Fostering 21st-century communication: Students' views on English club as a speaking platform

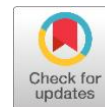Suryanto Suryanto [a,1,*], Desi Rahayu [a,2], Bolormaa Shinjee [b,3], Turki Alsolami [c,4]

[a] English Education Department, Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, Jl. Brawijaya, Tamantirto, Kec. Kasihan, Kabupaten Bantul,Yogyakarta, 55183, Indonesia
[b] Foreign Language Center, School of Arts and Sciences, National University of Mongolia, Mongolia
[c] The Applied College, King Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia

[1] suryanto@umy.ac.id *; [2] desi.rahayu.fpb19@mail.umy.ac.id; [3] Bolormaa_shinjee@num.edu.mn; [4] tgalsolami@kau.edu.sa
* corresponding author

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ABSTRACT

In the contemporary globalized landscape, proficient communication in English is crucial for educational success and worldwide interaction. Despite extensive formal education, many Indonesian students struggle with speaking fluently in real-life contexts. English-speaking clubs (ESCs) have emerged as extracurricular platforms to help students overcome these challenges by providing a supportive, interactive environment for practicing speaking skills. Using a qualitative descriptive design, this research investigates the students' perceptions of the benefits and challenges of participating in an ESC at a high school in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Through in-depth interviews with eight active club members, the research identifies several themes. The findings show the advantages of joining ESC, including increased speaking practice, improved language skills, enhanced fluency, and greater confidence. However, due to scheduling constraints, students also face challenges in joining ESC, such as fear of making mistakes, anxiety in spontaneous speaking situations, and limited participation time. The results of this study highlight the significance of building helpful, structured environments within ESCs to foster students' communicative competence and self-assurance in English. This research provides a constructive understanding for teachers and administrators seeking to improve ESC programs and boost foreign language competence.

1. Introduction

In the contemporary era of globalization and digital transformation, effective communication in English has become a vital competency for individuals aiming to participate actively in global discourse. As the international lingua franca, English bridges diverse linguistic and cultural boundaries, enabling people to collaborate and exchange ideas in science, technology, education, business, and international relations (Roshid & Kankaanranta, 2025; Sah & Fang, 2024; Victoria et al., 2025). Rose et al., (2021) show up English as the most widely used international language, making it an indispensable skill for global engagement. In countries like Indonesia, English is taught from primary to tertiary levels, not only as an academic subject but as a crucial life skill that supports academic achievement and enhances career prospects (Curle et al., 2024; Gayatri et al., 2023; Puspitasari, 2024). The widespread emphasis on English instruction reflects the urgent need to prepare

students for 21st-century challenges that demand cross-cultural communication and multilingual competence.

Among the four fundamental language skills—reading, writing, listening, and speaking—speaking is regarded as the most quickly recognizable and useful sign of communication competency (Ali, 2022; Nggawu & Thao, 2023). It provides a means of communication for ideas, knowledge sharing, and social and intellectual debates. As Adem & Berkessa, (2022) underline, success in higher education and worldwide communication depends on first learning English speaking abilities. Even with constant English exposure in the classroom, many Indonesian students still find it challenging to use the language boldly in daily life. These difficulties arise from various internal and external barriers, including limited opportunities to practice speaking and psychological inhibitions like anxiety and low self-confidence (Angraeni et al., 2024; Kashinathan & Aziz, 2021; Malik et al., 2021).

Speaking fluently in English requires integrating linguistic elements such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency, alongside psychological readiness to perform in public (Tsang, 2022). However, Anggrisia and Robah (2023) argue that many learners experience persistent challenges due to linguistic limitations and emotional obstacles, such as anxiety of making mistakes, shyness, or a deficiency in self-assurance. These problems are often exacerbated by traditional classroom settings that offer limited interaction and speaking time, resulting in passive learning. As a result, many students remain hesitant and underprepared to speak English spontaneously despite years of formal instruction.

To address these challenges, several schools in Indonesia have introduced extracurricular activities like English-speaking clubs, which provide learners with more relaxed and supportive environments to practice their speaking skills (Anshori, 2023; Holandyah et al., 2023). One such initiative is observed in a high school in Yogyakarta, where the English Speaking Club (ESC) is an alternative platform for students to engage in interactive, enjoyable, and collaborative speaking activities. Hamadameen and Najim (2020) English clubs offer informal spaces where students can communicate in English, build friendships, and gain practical language experience. Students are encouraged to speak confidently and freely through structured discussions, games, debates, and presentations, helping them overcome linguistic and psychological barriers. These settings contribute to skill development, students' self-esteem, and motivation to use English in authentic contexts (Ceron & Miranda, 2023; Dewi et al., 2022).

