

## STUDENTS' PERCEPTION ON THE EFFECT OF ENGLISH SPEECH COMPETITION TOWARD SPEAKING SKILLS AT SMA ISTIQAMAH MUHAMMADIYAH SAMARINDA

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### ABSTRACT

*The development of speaking skills among high school students is essential for effective communication and future success. This study investigates students' perceptions of the impact of participating in English speech competitions on their speaking abilities at SMA Istiqamah Muhammadiyah Samarinda. Additionally, it explores the challenges that hinder students from maximizing the benefits of these competitions. Using a mixed-method approach, data were collected from students who participated in English competitions over the past two years. The research utilized questionnaires adapted from previous studies and semi-structured interviews to gather insights from the students. Supplementary data were obtained through documentation of students' assignments from the competitions. The findings reveal that English speech competitions significantly enhance students' speaking skills by increasing their confidence, enriching their vocabulary, and improving their pronunciation and fluency. However, factors such as limited practice opportunities, anxiety, and inadequate feedback mechanisms were identified as barriers to achieving the full benefits. This study highlights the importance of incorporating structured and supportive speech competition programs in the curriculum to foster better speaking skills among students.*

**Keywords:** High School Students, English Speech Competitions, Speaking Skills, Learning Styles, Curriculum Development.

### INTRODUCTION

The primary goal of teaching speaking skills at the high school level is to prepare students for effective communication, equipping them with fluency and accuracy essential for their future careers and daily interactions (Kusrini, 2012). Mastery of various speaking skills—vocabulary, pronunciation, intonation, fluency, and accuracy—is critical. Fluency issues can significantly impede communication, making it challenging for listeners to comprehend the message. Conversely, speaking English clearly and smoothly can enhance communicative competence.

EFL students in Indonesia face numerous challenges when learning to speak English, such as limited vocabulary, low self-esteem, and anxiety about pronunciation (Suryani et al., 2020). Since English is a foreign language in Indonesia, these challenges are further compounded. Speaking skills are categorized into accuracy, which involves using proper grammar, vocabulary, and

pronunciation, and fluency, which focuses on smooth, effortless communication without frequent pauses (Derakhshan et al., 2016). To achieve accuracy, students must concentrate on language structures, vocabulary, and correct pronunciation, which helps them communicate more effectively and confidently.

Many EFL students tend to be passive learners and fear using English in their daily lives due to the apprehension of making mistakes. This fear often prevents them from incorporating English into their daily routines and hinders their ability to express themselves orally. Other factors that impede the development of speaking skills include time constraints, crowded classrooms, limited opportunities for practice outside the classroom, and inadequate multimedia technology facilities.

Observations at SMA Istiqamah Muhammadiyah Samarinda in January 2023 highlighted a program designed to enhance students' English-speaking skills through participation in English speech competitions at both city and national levels. These competitions provide students with real-life practice opportunities, helping them overcome fear and anxiety associated with public speaking (Lutviana, 2016). By participating in these competitions, students can boost their confidence, reduce their fear of making mistakes, and improve their fluency and accuracy in speaking.

Preparing for speech competitions encourages students to expand their vocabulary and improve their pronunciation and intonation. Crafting well-organized speeches and practicing correct pronunciation helps students become more aware of language structures and vocabulary usage, which is crucial for achieving accuracy. Furthermore, these competitions offer a supportive environment where students receive constructive feedback from judges and peers, helping them identify and work on their weaknesses.

The research aims to investigate students' perceptions of the impact of English speech competitions on their speaking skills and identify the main challenges they face in maximizing these benefits. Understanding students' perceptions can lead to the development of more innovative and responsive teaching strategies. This study will provide a theoretical overview of speaking abilities, the conceptual framework, and the definition of debate competition.

Perception is a process involving experiences gained through the five senses, encompassing selection, interpretation, and reaction stages. It includes the selection of sensory inputs, organization of these inputs into meaningful experiences, and interpretation where meaning is attached to the stimuli. Perception can be positive or negative, influencing human actions (Riadil, 2020). Positive perceptions encourage continued effort and application, while negative perceptions lead to passivity or rejection.

Speech contests, defined as public speaking events where students deliver speeches to an audience, aim to persuade, inform, or entertain (Templeton & Fitzgerald, 1913). These contests help boost students' confidence and promote autonomous speaking activities. According to Thornbury (2005), autonomous speaking tasks should be productive, purposeful, interactive, challenging, safe, and authentic. Speech contests fulfill these criteria by requiring students to deliver speeches in English, set clear outcomes, encourage interaction with the audience, and provide a safe environment for practice.

Effective speaking skills are crucial for communication, both inside and outside the classroom, enhancing employment opportunities and educational prospects (Newton & Nation, 2020). Speaking is considered the most challenging of the four language skills (Bailey & Savage, 1994), but it is essential for achieving overall language proficiency. Proficient speakers can communicate ideas and messages more effectively, benefiting from better job opportunities and higher earning potential (Othman et al., 2015).

Students often face several problems in developing speaking skills, such as low engagement, inhibition, and comprehension issues (Al Hosni, 2014). Inhibition can silence students in class, as they fear making mistakes and facing criticism. Emotional factors, such as feeling embarrassed or lacking confidence, also impact their speaking abilities (Lawtie, 2004). Large class sizes limit speaking opportunities, as only one student can speak at a time while others listen, leading to uneven participation.

To address these challenges, EFL students need increased practice in speaking to enhance their vocabulary, knowledge, and self-assurance (Derakhshan et al., 2016). Creating a supportive learning environment that encourages practice,

reduces fear of mistakes, and provides constructive feedback is crucial for developing effective speaking skills. Speech competitions can play a significant role in this process by offering structured, real-life speaking opportunities that help students build confidence and improve their fluency and accuracy.

## **MATERIALS AND METHOD**

This research aims to understand social events from the perspective of human participants using a mixed-method approach, combining qualitative (interviews) and quantitative (questionnaires) methods (Creswell, 2017). The study focuses on students in grades X, XI, and XII at SMA Istiqamah Muhammadiyah Samarinda who participated in English competitions over the past two years. The school was chosen for its active encouragement of extracurricular activities and numerous achievements in English speech competitions.

The research sample was purposely selected to include students with varying levels of English proficiency and experience in competitions, ensuring a representative mix of abilities and perceptions. This approach provided comprehensive insights into students' views on the impact of English competitions on their speaking skills. The findings are relevant for curriculum development and English language learning programs at Istiqamah Muhammadiyah and other schools aiming to enhance students' English-speaking abilities.

## **RESULTS**

The research gathered data from questionnaires and interviews with students at SMA Istiqamah Muhammadiyah Samarinda who participated in English speech competitions in the past two years. The questionnaire had 21 questions about students' perceptions of the competitions' impact on their speaking skills, completed by 53 respondents (35 male, 28 female). Three male students participated in interviews to provide additional insights into challenges faced.

**Table 1.** The result of students' perceptions of the influence of English speech competitions on the improvement of their speaking skills

No	Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Participating in English speech competitions has noticeably enhanced my speaking skills in English.	1,6%	6,3%	81%	11,1%
2	I feel more confident in my ability to speak English fluently after participating in English speech competitions.	3,2 %	12,7 %	73, %	11,1 %
3	The feedback and evaluations received during English speech competitions have been helpful in improving my speaking skills.	3,2 %	6,3 %	73, %	17,5 %
4	Engaging in English speech competitions has provided effective practice opportunities to enhance my speaking abilities.	1,6 %	6,3 %	71,4 %	20,6 %
5	Participating in English speech competitions has increased my motivation to improve my speaking skills in English.	1,6 %	9,5 %	65,1 %	23,8 %
6	I believe that English speech competitions have positively impacted my overall communication proficiency in English.	1,6 %	7,9 %	81, %	9,5 %
7	I perceive that my ability to express ideas clearly in English has improved through participation in speech competitions.	1,6 %	7,9 %	76,2 %	14,3 %
8	English speech competitions have contributed significantly to the development of my public speaking skills.	1,6 %	7,9 %	81, %	9,5 %
9	I attribute personal growth and development to my participation in English speech competitions.	1,6 %	7,9 %	76,2 %	14,3 %
10	Overall, English speech competitions have played a crucial role in enhancing my speaking skills.	1,6 %	7,9 %	76,2 %	14,3 %
11	Participating in English speech competitions has increased my self-confidence in speaking English.	1,6 %	7,9 %	76,2 %	14,3 %

12	I feel more assured about my speaking abilities in English as a result of participating in speech competitions.	1,6 %	6,3 %	84,1 %	7,9 %
13	English speech competitions have positively impacted my self-esteem regarding my English speaking skills.	1,6 %	11,1 %	76,2 %	11,1 %
14	I believe that my pronunciation has improved due to participating in English speech competitions.	1,6 %	7,9 %	79,4 %	11,1 %
15	Engaging in speech competitions has enhanced my fluency in English speaking.	1,6 %	4,8 %	76,2 %	17,5 %
16	I feel more comfortable expressing myself verbally in English after participating in speech competitions.	3,2 %	6,3 %	76,2 %	14,3 %
17	Participating in speech competitions has increased my motivation to practice and develop my speaking skills in English.	3,2 %	1,6 %	76,2 %	19, %
18	I am more determined to excel in English speaking because of my participation in speech competitions.	1,6 %	4,8 %	76,2 %	17,5 %
19	Engaging in speech competitions has made me more enthusiastic about enhancing my English speaking skills.	1,6 %	1,6 %	79,4 %	17,5 %
20	I am more inclined to seek out opportunities to practice speaking English outside of the classroom due to my participation in speech competitions.	1,6 %	9,5 %	76,2 %	12,7 %
21	Overall, participating in English speech competitions has had a significant impact on boosting my self-confidence, improving various aspects of my speaking, and increasing my motivation to excel in speaking English.	1,6 %	6,3 %	73, %	19, %

Results showed that most students had a positive perception of the competitions' influence on their speaking skills: 81% agreed and 11.1% strongly agreed that their skills improved, and 73% agreed and 11.1% strongly agreed that their confidence increased. Feedback from the competitions was also seen as

beneficial, with 73% agreeing and 17.5% strongly agreeing it helped improve their skills. Moreover, 71.4% agreed and 20.6% strongly agreed that the competitions offered effective practice opportunities.

Motivation to improve speaking skills increased for 65.1% of students, and 23.8% strongly agreed. The competitions also positively impacted overall communication abilities (81% agreed, 9.5% strongly agreed) and public speaking skills (81% agreed, 9.5% strongly agreed). Additionally, 76.2% agreed and 14.3% strongly agreed that they experienced personal growth through these competitions.

Improvements were noted in pronunciation (79.4% agreed, 11.1% strongly agreed) and fluency (76.2% agreed, 17.5% strongly agreed). Students felt more comfortable expressing themselves in English and were more motivated to practice outside the classroom. Overall, 73% agreed and 19% strongly agreed that the competitions significantly boosted their confidence and motivation to excel in English speaking.

Interview responses highlighted three main challenges:

**Time Constraints:** Limited preparation time (2-3 weeks) left students feeling rushed.

*"Preparation time was only 3 weeks, with guidance from the English teacher."* (Student 2)

*"Preparation was only for 1 month."* (Student 1)

*"Preparation was only for 2 weeks due to school exams."* (Student 3)

**Competition Pressure:** Facing more fluent or experienced participants increased nervousness and reduced confidence.

*"Of course, there will be nervousness and lack of confidence."* (Student 3)

*"The problem is usually nervousness to the point of sweating."* (Student 2)

**Lack of Experience:** First-time participants, especially at national levels, felt overwhelmed.

*"This is my first time participating in an English speech competition, especially at the national level."* (Student 1)

Overall, the study concluded that English speech competitions positively influence students' speaking skills, confidence, and motivation, despite challenges like time constraints, competition pressure, and lack of experience.

## **DISCUSSION**

The research findings indicate that students generally hold a positive view of how English speech competitions contribute to the improvement of their speaking skills. They believe these competitions significantly enhance their abilities and boost their confidence in speaking English. This aligns with the conclusions drawn by Lutviana (2016), who emphasizes that English speech competitions are crucial for developing students' speaking skills. These events not only provide students with opportunities to use English in real-life scenarios but also help them overcome the fear and anxiety associated with public speaking.

According to Lutviana (2016) shows that speech competitions allow students to showcase their potential and motivate them to work diligently to overcome feelings that might hinder their fluency and confidence. This is consistent with the current research findings, where students reported increased motivation and an improved ability to manage the pressures of competition.

This research also shows that these factors collectively influence students' speaking skills in the context of English speech competitions. The interaction between preparation time, competition pressure, and lack of experience creates a complex challenge for students. Preparation time is crucial, as adequate practice allows students to refine their skills and build confidence. When preparation time is limited, students may struggle to achieve the desired level of proficiency and originality in their speeches. This is in line with the findings of Nugent (2018), who emphasized the importance of balancing skill development with maintaining students' authentic expression.

Competition pressure is another significant factor, as the high-stakes environment of speech contests can heighten anxiety and inhibit performance. This pressure is compounded when students compare themselves to peers who appear more adept, as noted by Littlewood (2007). Such comparisons can exacerbate feelings of inadequacy and stress, making it difficult for students to perform to the best of their abilities. The current research echoes these observations, highlighting the impact of psychological stressors on student performance.

Furthermore, a lack of experience can hinder students' ability to navigate the demands of English speech competitions effectively. Novice participants may find

it challenging to manage their time efficiently, organize their thoughts coherently, and deliver their speeches with confidence. This inexperience can be a significant barrier to success, as it limits the students' ability to perform under pressure and adapt to the dynamic environment of a competition.

Environmental factors, particularly time constraints, also play a crucial role in shaping speaking performance. As Nation and Newton (2020) point out, the ability to perform well in speaking tasks is often influenced by the surrounding conditions, including the amount of time available for preparation and practice. The current research supports this view, indicating that limited practice time can significantly impair students' performance in English speech competitions.

Moreover, as Khan (2014) points out, attitude and motivation are strong factors behind success in learning English. A positive attitude towards learning and high levels of motivation can drive students to engage more deeply with the material, practice diligently, and persevere through challenges. These psychological factors are essential for overcoming the various obstacles encountered in speech competitions, such as nervousness, self-doubt, and external pressure. The complex nature of these factors highlights the importance of a holistic approach to supporting students in developing their speaking skills, ensuring they have the resources, encouragement, and time needed to succeed.

## **CONCLUSION**

The research findings indicate that students at SMA Istiqamah Muhammadiyah Samarinda hold a positive view of English speech competitions and their role in improving speaking skills. A significant majority of students reported enhanced speaking abilities, increased confidence, and greater motivation as a result of participating in these competitions. The positive impact of speech competitions is attributed to the real-life practice opportunities, constructive feedback, and the supportive environment they provide.

Despite these benefits, students face several challenges that limit their ability to gain maximum benefits from speech competitions. Time constraints for preparation are a major issue, often leaving students feeling rushed and underprepared. The pressure of competing against more experienced participants increases nervousness and decreases confidence. Additionally, the lack of

experience among many students adds to their difficulties in effectively preparing for and participating in competitions.

To address these challenges, it is crucial for educators to provide more extensive preparation time and create a supportive learning environment that helps students manage competition pressure. Encouraging regular practice and offering guidance to less experienced students can also enhance their readiness and confidence. By implementing these strategies, educators can help students overcome obstacles and fully benefit from the opportunities provided by English speech competitions.

In conclusion, while English speech competitions significantly contribute to the development of students' speaking skills, a holistic approach that addresses preparation time, competition pressure, and student experience is essential for maximizing their effectiveness. These findings suggest that with appropriate support and resources, speech competitions can play a pivotal role in improving students' speaking abilities and overall communication proficiency.

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