

Students' Perception Toward English Club Extracurricular in Speaking Practice at MTs Al-Islah Jenggawah

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Abstract

Speaking is one of the most essential yet most challenging skills for EFL learners. Limited practice opportunities and high anxiety in formal classrooms remain major barriers for Indonesian students. Although previous studies by Armita (2019) and Atika (2024) have examined students' perceptions of English Club extracurricular activities, those studies were conducted at the senior high school level, leaving a gap at the junior high school level within a pesantren environment. This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach with 16 Grade VIII students at MTs Al-Islah Jenggawah selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document review, then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model with source and method triangulation. The findings revealed that the English Club was implemented through five systematic stages – warm-up, main activity, presentation, feedback, and closing – using materials progressively contextualized to students' daily and pesantren life. Students held both positive perceptions, including a comfortable atmosphere, increased confidence, and vocabulary development, and negative perceptions, including public speaking anxiety, limited vocabulary, and insufficient meeting frequency. It is concluded that the English Club has been implemented effectively and contributed positively to students' speaking development, although vocabulary-building activities, graduated speaking tasks, and increased meeting frequency are recommended for further improvement.

Keywords: Students' Perception, English Club, Extracurricular, Speaking Practice

Abstrak

Berbicara merupakan salah satu keterampilan yang paling penting sekaligus paling menantang bagi pembelajar bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing (EFL). Keterbatasan kesempatan untuk berlatih dan tingginya kecemasan dalam pembelajaran formal di kelas masih menjadi kendala utama bagi siswa di Indonesia. Meskipun penelitian terdahulu oleh Armita (2019) dan Atika (2024) telah mengkaji persepsi siswa terhadap kegiatan ekstrakurikuler English Club, penelitian tersebut dilakukan pada jenjang sekolah menengah atas sehingga masih terdapat kesenjangan penelitian pada jenjang sekolah menengah pertama, khususnya dalam lingkungan pesantren. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif dengan melibatkan 16 siswa kelas VIII MTs Al-Islah Jenggawah yang dipilih melalui teknik purposive sampling. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi nonpartisipatif, wawancara semiterstruktur, dan studi dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan model interaktif Miles dan Huberman

dengan menerapkan triangulasi sumber dan metode. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kegiatan English Club dilaksanakan melalui lima tahapan sistematis, yaitu pemanasan (warm-up), kegiatan inti (main activity), presentasi (presentation), pemberian umpan balik (feedback), dan penutup (closing), dengan menggunakan materi yang secara bertahap dikontekstualisasikan dengan kehidupan sehari-hari siswa dan lingkungan pesantren. Siswa menunjukkan persepsi positif, antara lain terciptanya suasana belajar yang nyaman, meningkatnya kepercayaan diri, dan berkembangnya kosakata. Namun, ditemukan pula beberapa persepsi negatif, seperti kecemasan ketika berbicara di depan umum, keterbatasan kosakata, dan frekuensi pertemuan yang masih kurang. Dengan demikian, dapat disimpulkan bahwa kegiatan English Club telah dilaksanakan secara efektif dan memberikan kontribusi positif terhadap perkembangan keterampilan berbicara siswa. Meskipun demikian, diperlukan penguatan kegiatan pengembangan kosakata, pemberian tugas berbicara secara bertahap sesuai tingkat kemampuan siswa, serta peningkatan frekuensi pertemuan untuk mengoptimalkan hasil pembelajaran.

Kata kunci: Persepsi Siswa, English Club, Ekstrakurikuler, Praktik Berbicara.

INTRODUCTION

English is recognized as the primary international language of communication, and in Indonesia it holds the status of the first foreign language taught as a compulsory subject at the secondary school level. Among the four language skills – listening, speaking, reading, and writing – speaking is considered the most challenging yet most essential skill for EFL learners to master, as it requires producing language spontaneously while managing pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and fluency simultaneously and in real time. For many students in Indonesia, including those at the junior secondary level, speaking in English remains a significant challenge due to limited practice opportunities and high anxiety in formal classroom settings.

One effort to address this challenge is through extracurricular activities such as the English Club. In accordance with the (Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture, 2014), extracurricular programs are designed to provide students with opportunities to develop competencies beyond the academic curriculum. The English Club, as an extracurricular activity focused on speaking practice, offers students a relaxed, non-graded environment to practice English freely outside formal class hours. Unlike formal classroom settings where students may feel pressured by grades and evaluations, the English Club encourages students to speak English more naturally and confidently.

