

Research Article

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Exploring the Benefits and Barriers of Online English-Speaking Club for EFL Learners' Speaking Skill Development in Indonesia

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Abstract

Background/purpose. Despite its informal setting, it is astonishing that the members of online English-speaking club (ESC) are adept at speaking. Employing a mixed-methods approach, more specifically a descriptive case study, this study aimed to evaluate the ESC contribution to its members' speaking competence development, to examine their speaking competence, and to identify the challenges they encountered in their endeavor to acquire English-speaking competence in Indonesia, where English is a foreign language.

Materials/methods. A number of 15 members of the online ESC were recruited as the research participants. Interviews were conducted to unpack the contributions of the club with respect to its members' spoken English skill and the challenges facing them. An oral test was administered to assess the club members' speaking competence. Interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Data obtained from the test were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Results. The results indicated the online ESC considerable contribution to its members' speaking competence attainment attributed to the potentials it offers: language development support, psychological benefit, and collaborative learning opportunities. The club members' speaking proficiency level belonged to category "good," with an average score of 8.0. Additionally, the challenges facing the club members included linguistic and psychological obstacles.

Conclusion. The online ESC offers benefits to its members in regard with speaking competence development. Therefore, suggestions for the parties within and beyond this research are provided.

1. Introduction

It is the acquisition of the four basic skills of the English language that constitutes the primary objective of learning it as a foreign language (EFL), particularly speaking. It occurs in social or interpersonal circumstances and involves interactions among speakers and listeners. One is to acquire speaking competence to be able to perform communication well on daily basis. Speaking competence incorporates discourse and language, speaking skills, and strategies of communication (Sabnani & Renandya, 2019). This suggests the necessity to acquire speaking competence. Arguably, it takes considerable endeavor to gain speaking competence. Such endeavor is commonly made in the form of learning at school, that is formal learning. Be that as it may, the effort to attain speaking competence can also be made in other environments of learning. Odo (2019) delineated that language learning may occur in informal settings. He further noted that informal learning takes place in naturalistic contexts. With this in mind, it is probable to deem that a language learning community is a form of informal learning as it happens in naturalistic circumstances.

A preliminary inquiry into a certain online language learning community exhibits extraordinary English-speaking competence. The community in question is English-Speaking Club (henceforth abbreviated as ESC). It is a virtual English learning club within which its members rehearse speaking in informal contexts, online settings through Zoom or Google Meet. An initial observation resulted in the conjecture that the members speak English in a surprisingly decent fashion. Despite their outstanding speaking skill, they admitted experiencing challenges when trying to master speaking competence, which Advianti et al. (2022) refer to as linguistic and psychological challenges. Still, they managed to overcome such challenges.

Unquestionably, both formal and informal language learning contribute to learning attainment (Werquin, 2012). Based on literature search, scarcely has research been undertaken to inquire the speaking competence developed informally, particularly via virtual modes with the help of online conference platforms. The majority of the existing literature put the focus on investigating learning that takes place at schools or universities wherein the language learning is rather formal although held in a club (Werquin, 2012). As it stands, they are the types of clubs whose activities are conducted in-person or offline.

In the current study, the ESC learning activities are undertaken through a virtual conference platform and its membership is open to those who recognize it and want to join it. Owing to this matter, the present study attempted to investigate the advantage that the online ESC has in enhancing their members' speaking competence, to examine its members' speaking competence, and to discover the challenges they face during speaking-in-English activity. With the aforementioned explication as to the rationale, this inquiry proposed three research questions: (1) How does the online ESC contribute to its members' speaking competence development?; (2) To what extent is the speaking competence of the online ESC members?; and (3) What are the speaking challenges encountered by members when the online ESC activity is underway?

2. Literature Review

At the outset, it is paramount to look at what EFL speaking competence is. Speaking is the cognitive and linguistic process which entails the utilization of linguistic competences to disseminate information, manifest emotional states, and engage in interactive discourse coherently. It generates meaning through creation, retrieval, and cognitive processing information (Heald & Nusbaum, 2014; Hardacre & Guvendir, 2018). That being the case, those components namely grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehension should be treated as priority to master.

Grammar is the system of rules governing language structure that essential for clear and effective spoken communication. Syntactically, it constructs sentence formation, employing

morphology, tense, subject-verb agreement, and discourse cohesion (Gilakjani, 2016). A wide range of vocabulary advocates speakers to express with precision and clarity in conversation or discussion with a range of topics. The entirety of words actively engages speaker's understanding within a specific language. Pronunciation serves as a foundation for successful communication to ensure the unambiguous transmission and comprehension intended message (Suwartono, 2008). Within the domain of language acquisition, pronunciation is conceptualized as the act of producing speech sounds in a manner that effectively conveys intended meaning (Gilakjani, 2016).

To minimize disfluencies such as pauses and fillers, fluency and comprehension components are notable to be mastered in speaking competence. This aligns with Chang and Windeatt (2024) arguing that fluency is given an emphasis on the competence to utilize a language in a natural and assured manner, decreasing unnecessary pauses or interruptions in discourse. In order to assess individual speaking proficiency, speaking evaluation is required to measure the learning outcome. McKnight et al. (2023) classified speaking assessments into some types, including imitative, intensive, responsive, and extensive.

Another reviewed concept entails challenges in acquiring speaking competence. With reference to the existing body of literature, challenges in obtaining speaking competence are arguably classified into linguistic and psychological challenges (Zainurrahman & Sangaji, 2019; Thao & Nguyet, 2019). In their stance, linguistic challenges are the leading hindrances. Such impediments include selection of suitable words, fluency problem, L1 influence, and incorrect grammar use (Chand, 2021). This means that linguistic challenges are the obstacles that are associated with language components. Furthermore, another typology of challenges incorporates fear of committing errors, lack of confidence, and anxiety (Thao & Nguyet, 2019). Such challenges are regarded as psychological challenges in their stance. This means that the challenges that are correlated with the psychological stances of learners may exist.

A further reviewed idea constitutes a number of methods in acquiring speaking competence in informal manner. Richards and Rogers (2014) specifically identified Community Language Learning (CLL), natural approach, and immersion as key components of cooperative language learning. In online ESC, individuals are immersed in an environment where English is the primary language of communication. This immersion fosters language acquisition through constant exposure to authentic language use in various social contexts referred to as "Krashen Acquisition Hypothesis." As Krashen and Terrel in Amiruddin and Jannah (2021) stated, their theory focuses on developing communication without reference to a particular theory of grammar. Learners are encouraged to speak, even with the presence of errors. A later study by Suryanto et al. (2025) reported that English speaking club leaves a favorable impression as a beneficial platform to learners of English as a foreign language in Indonesia. To conclude, it is commendable to say that community language learning, natural approach, and immersion are communicative and apparently efficacious means of acquiring speaking competence.

Several identical studies have been undertaken, concerning the mapping of EFL learners' speaking competence. Harahap and Rahmawati (2024) explored the speaking abilities of diploma Midwifery students in their 5th term, who were engaged in the English Conversation Club and employed a mix-methods approach to assess their speaking abilities through a test. The results reveal that they had "good" or "very good" speaking competence and identified factors that influenced their speaking skills. In contrast, the present study recruited online speaking club members as research participants.

The subsequent study investigated the effect of English club activities on the speaking skill of students at a senior high school in the city of Makassar, Indonesia (Mursidin et al., 2023). Quasi-experimental study was performed to examine if there was a positive correlation between

participation in the English club and enhanced speaking abilities among the students. This study, however, did not only examine the speaking competence of ESC members but also delved into the challenges they encountered in acquiring oral language skills.

Advianti et al. (2022) conducted a descriptive case study, assessing speaking competence of students sitting at the 3rd grade of a vocational high school in the city of Tegal, Indonesia and exposing that the overall mapping of the participants' speaking competence belonged to "good". Meanwhile, in the current research, a case study was employed to investigate an online ESC advantage for its members, their speaking skill development, and the challenges facing them (teen and adult EFL learners) when speaking in the club forum.

3. Methodology

This section shall explicate the research methodology of this inquiry. It includes research design, participants, data collection, data analysis, as well as validity assurance.

3.1. Study Design

Bearing the nature of the problem under study, the current research applied a mixed-methods approach integrating different research designs and incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell, 2014). This approach was opted owing to the formulated research questions. The first and third research questions are qualitative in nature, whilst the second research question appears to be quantitative.

The aforementioned explication of research approach led to the selection of the research design. A case study was employed in this inquiry (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To be more specific, a descriptive case study was selected to describe the characteristics, context, and the dynamics of the case without necessarily seeking to establish causal relationships or make generalizations to a larger population (Yin in Mudzakir, 2004).

3.2. Participants

So as to inquire the problem under the study, this research chose an online ESC. The club has a membership of 50 people. They are EFL learners (mostly teens and adults) with varied backgrounds. The rationale for opting them is the fact that they are in possession of remarkable English-speaking club despite the informal setting. Fifteen members (30%) were recruited in a random fashion as sample. According to Suwartono (2014), using random sampling technique will reduce the threat to validity. We distributed an informed consent to the participants and obtained positive response from them. Figure 1 below depicts the online ESC weekly routines.

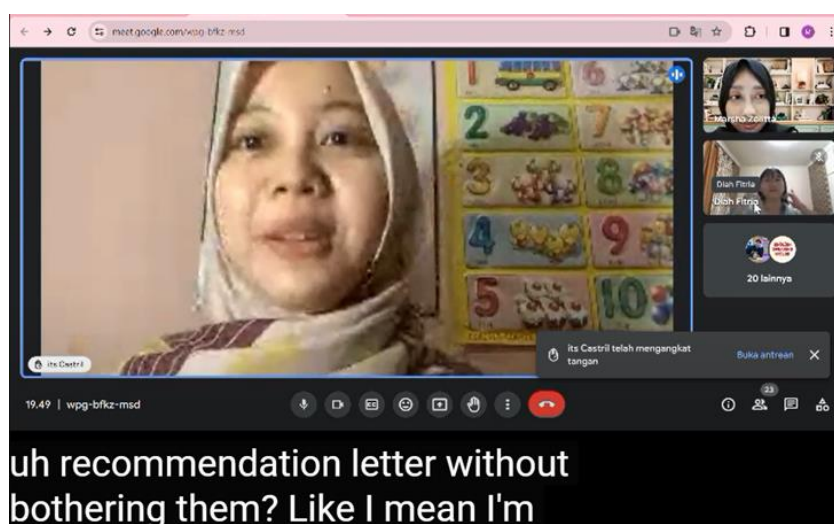


Figure 1. The Online ESC Weekly Program in Action

3.3. Data Collection

To collect data, this study employed interviews and testing. A series of semi-structured interviews along with interview guide was conducted with the participants in order to unpack the ESC contribution or impact on their speaking competence and the challenges they encountered. Subsequently, to ascertain validity – the idea that data have to reflect their real condition (Suwartono, 2014), the instruments of this research, i.e. a semi-structured interview protocol and a speaking test in the forms of “monologue” (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019) were constructed on the basis of logic validity using a careful blue-print. A test scoring rubric was adapted from Moedjito (2009) covering pronunciation, grammar accuracy, fluency, vocabulary, and intelligibility to assess the ESC members’ speaking competence. Both interview – a way to gather information through spoken interaction (Suwartono, 2014) and test/testing – a method of measuring one’s competence in a given domain (Brown, 2000) were carried out in a virtual platform, as the participants were reachable only through this mode.

Inter-rater technique – the degree of similarity between two raters (Wang, 2009) – was applied to enhance validity involving an experienced senior high school English teacher deemed capable and the lead researcher of the current project team. The English teacher was also requested to help appraise the interview protocol. The efforts to maintain this study’s valid findings arguably attempted properly sound rationale, accordingly.

3.4. Data Analysis

The data gathered were numeric and words. Descriptive statistics was performed to analyze the quantitative data, whereas thematic analysis (Naeem et al., 2023) was conducted to analyze the qualitative data.

Analysis using descriptive statistics began with the help of Microsoft Excel. It included mean, frequency, and percentage (Suwartono, 2014). The online ESC members’ speaking competence was assessed taking the following aspects into account: pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and intelligibility. Two independent raters categorized each score into five levels as suggested by Haris (1974): 1.0-2.9 = poor; 3.0-4.9 = fair; 5.0-6.9 = average; 7.0-8.9 = good; and 9.0-10.0 = excellent.

Thematic analysis, with reference to Naeem et al. (2023), consists of some steps: data familiarization, initial code generation, theme search, theme review, theme definition, and report production. The analysis began with transcribing interviews. Coding was then performed to generate themes. Generated themes serve as sound answers to research questions concerning the online ESC advantages and speaking challenges.

3.5. Ethical Considerations

Informed consent and anonymity were provided for academic purposes and clear research objectives (Sindhuri & Dongre, 2023). Upon receiving an informed consent form from us, the members of the online ESC under study volunteered themselves to be part of the research.

4. Results

Data obtained from interviewing and testing were then analyzed. The outcomes shall provide sound answers to the formulated research questions. Results of data analyses are presented with reference to the research questions.

4.1. Benefits of the Online ESC to its Members’ Speaking Competence Development

As far as speaking competence is concerned, the club provided its members with some benefits. Thematic analysis of the interview data indicated that contributions of the online ESC to its members’

speaking competence can be categorized into (1) language development, (2) psychological benefits, and (3) opportunity for collaborative learning. Detail is presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Benefits of the Online ESC to its Members

Categories	Contributions	Excerpts from Participants' Responses
Language development	Fostering speaking competence	So, yeah, they really contribute in my speaking ability. (P3)
	acquisition	
	Fostering listening competence acquisition	I mean, like for improving our speaking skill and our other English skills as well, like listening... (P10)
Psychological benefits	Fostering grammar competence acquisition	... I can improve my grammar...(P10)
	Becoming motivation source	...it's like give you motivation to speak English more...(P9)
	Developing leadership	... it make me a new challenge because I have to handle the new meeting... (P4)
Opportunity for collaborative learning	Providing learning partners	...big contribution for my speaking partner, and I thank a lot because it's giving a lot of things that I need to learn about my English. (P8)
		...the environment to help the members grow and practice...(P13)
	Providing a place for collaborative learning	

Initially, the online ESC contributes to language development through activities that foster speaking competence and the acquisition of both listening competence and grammar. On the subject of fostering speaking competence, the term “really” uttered by participant implies that the club had impact on their speaking competence. Thereafter, listening competence and grammar competence exhibited a significant improvement according to the participants’ perspective.

The second contribution gave psychological benefits, as in the case of becoming motivation source and developing leadership. In the context of becoming motivation source, the participants admitted that it boosted to speak more extensively. Bestowing leadership development, they became a host to manage a meeting for speaking practice. Providing learning partners and a place for collaborative learning are the ultimate contributions. In terms of providing learning partners, the participants obtained tons of things that supported their English learning necessities. By serving as a place for collaborative learning, they meant the online ESC helped them preserve and practice their speaking ability.

4.2. Speaking Competence of the Online ESC Members

A speaking test was administered to the participants, intending to assess their speaking competence. Descriptive statistics including frequency, percentage, and mean, was employed to

evaluate the level of the online ESC members' speaking competence attainment. Their speaking competence shall be presented in both holistic and analytical fashions.

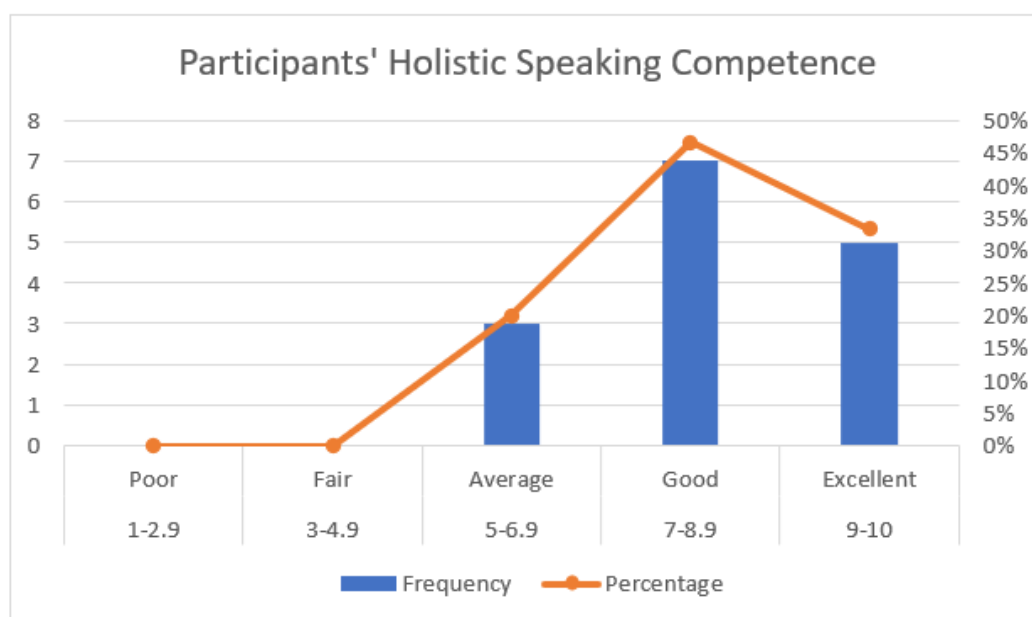


Figure 2. The Online ESC Members' Holistic Speaking Competence

Figure 2 showcases the holistic speaking competence level of the online ESC members. Their holistic speaking competence was conclusively classified as “good” with an average score of 8.0. Furthermore, three participants (20%) acquired only level “average”, seven participants (47%) attained level “good”, and five participants (33%) reached up to level “excellent”. Seen from all the aspects of speaking competence, this suggests that their spoken English is largely intelligible, has only few grammatical errors, has only few vocabulary errors, has only few pauses and rectifications, as well as has only few mispronunciations.

What comes next will pertain to the analytical details of the speaking competence of the club members, covering intelligibility, grammar accuracy, vocabulary choice, fluency, and pronunciation.

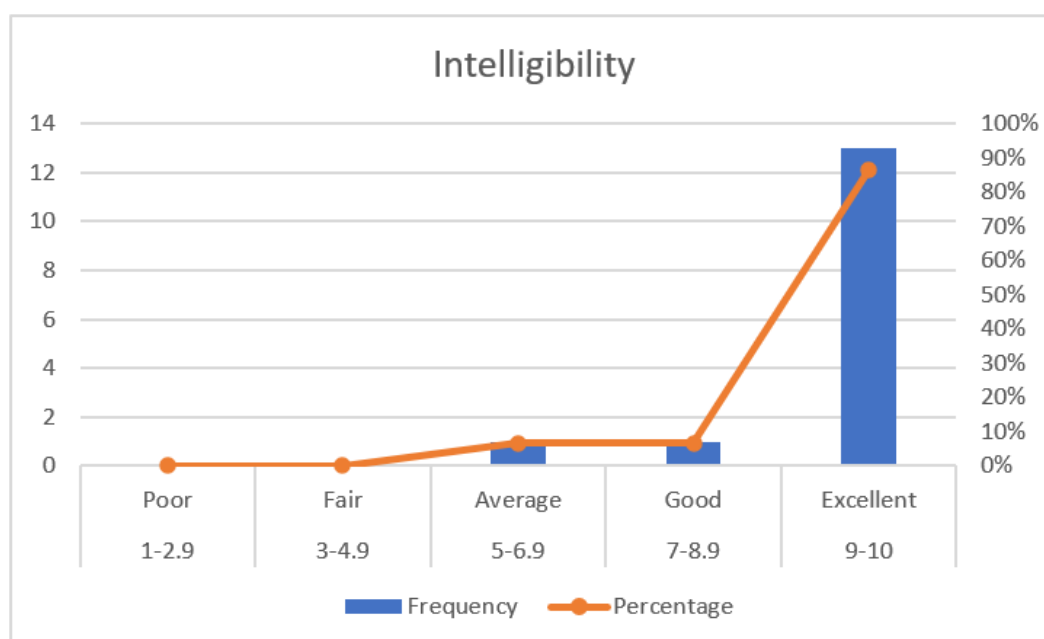


Figure 3. Spoken English Intelligibility of the Online ESC Members

Figure 3 depicts the online ESC members' spoken English communication intelligibility. The score of intelligibility was 9.6, and was classified as "excellent." One participant (7%) acquired level "average", whereas thirteen participants (87%) reached up to level "excellent". This conclusively denotes that the intelligibility to this extent causes no extra attempt to discern the utterances conveyed.

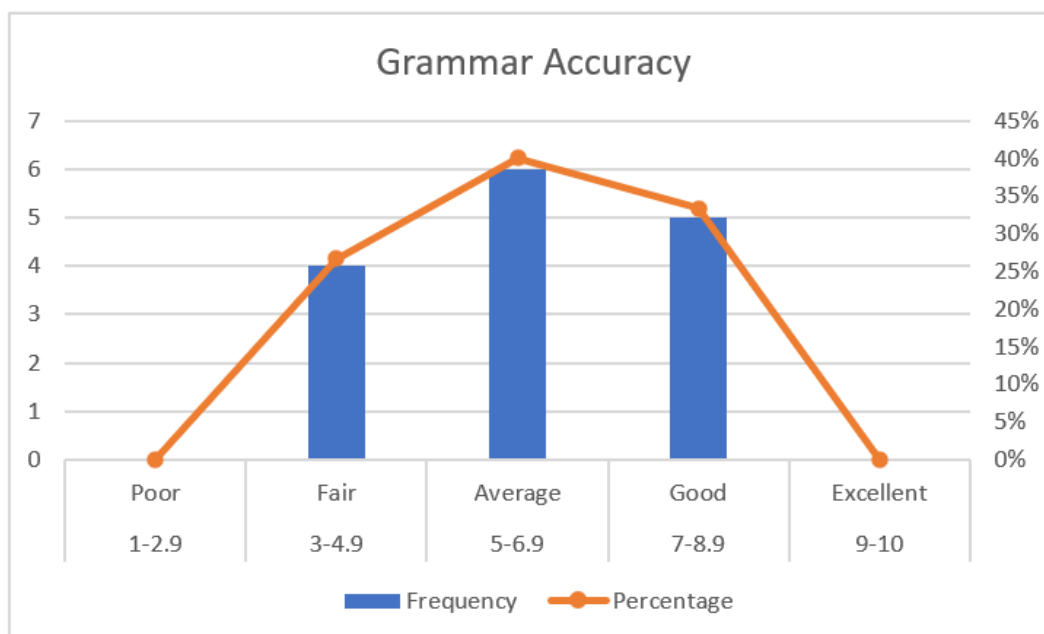


Figure 4. Grammar Accuracy of the Online ESC Members

Figure 4 vividly exhibits the grammar accuracy of the ESC members' speaking competence. They managed to acquire level "average" with an average score of 6.0. Four participants (27%) achieved only level "fair", six participants (40%) achieved "average" level, and five participants (33%) reached level "good". This scores attainment indicates that the utterances spoken by the majority of the members contain some grammatical errors. That being said, in an aggregate fashion, they are considered normal and their utterances remain intelligible.

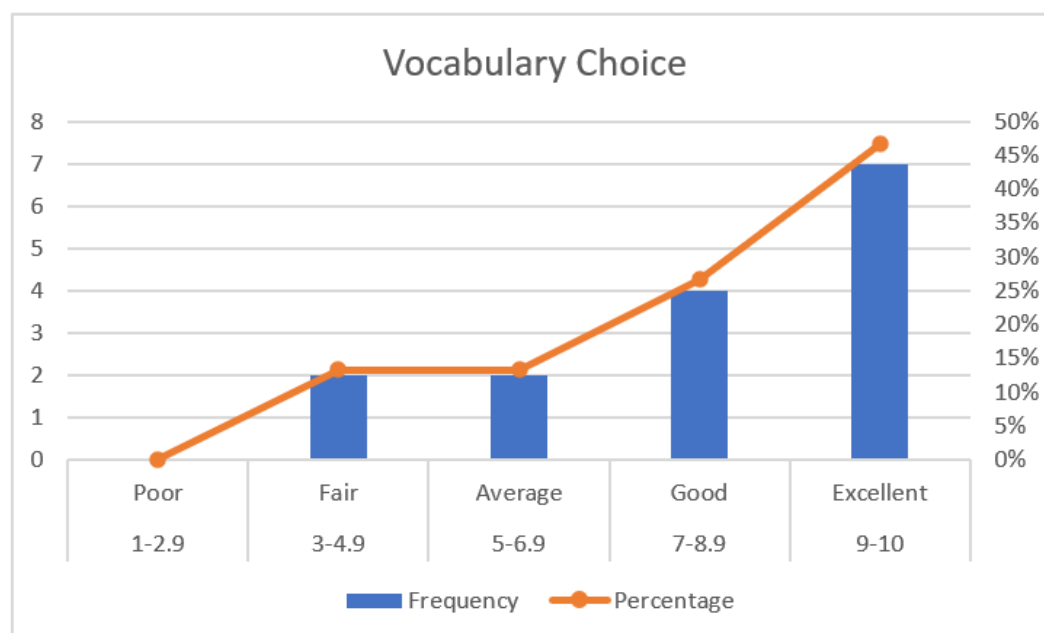


Figure 5. Vocabulary Choice Competence of the Online ESC Members

Figure 5 shows the vocabulary choice competence (another term for ‘vocabulary mastery’) of the online ESC members. They managed to acquire “good” vocabulary mastery, with an average score of 7.9. Two participants (13%) attained level “fair”. Two participants (13%) gained level “average”. Four participants (27%) achieved level “good”. Whereas seven participants (47%) reached up to level “excellent”. This scores attainment suggests that nearly all the participants select their words suitable albeit with few errors.

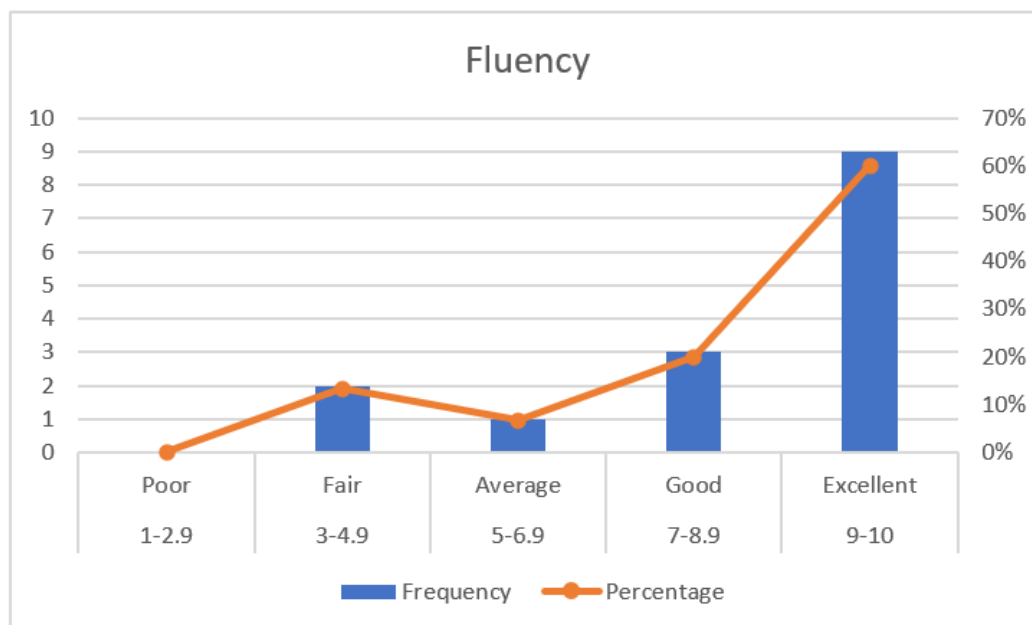


Figure 6. Speaking Fluency of the Online ESC Members

Figure 6 displays the speaking fluency of the online ESC members. They were able to obtain level “good” with an average score of 8.4. Two participants (13%) attained level “fair”. One participant (7%) acquired level “average”. Three participants (20%) achieved level “good”. Whereas nine participants (60%) reached up to level “excellent”. This scores attainment indicates that many participants incorporated within this study are capable of producing utterances with nearly no pauses and rectifications.

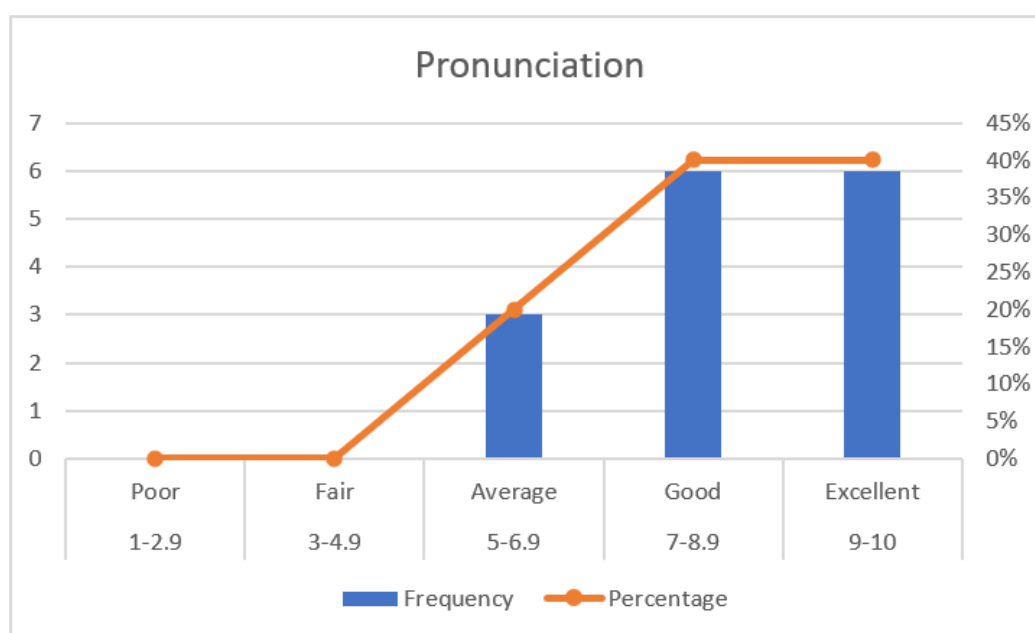


Figure 7. Pronunciation Competence of the Online ESC Members

Figure 7 presents the pronunciation competence of the online ESC members. They scored 8.3, belonging to category “good.” Three participants (20%) obtained category “average”. Six participants (40%) were able to attain level “good.” Six participants (40%) managed to acquire level “excellent.” This scores attainment suggests that they were able to produce at least segmental phonemes in the English language with nearly no mispronunciation. It is true that the first language may influence the ways by which they yield sounds when uttering words.

4.3. Speaking Challenges Encountered by the Online ESC Members

A series of interview was conducted, and the data obtained were analyzed using thematic analysis. From the analysis, it was unveiled that the members of the online ESC came across challenges whose types can be classified into: (1) linguistic challenges: and (2) psychological challenges. See Table 2 below for details:

Table 2. Speaking Challenges Facing the Online ESC Members

Speaking Challenges	Aspects	Excerpts from Participants' Responses
Linguistic Challenges	Unintelligibility	...my biggest challenges in speaking, especially as in recognizing the people's, the accents. (P2)
	Inaccurate grammar use	ny biggest challenge in speaking English, it would be grammar...(P5)
	Improper word usage	eel challenged to speak English because I often try to find precise words to express my ideas. (P11)
	Lack of fluency	also have difficulties in the fluency... (P4)
	Mispronunciation	..the challenge is about pronunciation; we are rather limited about the exposure. (P7)
Psychological challenges	Fear of making errors	I'm feeling afraid when I'm making a mistake when I pronounce the words. (P8)
	Lack of confidence	...underestimate people when they are talking with the other people...(P9)
	Anxiety	I feel so nervous how to answer because actually... (P1)

The very first typology of the speaking challenges encountered by the participants is linguistic challenges. They cover unintelligibility, inaccurate grammar use, improper grammar use, lack of fluency as well as mispronunciation. In the case of unintelligibility, it was admitted that they found it difficult to recognize people's utterance. Dealing with inaccurate grammar use, participants remarked that they often made syntactical errors in their utterances. In terms of improper word usage, the participants professed that they were not be able to memorize lexicons decently. Considering lack of fluency, it seemed that insufficient vocabulary was one of issues in order to be fluent in speaking. Mispronunciation is the last challenge encountered because of English language exposure limitation.

The second typology of the speaking challenges are regarded as psychological challenges. Fear of making errors, lack of confidence, and anxiety are included in this matter. Regarding fear of making

errors, the participants undoubtedly conceded that mispronouncing words gave a sense of worrying when speaking. The subsequent challenge pertained to uncertainty; it turned out that being underestimated led to lack of confidence. Anxiety seemed to be the ultimate hindrance in this case. The participants claimed that nervousness occurred in the period of responding question in a certain topic.

5. Discussion

The preceding analysis of interview section has unpacked the online ESC contributions in improving members' speaking competence. Some of participants admitted that their speaking capability has significantly enhanced due to the English immersion setting in ESC. Within this community, the members are enabled to uninhibitedly articulate their perspectives which allow them to acquire more English language input. Krashen and Terrel in Amiruddin and Jannah (2021) proposed that language acquisition actualizes subconsciously through exposure to comprehensible input, which aligns with the immersive environment where learners are constantly exposed to the target language. As with the current study, the contributions can be categorized into: (1) language development, (2) psychological benefits, and (3) opportunity for a collaborative learning.

In the context of language development, it fosters speaking competence acquisition, listening competence acquisition, and grammar competence acquisition. P3 noted that the online ESC contributed to his speaking ability. