expanding my vocabulary". (P2)*



Interactive Game



Gallery Walk Presentation

Figure 3. Vocabulary building activities

Overall, students believe that English club helps them learn vocabulary in a fun way because the diverse learning approaches and community support make them more motivated in learning English, especially in speaking. From the experience of speaking practice in the English Club, students could get more vocabulary to be used in oral speaking (Hanim, 2018). Wardatun (2020) identified that Students generally report having more vocabulary after participating in English Club. This is because the English Club provides students with additional opportunities to speak, allowing them to readily recall new terminology.

Referring to the students' perceptions above, it can be ensured that in English Club, students will talk more confidently, pronounce words more accurately, and develop their vocabulary in particular.

### 3. Featured activities at English Club

Since one of the English Club's objectives is to help students become more proficient speakers, it's critical to understand specific aspects of English Club activities that contribute to improved speaking abilities. Based on the interview, 3 of 5 students acknowledge that role-playing is an activity that enhances their ability to communicate.

*"I find that role playing is a great way to pick up new words that are relevant to a particular context. It develops speaking confidence by requiring spontaneity". (P4)*

*"Because I'm playing a character rather than myself when I role-play, I feel more at ease and my speaking anxiety is lessened". (P5)*

*"Role playing helps me to respond more quickly in certain situations so that I am trained to face unexpected situations or dialogues". (P1)*

In addition to role-playing, students reported that playing interactive games helps them become better speakers.

*"When playing games, I don't fear making mistakes because everyone is more concerned with having fun than with my faults". (P2)*

Group discussions are also one of the activities that are considered to help students. This is due to the fact that students can practice effective listening and reasoning techniques as well as learn how to communicate in a more ordered manner.

*"Group discussions taught me to formulate arguments clearly and speak confidently. I also learned how to listen and respond to my friends' opinions". (P3)*

Based on the interview, it can be seen that the most popular activities at the English club include role-playing, interactive games, and discussions. This is also consistent with the findings of observations, which reveal that students have a high level of self-confidence when performing the above activities. The observation employed the theory of Communicative Language Teaching of (Richards & Rodgers, 2014), which focuses on real-world conversation and meaningful interaction in language acquisition.

Table 1.

Rubric Score of CLT- based communicative activities (Richards and Rodger, 2001)

Activities	Active Students	Average Speech Duration	Self Confidence	Fluency	Note
Group Discussion	3 of 5 students	1-2 minutes/student	High	Good	Students actively share ideas and perspectives.
Debate	2 of 5 students	3-4 minutes/student	Medium	Average	Some students needed extra practice since they appeared anxious during debates.
Role-playing	5 of 5 students	2-3 minutes/student	Very High	Good	Students enjoy and take pleasure in their roles.
Storytelling	3 of 5 students	3-5 minutes/student	High	Very Good	Students' high degree of self-confidence and usage of a diverse vocabulary
Interactive Game	4 of 5 students	1-2 minutes/student	High	Good	The setting is more relaxed, and students speak more freely without fear of making mistakes.

The observation sheet demonstrates that the most effective activities include interactive games, role play, and group discussions. However, discussion still needs improvement; students still appear anxious, therefore they need a lot of practice to become more courageous and persuasive. Therefore, the findings of this study show that a balanced combination of formal and casual activities in learning can provide optimal results in improving students' speaking abilities. This finding is in line with Armita (2019) finding that English clubs help students enhance their speaking skills by allowing them to practice and study English while having fun. Additionally, English clubs provide students with more time to learn English. Aryanti et al. (2024) also revealed that the English club is one of a comfortable, fun and a better place that is suitable for students to speak English.

## CONCLUSION



Considering the result of the data analysis, it can be concluded that the majority of students have positive perceptions regarding the English club. In general, students regard the English Club as a place to learn English more freely without being frightened of making mistakes, because all students come to the English Club to learn and motivate one another. During the learning process, students discover that the English club helps them develop their English language skills, particularly speaking skills such as pronunciation, fluency, and vocabulary knowledge. Students also shared their thoughts on learning activities that they believed helped them considerably improve their speaking skills, such as role acting, interactive games, and group debates, as part of their English club experience.

The English club is more than just a place to learn English; it also provides students with a more fun learning experience through a variety of activities such as discussions, presentations, role-playing, and interactive games. In conclusion, based on favorable feedback from the English Club, it is suggested that English teachers can use or improve the English language proficiency of their students by implementing or developing the English Club's teaching methodology and create a more relaxed and enjoyable learning atmosphere.

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