



EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF SCHOOL-BASED ENGLISH CLUBS ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND LEARNERS' SELF-CONFIDENCE

Widya Rizky Pratiwi

Universitas Terbuka

widya_pratiwi@ecampus.ut.ac.id

Abstract

This research investigates the impact of school-based English clubs on language skill development among Indonesian high school students, addressing the educational gap in English proficiency as an impact of globalization. Utilizing a qualitative case study design, the study engaged 21 active members of a combined English club at Benteng Rotterdam, Makassar, employing online questionnaires and focus group discussions to gather data on participants' experiences and challenges. Findings reveal that participation in English clubs significantly enhances students' speaking, listening, and reading skills, with 81% of students reporting increased confidence in speaking. However, challenges such as inconsistent program implementation, pronunciation difficulties, and limited vocabulary retention were identified. This study contributes to the understanding of extracurricular language learning by highlighting the effectiveness of English clubs and offering recommendations for improving their implementation. Insights gained from this research can inform educators and policymakers in designing more effective language learning environments that support students' needs and foster equitable access to language education.

Keywords: Educational Gap, English Proficiency, Extracurricular Language Learning, Globalization, School-Based English Clubs

To cite this article:

Pratiwi, Widya Rizky. (2024). Evaluating the Impact of School-based English Clubs on English Language Acquisition and Learners' Self-confidence. *Journal of Research on Language Education*, 5(2), 1-9.

INTRODUCTION

English, as a foreign language in Indonesia, plays a crucial role in its citizens' educational landscape and professional development. The adoption of English in Indonesia has been driven by globalization, which necessitates proficiency in English to access international knowledge, enhance employability, and participate in global communication networks (Lauder, 2019). As a result, the Indonesian government has integrated English into the national curriculum, recognizing its importance for future generations (Suyanto, 2020). However, the challenge remains in effectively mastering the language, given the varying levels of exposure and opportunities for practice among students.

The widespread adoption of English as a foreign language in Indonesia has had significant educational and social consequences. While it opens doors to international opportunities, it also highlights the disparity in language proficiency between urban and rural students (Zein, 2017). Students in urban areas often have more access to quality English education and resources, whereas those in rural areas struggle with limited exposure and practice opportunities. This disparity necessitates innovative solutions to bridge the gap and provide equitable language learning experiences for all students.

One effective solution to address these challenges is the establishment of English clubs in schools and other educational institutions. English clubs offer a supportive and engaging environment where students can practice and improve their language skills outside the formal classroom (Mustafa, 2018). These clubs often provide a variety of activities, such as

discussions, debates, storytelling, and role-plays, which help students develop their speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills in a more relaxed and interactive manner (Mahboob, 2018).

The concept of an English club revolves around creating a community of learners who share a common goal of enhancing their English proficiency. English clubs typically consist of members who meet regularly to engage in activities that promote language practice and cultural exchange (Irawan, 2019). These activities are designed to be fun and interactive, encouraging students to use English in real-life contexts and build their confidence in using the language. The informal setting of English clubs allows for a more relaxed and enjoyable learning experience, which can significantly enhance students' motivation and interest in learning English.

The importance of English clubs cannot be overstated. They provide a platform for students to practice their language skills in a supportive and non-threatening environment, crucial for building confidence and fluency (Nurhayati, 2018). Moreover, English clubs foster a sense of community and belonging among members, which can lead to increased motivation and sustained interest in learning the language. By participating in English clubs, students also develop critical soft skills such as teamwork, communication, and problem-solving, which are essential for their overall personal and professional development (Fatimah, 2019).

The benefits of participating in English clubs are manifold. Research has shown that students participating in English clubs significantly improve their language skills, particularly in speaking and listening (Rahayu, 2019). These clubs also provide opportunities for students to engage with authentic language materials and practice using English in meaningful contexts, which enhances their overall language proficiency. Also, English clubs offer a space for cultural exchange and awareness, helping students develop a broader understanding of different cultures and perspectives (Hidayati, 2020).

Given the significant role that English clubs play in enhancing language skills and fostering personal development, it is crucial to evaluate their effectiveness in different educational settings. This study aims to assess the impact of English club meetings on language skills development among students. By examining the activities and outcomes of English clubs, this research seeks to identify best practices and provide recommendations for improving the effectiveness of these clubs in enhancing students' English proficiency (Iskandar, 2020).

There is a notable gap in the existing literature regarding the specific impact of English club activities on students' language skills development. While several studies have highlighted the benefits of extracurricular language learning activities, few have focused on English clubs and their unique contributions to language learning (Ramadhan, 2019). This research aims to fill this gap by providing empirical evidence to understand students' experiences, motivations, and challenges related to their participation in school-based English clubs. It also examined the impact of the school-based English Club on students' language skills.

The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the broader field of language education by providing insights into the best practices for implementing and running English clubs. These insights can be valuable for educators, policymakers, and practitioners designing and supporting extracurricular language learning programs. By highlighting the specific benefits and challenges of English clubs, this research can inform future initiatives to promote effective language learning environments in schools and other educational institutions (Hapsari, 2021).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review further discusses the concept and theory of English Clubs and the benefits of English Clubs from previous research.

Concept and Theory of English Clubs

English clubs are extracurricular groups that provide students with opportunities to practice and enhance their English language skills in a supportive, informal setting. These clubs typically involve discussions, debates, storytelling, and role-plays designed to improve students' speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills (Irawan, 2019). The primary objective of an English club is to create an immersive environment where students can engage with the language practically and enjoyably, thereby increasing their confidence and competence in using English.

The theoretical foundation of English clubs is rooted in the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach, which emphasizes using authentic language and real-life communication scenarios to develop language skills (Mahboob, 2018). CLT encourages interaction and participation, core components of English club activities. By participating in these clubs, students are exposed to various language inputs and outputs, which help to enhance their linguistic and communicative abilities (Mustafa, 2018).

Moreover, English clubs are often guided by Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, highlighting the importance of social interaction and collaboration in learning. According to this theory, language learning is a socially mediated activity where learners acquire new skills through interaction with more knowledgeable peers and facilitators (Fatimah, 2019). English clubs provide an ideal setting for such interactions, fostering a collaborative learning environment where students can learn from each other and their facilitators.

Benefits of English Clubs from Previous Research

Research has consistently shown that participation in English clubs offers numerous benefits for language learners. One of the most significant advantages is improving speaking and listening skills. Students who regularly participate in English club activities demonstrate enhanced fluency, pronunciation, and comprehension, as they have more opportunities to practice speaking and listening in a relaxed, supportive environment (Rahayu, 2019). These clubs provide a safe space for students to experiment with language use without fearing making mistakes, which is crucial for building confidence.

In addition to language skills, English clubs contribute to developing critical soft skills such as teamwork, communication, and problem-solving. By engaging in group activities and discussions, students learn to express their ideas clearly, listen to others, and work collaboratively to achieve common goals (Hidayati, 2020). These skills are essential for language learning and personal and professional development, making English clubs valuable for holistic education.

English clubs also foster cultural awareness and understanding. Through exposure to diverse topics and perspectives, students gain insights into different cultures and ways of thinking, which broadens their horizons and promotes intercultural competence (Irawan, 2019). This cultural exchange is particularly important in today's globalized world, where navigating cross-cultural interactions is a valuable asset.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative case study design to explore the implementation, impact of English clubs, and the challenges related to their participation in school-based English clubs. The research methodology includes online questionnaires and focus group discussions (FGDs) to gather comprehensive data on students' experiences, motivations, and challenges related to their participation in English clubs. The case study approach is particularly suitable

for this research as it allows for an in-depth examination of a phenomenon within its real-life context (Creswell, 2014).

Sampling and Participants

Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure they met specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. The study involved 21 high school students who are active members of a combined English club at Benteng Rotterdam, Makassar. These students were chosen because they participate in the joint English club and belong to their respective schools' English clubs. The selection criteria did not consider gender, based on the assumption that the opportunity to participate in English clubs is equally available to both male and female students. This purposive sampling method ensures that the participants have relevant and rich experiences that can contribute valuable insights to the study (Palinkas et al., 2015).

Data Collection

The data collection process involved two main methods: online questionnaires and focus group discussions. The online questionnaires were distributed to gather initial data on the participants' experiences, motivations, and perceived benefits of participating in English clubs. This method efficiently allowed for a broad collection of data from all participants.

Following the online questionnaires, focus group discussions were conducted to delve deeper into the participants' experiences and to capture more nuanced insights. Each FGD lasted approximately 60 minutes and was structured to encourage open and detailed discussions about the implementation and impact of English clubs at their schools. The languages used were a mix of English and Bahasa Indonesia.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the online questionnaires and focus group discussions were analyzed using a descriptive qualitative approach following Creswell's (2014) six-step process. Initially, FGD recordings were transcribed, and questionnaire responses were organized. Researchers then read through all the data to understand participants' perspectives comprehensively. Significant statements were identified and coded into recurring themes relevant to the research questions. These themes were developed into broader descriptions that captured the essence of the participants' experiences. The themes of the research objectives were interpreted, providing insights into the implementation and impact of English clubs. Finally, the findings were presented in a structured manner, linking them to the research questions and offering evidence-based conclusions.

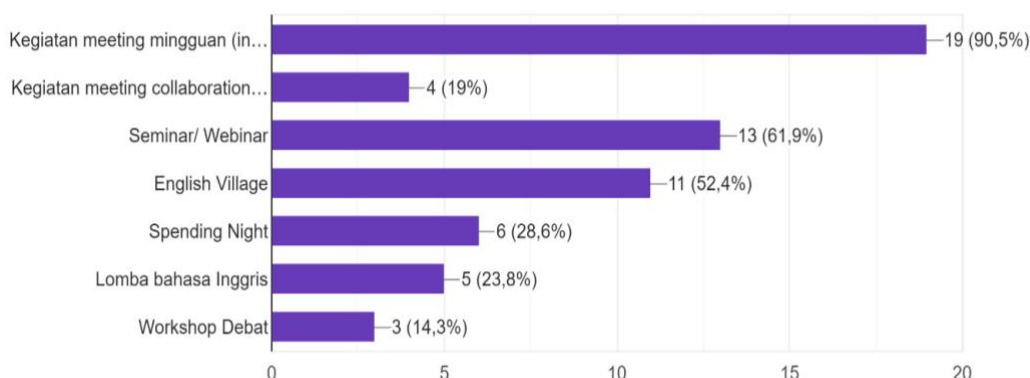
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The research aimed to understand students' experiences, motivations, and challenges related to their participation in school-based English clubs. It also examined the impact of the school-based English Club on students' language skills. Data were collected through online questionnaires and focus group discussions (FGDs) with 21 high school students who are active members of a combined English club at Benteng Rotterdam, Makassar.

Students Experiences at the School-based English Clubs

Overall, the students reported positive experiences with the English club activities. Many highlighted the opportunities to practice speaking, listening, and writing in English, which significantly boosted their confidence and competence. Activities such as weekly meetings, collaboration meetings, seminars, webinars, and English Villages were particularly

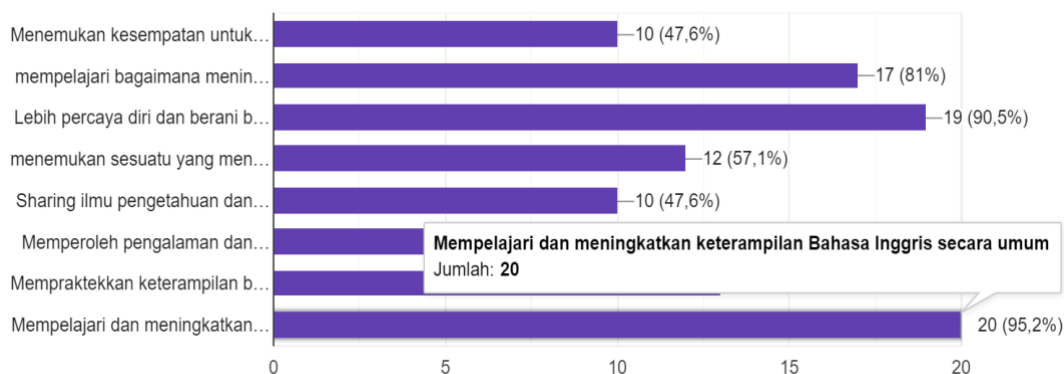
effective in enhancing their language skills. For example, one student noted that participating in these activities made them "more confident and brave in communicating using English," reflecting a common sentiment among participants.



Picture 1. Students' Experience at the School-based English Clubs

Motivations for Joining School-based English Clubs

Students' motivations for joining the English clubs varied. While some were encouraged by friends or instructed by teachers, many joined out of their own interest. The primary motivations included the desire to learn how to improve English skills, gain new experiences, and practice speaking English. A notable 95.2% of students indicated that they joined to "learn and improve general English skills." Additionally, 90.5% joined to "gain confidence and become braver in communicating using English." This highlights a strong intrinsic motivation among students to enhance their language abilities and personal growth.



Picture 2. Motivations for Joining School-based English Clubs

Challenges Faced by Students in English Clubs

The research identified several challenges faced by students participating in school-based English clubs. These challenges, drawn from both questionnaire responses and focus group discussions, highlight areas that need attention to enhance the effectiveness of these clubs.

1. Inconsistency in Program Implementation

One of the main challenges reported by students was the inconsistency in the implementation of English club activities. Due to the heavy school schedule, several

planned activities, such as spending nights and collaborative sessions with other clubs, were postponed or canceled. This inconsistency affected the regular practice and engagement that are crucial for language learning. One student suggested, "Activities should be carried out continuously and variably," indicating a need for regular and diverse programming.

2. Pronunciation Difficulties

Many students reported difficulties with pronouncing English words correctly. This issue was noted as a significant barrier to effective communication in English. One student mentioned, "Sometimes it's hard to pronounce English words," which was echoed by several others. This challenge underscores the need for more focused pronunciation practice and perhaps the inclusion of native speakers or pronunciation tools in the club activities.

3. Vocabulary Retention

Another common challenge was the difficulty in retaining and recalling English vocabulary. Students expressed that memorizing and remembering vocabulary was particularly tough. One student stated, "It's very hard to memorize vocabulary and remember it".

4. Limited Practice Opportunities

The heavy academic schedule was also cited as a challenge, limiting the time students could dedicate to English club activities. One student pointed out, "The school schedule is too packed," reflecting a common concern that balancing schoolwork with extracurricular activities can be challenging. This suggests a need for better scheduling and perhaps integrating club activities more seamlessly with the academic calendar.

5. Lack of Confidence

Several students noted a lack of confidence in using English, especially in speaking and writing. While the club aimed to boost confidence, some students felt they still needed more practice and encouragement. One student mentioned, "Sometimes I feel a bit more confident when I speak English," indicating incremental improvements but also a need for ongoing support.

6. General Absence of Challenges:

Interestingly, a subset of students reported that they did not face any significant challenges. Responses like "So far so good" and "No challenges" suggest that for some students, the English club was meeting their needs effectively without major issues..

Impact on Language Skills

The data from the study reveal a notable positive impact of school-based English clubs on students' language skills. The analysis of questionnaire responses and focus group discussions indicates substantial improvements across various language domains, though some areas need further focus.

Participation in English clubs significantly enhanced students' speaking abilities. An overwhelming majority (81%) of students reported improved confidence and proficiency in speaking English. This is primarily attributed to the regular practice and interactive activities conducted during club meetings, such as debates, presentations, and speaking exercises. One student noted, "The English club helps me to be more confident when speaking in English," highlighting the importance of these interactive sessions in building oral communication skills.

Improvements in listening skills were even more pronounced, with 90.5% of students acknowledging progress. Activities that involved listening to native speakers, audiovisual materials, and peer interactions contributed to this development. Frequent exposure to spoken

English in various contexts helped students become more adept at understanding and processing the language. One student remarked, "Listening exercises in the club meetings have helped me to follow and understand spoken English better."

The impact on reading skills was similarly positive, with 90.5% of students reporting enhancements. The club's activities often included reading comprehension exercises, discussions of English literature, and analyzing texts, collectively improving students' reading proficiency. Students benefited from the diverse reading materials and the guided reading sessions that fostered a better grasp of vocabulary, syntax, and comprehension.

While most students (71.4%) noted improvements in their writing skills, this area saw relatively lower progress than speaking, listening, and reading. This suggests that while English clubs contribute to better writing abilities, there is room for more targeted efforts. Writing activities in the clubs, such as essay writing, journaling, and peer reviews, must be more structured and frequent to ensure students develop stronger writing skills. One student pointed out, "I think I need more practice with writing in English to feel more confident," indicating a desire for additional focus on this area.

The comprehensive nature of the English club activities, which often integrate multiple language skills, has contributed to an overall enhancement of language proficiency among students. The data reflect that the clubs provide a balanced approach to language learning, encouraging students to engage with the language in various forms and contexts. This holistic engagement helps reinforce the interconnectedness of different language skills, promoting well-rounded language development.

Beyond the specific language skills, participation in English clubs has significantly boosted students' motivation and confidence in using English. An impressive 95.2% of students felt more motivated to learn English, and 90.5% reported increased confidence in their language abilities. This psychological uplift is crucial as it fosters a positive attitude towards learning and using English, essential for continued progress and engagement.

DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this research highlight the positive experiences students have in school-based English clubs, underscoring the clubs' role in enhancing language skills and providing valuable learning opportunities. Students reported substantial benefits from engaging in various activities such as weekly meetings, collaborative sessions, and interactive events like English Villages. These activities fostered language skills and increased confidence among participants, aligning with previous studies that emphasize the importance of social interaction in language learning (Feng et al., 2021). Such interactions facilitate a supportive environment that encourages learners to practice and experiment with their language skills without fear of judgment, ultimately improving proficiency (Saeed et al., 2022).

Motivation plays a crucial role in language acquisition, and the research reveals strong intrinsic motivation among students to improve their English skills. Most participants expressed a desire to learn and gain confidence, reflecting findings from other studies that indicate motivation as a key factor in successful language learning (Khan & Ali, 2020). The emphasis on personal growth and experiential learning among students highlights the need for educational institutions to create environments that support these intrinsic motivations, thereby enhancing students' engagement and commitment to learning.

Despite the positive outcomes, students reported several challenges that hindered their participation and language development within the English clubs. The inconsistency in program implementation due to heavy academic workloads has been shown to negatively affect student engagement and learning outcomes (Ali et al., 2023). This aligns with findings from previous research that stress the importance of consistent and structured programming in extracurricular

language activities to sustain student involvement and support language acquisition (McLoughlin et al., 2020). Addressing scheduling conflicts and ensuring regularity in club activities could enhance student participation and language skill development.

Additionally, students expressed pronunciation and vocabulary retention difficulties, which have been identified as common challenges in language learning (Duflou & Tardieu, 2019). The need for focused pronunciation practice and vocabulary acquisition strategies is essential, as these areas directly impact students' confidence and effectiveness in communication (Hosseini & Shafiee, 2021). Implementing targeted interventions, such as pronunciation workshops or vocabulary-building exercises, could significantly help students overcome these challenges and boost their language proficiency.

While writing skills showed improvement, they were less pronounced than other language domains. This finding suggests that writing, often seen as a more complex skill, requires dedicated instructional strategies (Zhang & Wang, 2021). Research indicates that students benefit from structured writing activities that provide clear guidelines and frequent feedback (Hughes et al., 2022). To maximize the effectiveness of English clubs, it is imperative to incorporate more writing-focused sessions, such as peer reviews and collaborative writing projects, to further develop students' writing competencies.

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that participation in school-based English clubs significantly positively impacts students' language skills. Through regular activities such as weekly meetings, seminars, and collaborations, students reported improvements in their speaking, listening, and reading abilities. Many participants expressed increased confidence and competence in communicating in English, indicating that these interactive sessions effectively foster language proficiency. While writing skills also showed improvement, there is a clear need for more targeted activities to enhance this particular area further. These findings align with previous studies emphasizing the importance of social interaction and continuous practice in language learning processes.

However, the research also identified several challenges faced by students in English clubs. Inconsistency in program implementation due to heavy academic workloads, difficulties in pronunciation and vocabulary retention, and limited practice opportunities emerged as significant barriers. Although some students reported not encountering substantial challenges, it is crucial for educators to consider this feedback and design more effective interventions. By addressing these areas for improvement, English clubs can better facilitate language skill development and build students' confidence in using English.

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