

**ENGLISH COURSE ENROLMENT ON STUDENTS' SPEAKING  
PROFICIENCY: A PERCEPTION-BASED STUDY**

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**ABSTRACT**

English is considered as a foreign language in Indonesia, the EFL learners face difficulties in speaking due to lack of practice and experience conveying their opinion, feeling, thought, and message in the target language because they have limited time and place to utilize it. There are numerous ways that can support students to enhance their speaking ability, one of them are joining an English course. This study aims to find out about students' perception of English course can assist them to improve their speaking skill. Two students who have been learning English at the course were involved in this study. A qualitative design was used, and semi-structured interview was conducted to obtain the data. The results indicate that English course improves students' speaking ability and enhance their public speaking skill. Some suggestions are suggested to enhance the quality of the students' speaking skill and develop more engaging and challenging activity to the English course.

*Keywords:* English Course, Perception, Speaking

**A. INTRODUCTION**

Acquiring proficiency in speaking is crucial for language learners. Speaking is a productive skill that involves generating words and conveying oral messages (Harmer, 2001). As language serves as a medium for communication, learners are expected to not only develop proficiency in the other four skills—writing, listening, reading, and grammar—but also to excel in their communicative abilities. In Indonesia, English is regarded as a foreign language (Lauder, 2008), implying that its usage is confined to particular circumstances such as education, business, and work (Alrajafi, 2021). Additionally, Indonesian EFL learners may face a shortage of opportunities to practice and express their opinions, feelings, thoughts, and messages in English due to limitations in time and available settings. Given that humans are inherently social beings and engage in various activities through communication, speaking holds a significant role.

However, effective conversation requires not only strong speaking skills but also proficient listening abilities. Successful communication hinges on the seamless interaction between speakers and listeners, as emphasized by Hyang (2018), who asserts that communication depends on the mutual interest between individuals. Through speaking, students gain insights into the opinions, ideas, and information shared by their conversational partners (Harmer, 2003). Achieving speaking fluency involves not only accurate pronunciation but also the ability to communicate effectively in diverse situations. Therefore, teachers should

not solely focus on enabling students to speak or comprehend spoken words; they should also instruct students on the art of effective communication.

In learning a foreign language, many students continue to struggle with speaking the target language fluently as they encounter challenges in interpreting various transactional and interaction signals in specific situations (Hijrah & Umar, 2021). These difficulties are attributed to factors such as hesitation, awkwardness, lack of confidence, and fear of making mistakes (Rini et al, 2020; Hijrah & Umar, 2021). The root of these language difficulties may be traced back to teaching strategies, curriculum design, and the learning environment (Turco, 2021). Nonetheless, there are various methods available to help students improve their speaking skills, and one of these approaches is enrolling in an English course (Virawan et al., 2021, Jayanti et al, 2022).

English course holds a distinctive position within the realm of non-formal education, presenting itself as a unique educational service separate from formal education systems. Operating within the framework of non-formal education, English courses adhere to a competency-based curriculum offering skills that are meaningful to students in their learning experiences and applicable to their lives. This curriculum is meticulously designed with the primary objective of arming students with the essential skills relevant to their chosen fields and empowering them to apply their acquired knowledge effectively in society (Saylor, 1981).

The decision to enroll in English courses is often driven by a tangible dissatisfaction among students with the materials or learning experiences provided in their regular academic settings. In response to this, the students seek out English courses as supplementary subjects, viewing them as a way to not only enhance but also delve deeper into their understanding of the English language (Biantoro et. al, 2023). These courses serve as dynamic supplements that go beyond the conventional classroom offerings, providing students with a more nuanced and enriched perspective. Ewens (2013) outlines key principles for a successful English course: (1) Effective courses should be student-centered, encouraging students to contribute their own content. (2) They should provide opportunities for students to express themselves creatively in the target language. (3) An English course can serve as a platform for students to meet new people and form friendships. (4) A successful English course allows individuals a sense of freedom. (5) The course should be connected to the community, organizing visits to local places of interest, and inviting community members to engage with students. Lastly, (6) an English course should be enjoyable and fun.

Engaging in an English course, as depicted by Gelanes & Adams (2013), brings forth a multitude of advantages that extend beyond the confines of language acquisition. Firstly, the educational journey in an English course facilitates the establishment of a vigorous network, fostering connections among students who share similar interests. This interconnected relation not only promotes the exchange of diverse ideas but also transcends disciplinary boundaries, allowing for a cross-pollination of thoughts and perspectives.

Several prior studies have addressed the issue of improving students' speaking skills, particularly through participation in English clubs or courses. Jayanti et. al., (2022) revealed significant enhancements in students' pronunciation, vocabulary, and overall fluency after joining a speaking club, with increased confidence noted as well. Another study by Hijrah & Umar (2021) revealed positive student attitudes towards English clubs, indicating a belief in their supportive role for speaking skill development. Similarly, Riyadini's (2022) study in

higher education found that students considered speaking clubs as valuable opportunities to boost confidence and enhance speaking knowledge and skills. However, there remains a limited focus on students in English courses as non-formal education services. This current study aims to address this gap and answer the research question derived from the background and previous research. Hence the following research question is formulated as follow:

*“How do students perceive the impact of participating in an English course on enhancing their speaking skills?”*

Regarding the aforementioned research question, this study seeks to provide additional insights into students' perspectives regarding how an English course contributes to improving their overall English skill. Furthermore, the study's findings are anticipated to offer valuable contributions to the readers. This research is also poised to enhance our understanding of the addressed issue, and the outcomes can serve as a reference for future studies.

## **B. METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative approach to investigate students' perception on the development of their speaking skills at an English course. The objective of this study is to explore students' viewpoints on how participating in an English course can contribute to improving their speaking skills. Two participants, selected purposively for their extensive experience in an English course, contributed to the richness of the data. The students who have been learning English were taken as informants for this research. They have been learning English in the English course (EC) for about 4 years. The study took place in an English course in Bandung regency, chosen for its practical teaching and learning activities. The research procedures included seeking ethical permissions, conducting semi-structured interviews, transcribing data, and analysing findings (Creswell, 2013; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). The interview questions were adapted from previous research (Hijrah & Umar, 2021), ensuring alignment with the current study's objectives. The semi-structured interviews facilitated a deep exploration of participants' reflections, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the research topic. The following is the interview questions guideline which is presented in table 1.

**Table 1.** Interview questions

No	Question
1	How you defined English course in general?
2	What are the benefits do you get after joining English course?
3	Does English course can help you to speak English well? If yes, would you give your reason?
4	Do you get improvement in speaking skill after joining English course? What's your improvement?
5	After joining the English course, are you motivated to speak English continuously?
6	What do you think about practicing speaking in the school or in English course. Which one do you prefer? Please give the reason!
7	Do you believe if English course can support you to speak English fluently? Why?

## C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The interview conducted with the pair of participants revealed valuable insights concerning students' perceptions regarding the potential impact of participating in an English course on their speaking proficiency. The interview results exposed essential aspects that will be explored further in the upcoming section. These encompass into three main categories, they are: 1) the motivations for enrolling the English course, 2) the pre- and post-course experiences, and 3) the notable improvements in self-development. A more detailed elaboration on these key points are presented in the following section.

### 1. The motivation for enrolling the English course

Concerning the ongoing motivation to speak English, it was found that both students were motivated to consistently engage in English course. This finding aligns with the results found by Hijrah and Umar (2021), where students experienced increased enthusiasm while conversing in English. Nevertheless, in the present study, a student asserted that her motivation to consistently learn English stems from her aspiration to pursue a career in the English Education Department. Thus, the skills she has acquired serve as a pathway toward realizing her dream.

*S1: "I will learn it until later in the future, because in here I found my dream, I feel matched with English, I have serious to continue my study in English department, and that is the requirement for my future."*

Conversely, another student finds motivation to speak English consistently by believing that individuals proficient in the English language often lead successful lives with numerous achievements.

*S2:" Due to the many achievements of people who are proficient in English, their career is so well established. Therefore, I am motivated to study harder."*

The decision to enroll in an English course is also motivated by a combination of internal and external factors. Internally, it involves the pursuit of a dream coming to fruition, while externally, it is inspired by observing individuals who have benefited from proficiency in the English language.

Regarding the choice between EC and regular classes for learning English, both students expressed a preference for EC. They stated that the teaching approach in the EC was distinct from that in regular classes. Given that the regular classes primarily emphasize the textbook, the students feel that there is limited improvement in their speaking skills.

*S2: "Of course I will answer in the course, because in my opinion, the teachers in the school can't watch their students one by one, whether the pronunciation is good, or the grammar is correct, different with the English course that I join which performed in the contrary."*

### 2. the pre- and post-course experience

Engaging in an English course transcends the restraints of a conventional classroom; it assumes a pivotal social role with far-reaching impacts. The classroom serves as a meeting ground, offering students the opportunity to forge new connections and enhance their

communicative skills. This social dimension becomes a breeding ground for expanding vocabularies, as linguistic interactions with peers and instructors contribute to a nuanced mastery of the English language.

Furthermore, a joyous and enjoyable learning activities integrated into English courses, as highlighted by Hijrah & Umar (2021), not only make the educational experience delightful but also infuse an element of playfulness into language acquisition. Such an approach not only fosters a positive attitude toward learning but also reinforces the notion that acquiring language skills can be an enjoyable journey.

In the context of expressive skills, English courses become a stimulus for students to speak confidently. This sentiment aligns seamlessly with the findings of Jayanti et al., (2022), emphasizing that taking an English course boosts students' confidence in public speaking. Tutors also play a pivotal role in guiding and facilitating students, creating an environment where expressing ideas and thoughts becomes an enjoyable endeavor. This not only contributes to linguistic proficiency but also drills a sense of self-assurance that extends beyond the classroom, empowering students to confidently articulate their thoughts in various public settings.

In addition to enhancing their communicative skills, an English course, specifically the tutor, also refines their pronunciation. Given its crucial role in language acquisition, particularly in oral communication, pronunciation is deemed important for effective communication (Lasabuda, 2017).

*S1: “.... In terms of pronunciation, more trained, because I saw the tutor and the others pronounce the word properly. I often get correction in the course rather than in the school because in school is not focus on one skill but more focus on the textbook.”*

The tutors seem like to give attention to minor things such as pronunciation. Even though some students' goal might not just obtain the speaking skills, however the tutor may always give correction to their students in terms of pronunciation.

In alignment with the findings of Jayanti et al. (2022), the significance of an English course extends beyond mere language acquisition. It plays a pivotal role in creating a positive atmosphere and fostering a supportive learning environment, factors identified as crucial contributors to the enhancement of students' speaking performance.

The establishment of a positive atmosphere within an English course involves a complex approach. Firstly, the curriculum is designed with an inherent emphasis on encouraging active participation and engagement. This interactive nature of the courses not only cultivates a sense of enthusiasm among learners but also provides them with ample opportunities to practice and refine their speaking skills in a supportive setting.

### **3. the notable improvements in self-development**

Both students characterized English course as a dedicated environment where they can acquire English skills with a particular emphasis and focus. Having started their English learning journey at a young age, they have found that the English course serves as a valuable resource in enhancing their English proficiency, particularly in the realm of speaking skills. The subsequent quotations are derived from the interview.

S1: *“In my opinion, English course is a place where we learn English specifically, such as we learn how to speak well, how to implement it in daily life, also how to understand the material well”*

S2: *“English course to me is a place where people can learn and develop their English skill, of course without age restriction and the time is flexible.”*

The finding was corroborated by the works of Hijrah & Umar (2021) and Virawan et. al, (2021). In accordance with the interview results, the students have gained an understanding of what an English course entails and have a clear awareness of their reasons for participating in the course. Several factors influence students' decision to enroll in the course, with it being identified as a right place for both learning and practicing English.

Students derive several advantages from enrolling in an English course, with both highlighting a notable improvement in their confidence when speaking. They express greater enjoyment in conversing in English compared to their proficiency before undertaking the course.

S1: *“...also the benefits not only impact to my English skills, but also become confident to show my competence and beneficial for the future.*

S2: *” The benefit which I feel when I study in this course is that I can develop my skill in English language more deeply and easier to understand because there is a tutor.”*

The English course has fewer participants compared to the regular class, contributing to a more comfortable and focused learning experience for the students.

S1: *“...I will definitely choose a course. Because, I could say this course is more 'private' ya. I can talk as much as I want, because there are fewer students in the course compared to the school.”*

Those discoveries provide us with insight that the incorporation of innovative teaching methodologies, as highlighted by Jayanti et al. (2022), further contributes to the positive learning atmosphere. By integrating varied and stimulating instructional techniques, such as group discussions, role-playing exercises, and real-life scenario simulations, the English course exceeds traditional pedagogical boundaries. These dynamic methods not only make the learning experience more enjoyable but also create an environment where students feel comfortable expressing themselves verbally.

The supportive learning environment, as identified in Jayanti et al.'s (2022) research, is a foundation of effective language education. English courses are structured to nurture a sense of collaboration and mutual encouragement among students. Peer interactions, collaborative projects, and constructive feedback mechanisms are integral components of this environment, fostering a culture where students feel empowered to take linguistic risks and explore the nuances of spoken English without fear of judgment.

Furthermore, the role of instructors within the English course is paramount in cultivating this supportive atmosphere. Educators are not only language facilitators but also mentors who inspire confidence and provide personalized guidance. Their approach involves creating an inclusive space where each student's unique learning journey is acknowledged and

celebrated, thereby fostering a sense of belonging and motivation to excel in speaking proficiency.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

This study focused on the students' perception of enrolling English course can improve their speaking skill. In accordance with the data analysis in the findings, it can be inferred that both students had a positive attitude of the English course. The students believe that English course could support their fluency in speaking the target language. It supports them to develop their speaking skill and improve their self-confidence in terms of public speaking after they are joining an English course. Their vocabulary and pronunciation also get more developed and improved. They agreed that the tutor in the English course facilitate and encourage them to be more empowered and enthusiastic to speak English. The students also had a perception that English course is the right place to develop skills particularly in speaking. It could be one of the ways to enhance and develop themselves, and for those who want to learn and practice more about how to speak English fluently.

The study, limited to two participants, suggests the potential for different results with a larger sample size, urging future research to involve more participants for a more comprehensive dataset. Recommendations are provided for the institution conducting the course, emphasizing the need for increased engagement through activities like role-play, storytelling, and enhanced social media presence to attract more students. The study concludes with a suggestion for future researchers to use this study as a reference for similar topics and encourages exploration of related themes within the non-formal education perspective, such as the role and strategies of teachers in improving students' speaking skills. This expansion would provide readers with deeper insights into non-formal education.

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