Students' perceptions play a crucial role in determining the effectiveness of any learning program. How students perceive an extracurricular activity – whether positively or negatively – directly influences their level of engagement, motivation, and ultimately their language development. MTS Al-Islah Jenggawah, an Islamic junior high school operating within a boarding school (pesantren) environment in Jenggawah District, Jember Regency, has established an English Club extracurricular program specifically aimed at improving students' English-speaking skills outside formal class hours. Based on a preliminary study conducted on April 6, 2026, students in the English Club generally showed enthusiasm in following speaking practice activities; however, several students also expressed difficulties in speaking English

confidently, particularly during public speaking sessions, citing limited vocabulary and nervousness as the main obstacles to active participation.

Previous studies on English Club extracurricular activities, such as those conducted by (Yeyen Armita, 2014.) and (Melinda Atika, 2024), have shown that students' perceptions significantly influence their involvement in speaking practice activities. However, those studies were conducted in senior high school contexts and focused primarily on students' general perceptions. No study has specifically examined students' perceptions in a junior high school with a boarding school environment such as MTS Al-Islah Jenggawah. This gap provides a clear rationale for the present study, which aims to: (1) describe the implementation of English Club extracurricular activities in speaking practice, and (2) describe students' perceptions toward those activities at MTS Al-Islah Jenggawah.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach, which was considered appropriate for comprehensively describing the phenomenon of students' perceptions toward English Club speaking activities. The research was conducted at MTS Al-Islah Jenggawah, an Islamic junior high school operating within a pesantren environment in Jenggawah District, Jember Regency, East Java, Indonesia. This location was chosen because the school has an active English Club program directly relevant to the research focus. The research subjects consisted of 16 Grade VIII students who actively participated in the English Club extracurricular at MTS Al-Islah Jenggawah, all of whom were involved as observation subjects. Of these, 4 students were selected as interview informants through purposive sampling, based on criteria including active participation in at least 75% of English Club sessions, willingness to share experiences verbally, and variation in speaking confidence levels – representing two students with high confidence and two with low confidence. One English Club teacher was also interviewed as an additional informant.

Data were collected through three techniques. First, non-participant observation was conducted across two sessions of English Club meetings, during which the researcher focused on observing and recording notes without being involved in the activities. Second, semi-structured interviews were conducted, including one-on-one interviews with the teacher and a focus group interview with the four selected students, using an interview guideline. Third, document review was conducted on supporting documents such as program schedules, attendance records, lesson plans, and activity photographs. The data were analyzed using the (Miles et al., 2014) interactive model, which encompasses four components: data collection, data condensation (selecting, focusing, simplifying, and abstracting data), data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, the researcher applied source triangulation, which involved checking data credibility through multiple sources (students, teacher, and documents), and method

triangulation, which involved checking data credibility through multiple methods (observation, interview, and documentation).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Implementation of English Club Extracurricular Activities in Speaking Practice

Based on the interview with the English teacher, the English Club extracurricular activities are primarily aimed at improving students' speaking skills in a non-formal and enjoyable learning environment, free from the pressure typically associated with formal classroom assessment. The teacher explained the main purposes of the English Club as follows: first, to build students' confidence in speaking English; second, to improve pronunciation and fluency through repeated and varied speaking practice; and third, to broaden students' vocabulary and communicative expressions. Regarding this purpose, the teacher stated:

"The main purpose of this English Club is to provide an additional space for students to practice speaking English more freely and comfortably. In a formal classroom, students are sometimes afraid of making mistakes because their grades are at stake. In the English Club, they can practice without that pressure, so they become more confident to try speaking."
(Teacher)

The materials used in the English Club speaking activities were carefully selected to match students' current proficiency levels and to be relevant to their daily lives. Based on document review and the teacher's interview, materials included conversational topics related to everyday life, storytelling, short debates, and English games, organized progressively from simpler topics such as self-introduction, family, hobbies, and school life toward more complex themes such as environmental and social issues. The teacher also incorporated materials drawn from Islamic values and students' boarding school life, asking students to deliver short speeches or storytelling based on Islamic stories or their experiences as santri, which was found to increase students' motivation and engagement.

The observation results identified that speaking activities were implemented through five systematic stages. First, the warm-up stage, which involved English games, short quizzes, or a brief vocabulary review, was effective in reducing students' anxiety and creating a positive atmosphere. Second, the main activity stage, in which the teacher introduced the session's primary speaking activity — storytelling, role-play, debate, public speaking, or English games — varying each week. Third, the presentation and performance stage, in which students presented or performed their speaking tasks in front of peers, important for building self-confidence and public speaking skills, with the audience encouraged to provide peer feedback. Fourth, the feedback and reflection stage, in which the teacher provided constructive feedback on pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, and overall communication, supplemented by peer feedback. Fifth, the closing stage, in which each session ended with a summary of what had been learned and motivational remarks encouraging students to continue practicing independently.

Evaluation in the English Club was conducted formatively, without formal grading, in order to maintain the club's relaxed atmosphere. The teacher used continuous observation and oral feedback as the primary means of monitoring progress, assessing students based on five components: fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, vocabulary, and comprehension. Regarding this approach, the teacher stated:

"I do not give formal grades in the English Club because I want students to feel free and not pressured. I conduct evaluation through direct observation during the activities. What matters most to me is that students are willing to try speaking and continue to develop – it is not just about whether they are right or wrong." (Teacher)

Peer evaluation was also introduced as part of the club's culture, with students trained to appreciate each other's efforts and provide encouraging and constructive comments, which supported the evaluation process while cultivating a sense of community among club members.

Students' Perceptions Toward the English Club Extracurricular in Speaking Practice

1. Positive Perceptions

Based on the focus group interviews, the majority of students expressed positive perceptions toward the English Club, reflected in three aspects of Robbins and Judge's (2021) perception theory: acceptance, understanding, and evaluation. In terms of acceptance, most students stated that they genuinely enjoyed attending the English Club sessions and felt safe to practice speaking without fear of being judged or ridiculed for making mistakes. One student expressed:

"I feel happy and excited every time there is an English Club activity. The atmosphere is different from regular lessons – it is more relaxed and enjoyable. I am not too afraid to speak English because my friends are also learning together." (English Club Member 1)

This sense of comfort appeared to stem from the absence of formal grading, which removed the pressure students associated with regular English classes, as well as the shared learning experience among peers, which created a sense of equality that reduced embarrassment when making mistakes. This finding is consistent with the affective filter hypothesis, which suggests that a low-anxiety environment facilitates better language acquisition. In terms of understanding, students demonstrated awareness of how the English Club contributed to their speaking development. One student affirmed:

"Yes, my English ability has improved. Now I am more fluent in speaking and my vocabulary has grown a lot. Before, I was often confused about what to say, but now it is much easier for me to express my ideas in English." (English Club Member 2)

Regarding favorite activities, students showed particular enthusiasm for storytelling and role-play, as one student noted:

"The activities I enjoy the most are storytelling and role-play. Storytelling is fun because I can tell about my daily life in the boarding school using English, while role-

play is also exciting because we can pretend to be someone else and have conversations in English just like in real life." (English Club Member 3)

This enthusiasm appeared to be linked to the personal and contextual relevance of these activities — storytelling allowed students to discuss familiar experiences, while role-play provided a sense of playfulness that reduced self-consciousness. In terms of evaluation, students gave an overall positive assessment of the English Club, particularly appreciating the teacher's facilitation style, described as patient, encouraging, and creative:

"Our teacher is very patient and creative in guiding us. She always gives us encouragement and never gets angry when we make mistakes. Her feedback also helps us to grow, rather than making us feel insecure." (English Club Member 4)

Students also reported that participation in the English Club had significantly contributed to building their self-confidence in speaking English:

"Since joining the English Club, I feel more confident speaking English. Before, I was very shy, but now I am braver to speak up and I am not too afraid of making mistakes anymore." (English Club Member 5)

This growth in confidence can be explained by the cumulative effect of repeated positive experiences in a low-pressure environment, in which successful attempts at communication — even if imperfect — reinforced students' belief in their own ability and encouraged them to take more risks in speaking.

2. Negative Perceptions

Despite the predominantly positive perceptions, some students also expressed negative perceptions or challenges encountered during the English Club activities, which highlight areas for improvement. Some students reported feeling anxious when required to speak in front of the group, particularly during public speaking and debate sessions:

"My biggest difficulty is feeling nervous when I have to speak in front of many people. I am afraid of mispronouncing words or making grammar mistakes in front of my friends. My heart is pounding every time it is my turn to perform." (English Club Member 6)

This nervousness appeared to stem from several interrelated factors: the fear of being evaluated by peers, the pressure of speaking spontaneously in front of an audience, and students' awareness of their own limitations in pronunciation and grammar, which made them anticipate failure before they began speaking. This finding aligns with the concept of foreign language anxiety, particularly communication apprehension, which often arises when learners must produce language in real time before others while still uncertain of their own competence. A few students also indicated that they sometimes struggled to fully participate in discussions due to limited vocabulary:

"Sometimes I want to say something but I do not know the words in English. So I just stay silent or I am forced to switch to Indonesian. I feel my vocabulary is still lacking and that is what most often holds me back." (English Club Member 7)

This limited vocabulary appeared to result from students' exposure to English vocabulary being largely confined to club and classroom materials without sufficient additional vocabulary-building activities, as well as the tendency to retain only vocabulary related to familiar everyday topics while lacking words for more complex or spontaneous discussions. As a result, when students encountered ideas they wanted to express but lacked the corresponding English word, they often defaulted to silence or code-switched to Indonesian. One student also mentioned that the frequency of club meetings (once a week) was not sufficient for significant improvement:

"In my opinion, the English Club meetings should be held more often, not just once a week. If we meet more frequently, I think our speaking ability could improve more quickly. Once a week still feels insufficient to really get used to speaking English." (English Club Member 8)

Table 1. Summary of Students' Perceptions Toward English Club Extracurricular

Aspect of Perception	Positive	Negative
Acceptance	Enjoyable, relaxed atmosphere; feel safe to make mistakes	Anxiety during public speaking sessions
Understanding	Aware of improvement in fluency, vocabulary, and confidence	Limited vocabulary hinders full participation
Evaluation	Appreciate teacher's patience and encouragement; value peer interaction	Meetings considered too infrequent for significant progress

Discussion

The findings indicate that the English Club at MTS Al-Islah Jenggawah has been implemented in a structured and purposeful manner, organized around clear objectives, appropriate materials, systematic steps, and a supportive evaluation system. This implementation aligns with the concept of communicative language teaching (CLT), which emphasizes providing learners with meaningful and authentic opportunities to use the target language in real communicative contexts. The variety of speaking activities – storytelling, debate, role-play, and public speaking – reflects the principles of task-based language teaching (TBLT), in which students actively construct meaning through spoken interaction rather than practicing isolated language forms.

The teacher's role as a facilitator rather than a transmitter of knowledge is also noteworthy. The observation results showed a learner-centered environment in which students were encouraged to take the initiative in their speaking practice, aligning

with the constructivist view of learning. Furthermore, the contextual relevance of materials – particularly the integration of Islamic values and boarding school experiences – supports (Ausubel, 1968) theory of meaningful learning, which suggests that new information is most effectively learned when connected to learners' existing knowledge and experiences.

Regarding students' perceptions, the findings are largely consistent with previous studies by (Yeyen Armita, 2019), and (Melinda Atika, 2024), in which students predominantly expressed positive perceptions, particularly appreciating the relaxed atmosphere, the variety of activities, and the teacher's supportive facilitation style. The application of (Djamarah, 2008) four aspects of perception (happiness, interest, attention, and engagement) alongside (Robbins & Judge, 2001) three perceptual stages (acceptance, understanding, and evaluation) reinforced each other in capturing the full picture of students' responses.

However, the negative perceptions identified in this study also deserve attention. Students' reports of anxiety during public speaking activities suggest that even in a supportive environment, performance anxiety can persist, consistent with the concept of foreign language anxiety, which identifies communication apprehension and test anxiety as common challenges for EFL learners. The challenge of limited vocabulary similarly highlights the need for systematic vocabulary building as an integral part of the English Club's program, given that vocabulary knowledge is fundamental to all aspects of language use, including speaking. Finally, students' desire for more frequent club sessions reflects their motivation and recognition of the club's value, consistent with the principle of extensive practice in language learning, which holds that proficiency in speaking requires sustained and repeated practice over time.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion, the English Club extracurricular at MTS Al-Islah Jenggawah has been implemented in a well-structured and purposeful manner, encompassing four key aspects: purpose, materials, steps, and evaluation. Its primary purpose is to provide students with a supportive, non-formal environment to practice and improve their English-speaking skills, using materials that are contextually relevant and progressively organized, with speaking activities carried out through a systematic sequence of warm-up, main activity, presentation, feedback, and closing, and evaluation conducted formatively through observation, oral feedback, and peer assessment. Students at MTS Al-Islah Jenggawah generally hold positive perceptions toward the English Club extracurricular in speaking practice. In terms of acceptance, students appreciate the club's relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere, which makes them feel safe to practice speaking without fear of judgment. In terms of understanding, students are aware of the developmental benefits of the club, particularly in improving their fluency, vocabulary, and self-confidence. In terms of evaluation, students give positive assessments of the teacher's facilitation style and the variety of activities offered. However, some students also expressed negative

perceptions, including anxiety during public speaking sessions, limitations due to restricted vocabulary, and a desire for more frequent club meetings, which highlight areas where the program can be further improved. The English teacher and club supervisor are encouraged to incorporate a wider variety of speaking activities catering to different learning styles and proficiency levels, introduce graduated speaking tasks to address public speaking anxiety, integrate systematic vocabulary-building activities, and explore the use of digital tools and audio-visual media. School management is encouraged to provide greater institutional support, including increasing the frequency of English Club sessions from once a week to at least twice a week and providing adequate facilities, as well as considering inter-school English competitions or English Day programs. Future researchers are encouraged to conduct further investigations using different research designs, such as classroom action research or experimental research, with larger and more diverse samples, and to explore the long-term impact of English Club participation on students' overall English proficiency.

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