Research has shown that participation in English clubs can positively influence students' speaking abilities and boost their confidence in public communication (Yuliandasari & Kusriandi, 2018). However, most existing studies have focused on the outcomes of English club participation without exploring the students' personal perceptions, experiences, and challenges in depth. There is a lack of qualitative insight into how students perceive the benefits and difficulties of engaging in such extracurricular activities. This article strives to fill that gap by investigating how students view their experiences in an English-speaking club and how such participation impacts their speaking development. Understanding students' perceptions can provide valuable feedback for educators and school administrators in enhancing English club programs to meet learners' needs more effectively.

Therefore, this research, entitled "Fostering 21st-century Communication: Students' Views on English Club as a Speaking Platform," investigates students' perceptions of the advantages and challenges of joining an English-speaking club as an extracurricular pursuit. By gaining deeper insight into the learner's perspective, this study fosters communicative competence through learner-centered and supportive language environments.

2. Literature Review

2.1. English Club as an Extracurricular Pursuit

Extracurricular activities are vital platforms for learners to foster their interests, capacities, and critical academic competencies, including language skills. According to Kardiansyah and Qodriani (2018), extracurricular activities are student-centered forums that allow learners to explore their potential, talents, and interests beyond the formal classroom environment. The English club has emerged as a prominent avenue for enhancing language learning among the various extracurricular offerings. Hamadameen and Najim (2020) define an English club as a purposeful gathering where

members practice English, typically in a collaborative and informal setting. These clubs offer students a valuable opportunity to engage in authentic English usage, particularly speaking, which is often limited during regular classroom instruction.

Schools that facilitate English clubs as part of extracurricular programs contribute meaningfully to students' language development. Astari and Hadi (2022) emphasize that English clubs nurture student interest in language learning and address the limited time allocated for communicative practice during formal English lessons. These clubs are designed with engaging pedagogical approaches, such as games, quizzes, and discussions, to create a relaxed yet meaningful learning experience(Tran et al., 2024). Teachers play an essential role by ensuring that the environment remains supportive and conducive for expression, making it easier for students to overcome speaking apprehension. By offering free access and institutional support, such clubs become inclusive platforms where students can interact, collaborate, and learn from one another.

Moreover, schools that strategically plan and implement English club activities can significantly enhance students' communicative competence. Tran et al. (2024) argue that the English club is a very successful extracurricular effort to advance students' English communicative skills. According to Iqbal et al. (2021), the successful operation of English clubs requires well-structured lesson planning, interactive teaching methods, and regular evaluations. Activities typically begin with motivational strategies, such as ice-breaking questions in English, followed by immersive speaking tasks that encourage student interaction. Through this structured approach, English clubs offer a balance between informal learning environments and instructional rigor, making them particularly effective for enhancing speaking skills.

Furthermore, understanding students' perceptions of English club activities is crucial for evaluating their impact and refining instructional strategies. Yuliandasari and Kusriandi (2018) highlight that perception, defined as individuals' cognitive and emotional response to a stimulus, varies based on personal experience. Students' feedback can provide meaningful awareness into the club's efficiency in developing their spoken communication skills. When schools recognize these perceptions, they can better align club activities with learners' needs, ensuring that objectives such as confidence-building and speaking fluency are effectively met. Hence, the English club becomes a platform for language enhancement and a reflective space for student growth and engagement.

2.2. Speaking Skills in Language Learning

One of the four fundamental language skills, speaking is the one most directly used to measure proficiency in a language. According to Yuliandasari and Kusriandi (2018), speaking is a process that is both interactive and complicated, and it involves negotiation in real time between the speaker and the listener. In addition, Sjølie et al. (2022) state that learners can communicate their views, share their information, and participate in social interactions when they talk. In a more globalized environment where English serves as a lingua franca, the development of speaking skills is no longer a desirable outcome but rather a fundamental need for communication in academic, professional, and interpersonal settings (Victoria et al., 2025). This highlights the need to structure learning experiences that emphasize the implementation of language practically and spontaneously.

One effective instructional strategy for promoting speaking development is through communicative group activities.Abdolrezapour and Ghanbari (2022) suggest that students grouped according to high, medium, and low language ability levels can benefit from peer support and collaborative learning. Group settings foster a less intimidating environment, enabling students to practice speaking without fearing negative evaluation. The supportive nature of group work can lead to increased self-confidence, self-monitoring, and overall speaking fluency. Yuliandasari and Kusriandi (2018) also note that conversation-based instruction, a common component of English club activities, helps students acquire real-world communication skills. Thus, incorporating engaging and learner-centered methodologies is essential to fostering meaningful speaking practice.

2.3. Joining English Clubs to Improve Speaking Skills

Participation in English clubs offers an experiential and socially enriched context for speaking practice, which is often lacking in conventional classroom settings. According to Yuliandasari and Kusriandi (2018), English clubs are specifically designed to support the acquisition of productive language skills, especially speaking. Regular interaction in such clubs allows learners to move from

passive knowledge to active language use. Kardiansyah and Qodriani (2018) emphasize the importance of teacher and peer support in these settings, as it nurtures a safe space for students to experiment with language without fear of making mistakes. Both talented and struggling learners benefit from English clubs, as the program offers differentiated support tailored to various proficiency levels (Ekawati & Sarie, 2021; Trang, 2024).

The core advantage of English clubs lies in their ability to foster students' confidence, motivation, and linguistic autonomy (Han, 2021; Mustofa & Indah, 2023; Song, 2024). Unlike formal classroom settings that may emphasize written accuracy, English clubs prioritize verbal communication and fluency (Al-khresheh, 2024; Robert & Meenakshi, 2022). This makes them ideal for building public speaking skills, self-expression, and the spontaneous use of English. With frequent exposure and practice, students can gradually overcome performance anxiety, a key barrier to speaking fluency. As such, English clubs serve as a training ground for language practice and a space for personal and interpersonal development.

2.4. Benefits of Joining English-Speaking Clubs

A growing body of research supports the pedagogical value of English-speaking clubs. Holandyah et al. (2024) identify four key benefits: a more enjoyable learning environment, improved self-confidence, expanded speaking opportunities, and vocabulary enrichment. First, English clubs offer a relaxed and flexible learning atmosphere compared to rigid classroom structures, making students more enthusiastic and less anxious (Sheokarah & Pillay, 2021). Second, the frequent speaking practice in front of peers cultivates public speaking confidence, especially for students who are otherwise hesitant (Amerstorfer & Freiin von Münster-Kistner, 2021; Li & Heydarnejad, 2024). Third, these clubs provide equitable speaking opportunities, ensuring all members actively participate in dialogues and role plays (Hwang et al., 2024). Finally, the informal setting facilitates the acquisition of new vocabulary and idiomatic expressions, directly enhancing students' communication skills (Kornbluh, 2023).

These benefits are particularly valuable for high school students who face high academic pressure and limited classroom speaking time. English clubs act as supplementary learning spaces where students feel empowered to use English authentically. As students gain confidence, their speaking proficiency improves, reinforcing their motivation to continue learning. Thus, English clubs offer a holistic model that nurtures linguistic and affective dimensions of language learning (Hijrah & Umar, 2021).

2.5. Challenges in joining the English-Speaking club

Students participating in English clubs face several challenges impacting their language learning, including inconsistent program implementation, vocabulary retention, limited practice opportunities, and lack of confidence (Hamadameen & Najim, 2020; Octaberlina & Muslimin, 2022; Pratiwi, 2024). Firstly, inconsistency in program implementation is a primary issue, with activities often disrupted or canceled due to scheduling conflicts or heavy curricula(Karakuş, 2021). Such irregularity prevents continuous practice, crucial for effective language acquisition. Secondly, vocabulary retention is another significant challenge. Students frequently struggle with memorizing and correctly using new vocabulary. This indicates a need for more effective, frequent vocabulary practice in diverse contexts within club activities to ensure proper retention and application.

Thirdly, limited practice opportunities due to packed school schedules also pose a challenge. Reduced time for extracurricular English club activities restricts essential speaking and listening practice, impeding language skill development. Academic responsibilities often overshadow these crucial practice sessions, limiting students' proficiency. Lastly, lack of confidence remains a common issue, even within supportive club environments. Many students feel insecure about their speaking abilities and are hesitant to express themselves freely, often fearing mistakes. Creating safe, low-pressure environments where mistakes are encouraged as learning opportunities can help address this challenge.

Additionally, psychological factors play a critical role in students' reluctance to speak. Rahmadani et al., (2024) identify fear of judgment, lack of genuine interest, and cultural expectations as common inhibitors. Students may refrain from speaking due to past negative experiences or the perceived risk of embarrassment. Cultural norms discouraging assertive communication can also inhibit active

participation in speaking activities. Therefore, to achieve communicative competence, educators must address learners' cognitive and emotional needs. Creating supportive environments and integrating student-driven initiatives, such as English clubs, are essential strategies for overcoming these challenges.

3. Method

3.1. Research design

This study utilized a qualitative research methodology with a qualitative descriptive design to investigate students' perceptions of their involvement in English-speaking clubs as a tool for improving their communication abilities. A qualitative descriptive design was considered suitable since it emphasizes the exploration of phenomena from the participants' viewpoints, particularly when the study pertains to subjective experiences like perceptions, emotions, and reflections (Ayton, 2023). As Creswell and Creswell (2023) state, this approach allows researchers to remain close to the data, interpreting responses in a naturalistic and minimally abstract manner. This method aimed to capture authentic narratives and identify emerging themes without imposing heavy theoretical frameworks. Qualitative research emphasizes understanding the meanings that individuals assign to their experiences, and this study aimed to describe how students interact with, benefit from, and are challenged by their involvement in extracurricular English-speaking activities. In doing so, the study provides insight into how English clubs foster 21st-century communication competencies among high school learners.

3.2. Research setting

The research was conducted in November 2024 at a public senior high school in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, known for its commitment to extracurricular language development programs. This school was selected for several practical and contextual reasons. Firstly, it actively promotes English clubs as part of its mandatory extracurricular offerings for students in grades ten and eleven, ensuring a consistent pool of active participants. Secondly, the researchers had logistical access to the school, allowing for smooth coordination with teachers and students throughout the data collection process. Additionally, the school setting provided a rich context for observing how structured extracurricular programs supplement formal classroom instruction in language learning. The entire research process—from planning to analysis—spanned approximately three weeks, with results compiled and analyzed in December 2024.

3.3. Research participants

The research participants were chosen through purposive sampling, a strategy commonly employed in qualitative research to ensure information-rich cases. Purposive sampling involves selecting individuals who are knowledgeable about or have experience with the phenomenon being studied (Ahmad & Wilkins, 2024). In this case, eight students from grades ten and eleven were chosen because they were active members of the English club and met specific criteria: regular attendance, involvement in speaking activities, and a recommendation from the club mentor. Before beginning data collection, the researchers secured formal consent from the supervising English teacher and informed the students about the purpose and confidentiality of the study. To maintain anonymity, all participants were assigned pseudonyms: Sarah, Widi, Cindy, Joni, Lia, Lesti, Syifa, and Agni. The participants comprised a blend of male and female perspectives, offering varied insights into the problems and advantages of participating in the English-speaking group. Their involvement was crucial in providing a comprehensive understanding of how English clubs enhance communication skills in an Indonesian EFL setting.

3.4. Data collection method

This study's primary data collection tool was an interview guide designed to elicit students' perceptions in a flexible yet focused manner (Brown & Danaher, 2019). Open-ended questions allowed participants to express their views in their own words, enabling the researchers to explore what they thought and why they held certain beliefs (Popping, 2015). Additional tools used during the interviews included a mobile phone audio recorder for accuracy, a notebook and pen for notetaking, and a mobile device for organizational purposes. The interview protocol addressed three core areas: students' experiences in the English club, the perceived benefits of club participation concerning

speaking skills, and their challenges. These tools combined facilitated the researchers in gathering comprehensive narrative data to inform the theme analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2023).

The data collection process was conducted through in-person interviews at the school. Before the interviews, the researchers developed an interview guideline to ensure that all relevant topics were covered while maintaining flexibility in the conversation flow. After obtaining the necessary permissions from the school's English club coordinator, the researchers arranged individual interview schedules with participants at mutually convenient times. The interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia to ensure clarity and comfort for both the researchers and participants, facilitating more profound and nuanced responses. Each session lasted between 10 and 30 minutes and was recorded (with consent) for accuracy and transcription purposes. The decision to use the native language also enhanced rapport and reduced language-related anxiety, which was particularly important given the research's focus on speaking performance.

3.5. Data analyses

The qualitative data gathered from the interviews were analyzed through a multi-phase coding process that included transcription, member checking, and three levels of coding: open, axial, and selective (Akkaya, 2023). The initial phase, transcription, entailed transforming audio recordings into written text. This stage was essential for facilitating comprehensive examination and analysis. The second phase, member checking, let participants to examine their transcripts to confirm the appropriate representation of their perspectives—a crucial procedure for augmenting credibility. (Hijrah & Umar, 2021).

Following transcription, the researchers applied open coding by labeling significant phrases and ideas found in the raw data, as recommended by Glaser (2016). These initial codes were then examined through axial coding, where analogous codes were classified and linked to emerging themes (Akkaya, 2023). Finally, through selective coding, the researchers identified the core categories that best represented the study's central findings and aligned these with the original research questions (Riazi et al., 2023). This step involved refining and integrating themes into coherent subchapters for reporting.

To ensure the authenticity of the data, the researchers employed member checking by sharing interview transcripts with the respective participants. This step allowed each student to confirm the accuracy of the transcribed content and offer clarification or corrections if necessary. According to Sahakyan (2023), this strategy improves the credibility and authenticity of qualitative data by ensuring that the researchers' interpretations accurately represent the real experiences of the participants. All participants responded positively, and no major revisions were needed, indicating that the findings represented their perspectives fairly.

Establishing trustworthiness is fundamental to ensuring the quality and reliability of qualitative research. Drawing on Lincoln and Guba's (1985) framework, the researchers addressed four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was improved through prolonged engagement, careful coding, and member checking (Rowlands, 2021; Singh et al., 2021). Transferability was supported by providing rich contextual detail about the research setting, participants, and procedures, enabling others to assess relevance to similar settings(Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Singh et al., 2021). Dependability was ensured through a systematic research process documentation, including decision-making and methodological consistency(Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Singh et al., 2021). Lastly, confirmability was achieved by grounding interpretations in participant narratives rather than researcher bias(Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Singh et al., 2021). These strategies collectively ensured that the study's findings are not only trustworthy but also meaningful in advancing understanding of how English clubs foster students' oral proficiency and communicative confidence in 21st-century educational contexts.

4. Findings and Discussion

This section delineates the results and discourse from two principal research questions that directed the study: What are students' views on the advantages of participating in an English-speaking club to enhance their speaking abilities? What are students' perspectives regarding the difficulty of

participating in an English-speaking club? The conclusions derive from qualitative data obtained from comprehensive interviews with eight participants.

4.1. Advantages of Participating in an English-Speaking Club (ESC) for Enhancing Speaking Proficiency

This part reports outcomes associated to the first research query, which explores the perceived advantages of joining an English-speaking club for improving students' speaking abilities. Based on thematic analysis, four key benefits emerged from participant responses: (1) the opportunity to practice English, (2) improvement in English language skills, (3) enhanced English fluency, and (4) increased confidence in speaking English. These benefits demonstrate the value of the English-speaking club as a complementary platform to formal classroom instruction.

1) Having the Opportunity to Practice English

One of the most widely recognized advantages of entering the English-speaking club is the consistent opportunity to practice speaking English. Seven out of eight participants reported that the club created a space where they were encouraged and, at times, required to use English actively. This exposure fostered more frequent use of the language in a practical and interactive context. For instance, Sarah explained, *"The mentor provides materials such as English quizzes, presentations, and videos (vlogs) in English, which are very helpful in increasing vocabulary and practicing speaking in English."* Similarly, Cindy shared, "If we actively participate in activities at the English-Speaking Club, it supports me, such as English debate activities." These accounts highlight how structured and dynamic activities contribute to their development.

Joni added, "Very supportive; many activities in this club require me to continue practicing speaking in English, such as games and English presentations." Lia also expressed that the club had significantly improved her pronunciation: "When students mispronounce vocabulary, the mentor will note down the incorrect part and provide feedback to correct it." Lesti remarked, "Very supportive because activities at ESC, such as speeches, expressing opinions, questions and answers, and presentations, influence me actively." Syifa echoed this sentiment, saying, "One of the activities that honed my speaking skills was debate. At that time, I had to prepare myself thoroughly to speak English in front of the class without feeling nervous." Agni stated, "Very supportive of practicing my speaking, such as storytelling, presentation, and speech. We are required to speak English in front of the class."

The findings highlight that consistent English practice is a key benefit of joining English-speaking clubs, as shared by nearly all participants. These clubs offer dynamic, task-based environments—through activities like debates, storytelling, and quizzes—where students actively engage in spoken English. Sarah's and Agni's experiences illustrate how such structured tasks promote meaningful verbal interaction. This aligns with Hamadameen and Najim (2020), who view English clubs as informal yet purposeful spaces for communication beyond rigid classroom settings. The variety of activities and feedback, such as Syifa's debates and Lia's pronunciation corrections, reflect a layered pedagogical approach supporting continuous improvement. As Astari and Hadi (2022) argue, these clubs effectively supplement limited classroom speaking time by providing informal, confidence-building opportunities. The role of mentors, noted by students, supports Tran et al.'s (2024) call for structured, student-friendly environments that ease speaking anxiety. Ultimately, English clubs bridge the gap in spontaneous oral practice, making them vital to communicative development in EFL contexts.

2) Improving English Language Skills

In addition to speaking practice, many students observed noticeable improvements in core English language skills, particularly vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Four participants explicitly acknowledged that their participation in the English-speaking club contributed to their linguistic development. Sarah shared, *"My English vocabulary has increased."* Likewise, Cindy said, "My grammar and vocabulary have increased, and my English knowledge has also increased." Their statements suggest that exposure to varied topics and interactive communication in the club context enhanced lexical knowledge and grammatical understanding.

Joni also reported gains, stating, "I got much new vocabulary and learned a lot about English." Meanwhile, Lesti added, "My vocabulary has increased, and I also learned grammar at ESC." These

accounts indicate that the English club environment effectively supplements acquiring fundamental language components.

The findings show that English-speaking clubs are vital in improving students' fluency and overall language proficiency—particularly vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Participants like Sarah, Cindy, Joni, and Lesti credited club activities with enhancing their linguistic skills, as seen in Sarah's note on vocabulary gains and Cindy's on grammar improvement. These outcomes align with Hamadameen and Najim (2020), who highlight English clubs as platforms for sustained exposure to varied, authentic English input. The clubs support both speaking practice and deeper lexical and grammatical understanding through activities like debates, storytelling, and vocabulary games. Majaliwa et al. (2024) similarly emphasize that these contexts strengthen core language components necessary for effective communication. Wahyuniati et al. (2020) further affirm that such structured extracurriculars complement classroom learning by boosting overall English performance. Personalized feedback and regular exposure help internalize language patterns, linking fluency with accuracy. Thus, English clubs build confidence and systematically develop students' linguistic competence across academic and social settings..

3) Improving English Fluency

Fluency is often cited as the hallmark of effective communication, and five participants reported a marked improvement in their fluency after joining the English-speaking club. Their responses highlighted the quantity of speaking practice and the structured nature of the exercises, which helped shape their oral language output. Sarah explained, "My pronunciation and speaking in English have become more precise and more fluent." Widi also noted progress: "So, I know the correct pronunciation even though it is not very good."

Lia's experience reveals a transformation from confusion to clarity: "Before joining the English club, my English was still confusing, but after joining ESC, my speaking has become a little more fluent, unlike before." Syifa attributed her improvement to grammatical awareness: "My way of speaking has become more structured because I learned much grammar at ESC." Agni, too, remarked, "When I joined the English club, my pronunciation improved because I practiced correct pronunciation in this club."

The findings indicate that fluency development is one of the most valued outcomes of English-speaking club participation, with five students—Sarah, Widi, Lia, Syifa, and Agni—reporting clear improvements. They attributed this progress to regular practice, structured activities, and peer interaction. Sarah noted improved precision and fluency, while Syifa emphasized more structured speech due to enhanced grammar awareness. These accounts show that fluency stems not just from frequent speaking, but also from deliberate exposure to language forms in communicative tasks. This aligns with Wahyuniati et al. (2020), who highlight the role of structured, repeated practice in building fluency. Similarly, Rizqiningsih et al. (2019) and Hijrah & Umar (2021) affirm that pronunciation and spontaneous speaking in clubs refine oral competence beyond what formal classrooms allow. Feedback and repetition, as supported by Abdolrezapour and Ghanbari (2022), also create a low-pressure environment where students can confidently experiment with language. Ultimately, English clubs promote fluency through motivation, practice, and interaction, which is key to developing real-world communicative skills.

4) Improving Confidence in Speaking English

Another important benefit consistently mentioned by participants was increased self-confidence when speaking English. Five students shared that their regular involvement in the English-speaking club helped them feel more at ease during public speaking activities. Sarah succinctly put it: *"*Yes, just become more confident." Widi elaborated, "I am more confident speaking English in public because my vocabulary is getting wider." This suggests that linguistic competence often reinforces emotional readiness.

Cindy also reported an increase in confidence. Joni explained his growth through experience: "Because I often present using English, I am more confident in speaking English without being afraid of making mistakes, even though I am still not very fluent." Syifa also acknowledged personal progress: "At the beginning of the meeting in this club, I felt nervous speaking English, but after I joined the English-speaking club, I became more courageous in speaking English." Lastly, Agni stated, "More fluent in speaking English. I am also more confident in communicating in English."

improving students' confidence in speaking English is one of the most significant psychological benefits of joining English-speaking clubs. Five participants—Sarah, Widi, Cindy, Joni, and Syifa—shared that regular, supportive speaking opportunities boosted their self-assurance. Sarah's brief remark, "Just become more confident," and Widi's link between growing vocabulary and public confidence show how language gains and emotional readiness go hand in hand. These findings align with Yuliandasari and Kusriandi (2018), who emphasize that low-pressure environments reduce anxiety and foster self-belief. Syifa's journey from nervousness to courage reflects the impact of gradual exposure and peer support, echoed by Wahyuniati et al. (2020), who note that confidence grows with practice and visible progress in language skills. Through varied tasks like debates and speeches, clubs create safe spaces for learners to take risks and overcome the fear of mistakes. Thus, beyond language development, English clubs play a crucial role in building the confidence essential for real-world communication.

4.2. The Challenges of Joining an English-Speaking Club for Speaking Skills

This section describes the answers related to the succeeding research inquiry, which explores the challenges students face in joining an English-speaking club aimed at improving their speaking skills. Grounded on the analysis of interviews with eight active club participants, three key themes emerged as central challenges: 1. fear of making mistakes in speech, 2. apprehension toward impromptu speaking situations, and 3. restricted participation time within the English-speaking. These challenges are discussed below, accompanied by participants' direct quotes and interpretations supported by relevant literature.

1)   Fear of Making Mistakes in Speech

One of the most prominent challenges reported by participants was the worry about making mistakes, especially related to sentence structure and vocabulary use during speaking activities. Four students—Sarah, Widi, Cindy, and Joni—openly expressed anxiety and self-doubt when they were expected to construct English sentences. Sarah shared, "Sometimes I am still afraid of making grammar mistakes; making sentences like that is hard because I am also a person who forgets quickly." Her statement reflects linguistic limitations and the psychological pressure of speaking accurately. Widi echoed a similar sentiment: "For me, the grammar is still confusing, and I am still afraid of what would happen if I made a mistake. However, my friends and mentors encourage me, saying, 'It is okay… just be assured,' so I become more confident, but sometimes I am still afraid." Despite support from peers and mentors, the fear of errors remained a barrier for her.

Cindy also noted, *"*Sometimes I'm afraid of making mistakes. 'Oh… is the grammar right? Sometimes, I get nervous before speaking. Luckily, my friends at ESC are all open. They will tell me if there is a mistake, and no one has a bad feeling like that." Her account illustrates how peer support helped alleviate anxiety. Joni admitted that, *"*This is the worst. I still do not understand many words, so I fear making mistakes." His fear stemmed primarily from limited vocabulary, a common hurdle for many EFL learners.

The findings reveal that fear of making mistakes, especially in grammar, vocabulary, and sentence construction, is a major psychological barrier for English-speaking club participants. Sarah, Widi, Cindy, and Joni described how anxiety over errors often discouraged them from speaking. Sarah and Widi highlighted confusion and self-doubt in constructing sentences, reflecting cognitive and emotional challenges. This aligns with Anggrisia and Robah (2023), who note that fear of judgment and linguistic insecurity hinder oral performance. Peer support plays a crucial role, as Cindy's experience showed how a safe, accepting environment helped reduce anxiety. However, as Joni's struggle with vocabulary indicates, linguistic gaps can intensify fear. Kashinathan and Aziz (2021) support this, noting vocabulary limitations often undermine speaking confidence. Thus, fear of mistakes is not just linguistic—it is emotional and cognitive. To address this, English clubs must intentionally foster mistake-friendly cultures through peer support, affirming feedback, and low-pressure speaking tasks, helping students build resilience and communicative confidence.

2)   Apprehension toward impromptu speaking situations

Another significant challenge highlighted by participants was the apprehension toward impromptu speaking situations. Four students—Lia, Lesti, Syifa, and Agni—expressed discomfort and anxiety when faced with impromptu speaking tasks. Lia stated, "Sometimes in this ESC, we are asked to speak spontaneously using English without preparation, so I find it a little tricky because there are many

vocabulary words that I have not memorized.*"* Her statement reflects a common challenge among EFL learners: struggling to recall and use appropriate vocabulary on the spot. Lesti admitted, "I am afraid if I am asked to go forward without any preparation." The lack of preparation time heightened her anxiety.

Syifa voiced similar concerns, saying, "I am afraid that an unexpected activity may require me to speak English." Her apprehension points to a fear of uncertainty and a lack of readiness for spontaneous communication. Agni added, "My English skills are still inadequate compared to other friends, so I feel nervous about speaking English without notes." He perceived a gap between his abilities and peers, contributing to feelings of inadequacy and hesitation.

Apprehension toward impromptu speaking was a significant challenge among participants, as speaking spontaneously without preparation triggered anxiety and performance pressure. Lia, Lesti, Syifa, and Agni expressed discomfort with unplanned speaking tasks, citing limited vocabulary and fear of making mistakes. These concerns reflect common struggles in EFL contexts, where lexical recall and fluency are difficult under pressure. Zondag (2024) supports this, noting that spontaneous speaking demands real-time processing and is often hindered by low self-confidence and fear of peer judgment. Agni's comparison to more fluent peers and Syifa's fear of unexpected tasks illustrate how psychological factors can inhibit participation. As Fadhilah (2022) and Rahmadani et al. (2024) affirm, such unpredictability increases anxiety, especially for students with limited proficiency. To mitigate this, mentors should scaffold impromptu speaking through gradual exposure, structured support, and a low-pressure environment that normalizes mistakes, encouraging learners to develop spontaneous communication skills with confidence.

3) Restricted participation time within the English-speaking

The final challenge from the interviews was limited participation time within the English-speaking activities, which students felt restricted their learning and practice. Three participants—Sarah, Joni, and Lia—expressed that the allocated time was insufficient to accommodate all planned activities. Sarah remarked, "Sometimes, because the activities are so exciting, we do not realize the time is over." Her experience indicates that engaging activities often run out of time before achieving their full potential. Joni shared, "Sometimes, because there are too many activities in ESC, we are hampered by time, which inevitably must be cut, and we must continue to the next meeting." He felt that time constraints frequently disrupted the flow and continuity of learning.

Lia added, "Sometimes, ESC's time is limited, making us rush." Her statement captures the tension between the richness of content and the practical limitations of time within extracurricular settings. The issue of time constraints is not uncommon in school-based extracurricular programs. Liana et al. (2024) argue that limited time often prevents full delivery of activity materials and limits students' active engagement. Activities such as storytelling, presentations, and debates typically require ample preparation and execution time to be effective, which becomes difficult when meetings are brief.

Time constraints emerged as a key challenge, limiting the effectiveness of English club activities. Sarah, Joni, and Lia shared that sessions often ended before tasks were completed, cutting valuable interaction and reflection short. Their experiences reflect how engaging activities are frequently rushed due to insufficient time. This aligns with Liana et al. (2024), who point to scheduling conflicts and curriculum overload as systemic barriers in extracurricular programs. Although clubs aim to enhance language learning, their marginal status often leads to inconsistent delivery and limited speaking practice. Wahyuniati et al. (2020) highlight that sustained and uninterrupted practice is essential for developing fluency. Schools should consider extending session times, increasing meeting frequency, and adopting flexible time management strategies to address this. Institutional recognition of English clubs as core language development platforms could improve support and scheduling. Without adequate time, even well-designed activities risk losing impact—making time allocation a critical investment in students' communicative growth.

5. Conclusion

This study highlights the significant benefits and challenges associated with participating in English-speaking clubs (ESCs) as a platform for enhancing students' speaking skills. The findings demonstrate that ESCs provide a supportive environment that fosters increased practice, improved language proficiency, greater fluency, and boosted confidence. Students also reported notable improvements in vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, which align with the core goals of enhancing communicative competence. However, students faced various challenges, including fear of making mistakes, apprehension towards impromptu speaking situations, and limited participation time. These barriers, while common, can impede the effective development of speaking skills.

The findings of this study hold significant implications for educators and school administrators. To improve the effectiveness of ESCs, teachers should establish a more organized yet nurturing atmosphere that facilitates consistent and varied speaking activities. Additionally, addressing psychological barriers by cultivating a mistake-friendly atmosphere and promoting peer support can help mitigate anxiety and fear of speaking. To ensure more substantial engagement, extending the time allocated for ESC activities or increasing the frequency of sessions could provide students with more practice opportunities. Finally, implementing scaffolded tasks that progressively increase in complexity may assist students in overcoming the fear of impromptu speaking. By addressing these challenges and capitalizing on the benefits, ESCs can become a more effective tool for developing 21st-century communication skills in students.

Declarations

Author contribution	:	The 1st author initiated the idea, wrote the draft, and finalized the manuscript. 2nd author provided feedback for improvement and proofread the final draft. The 3rd author collected the data. The 4th author proofread the draft.
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Ethics Declaration	:	We, as the authors, affirm that this research adheres to the ethical regulations of our university. We obtained necessary permissions from relevant institutes during the data collection process. We support the principles of academic integrity and honesty as upheld by the Teaching English as a Foreign Language Journal (TEFLJ) and maintain high standards of personal conduct in our professional practices.
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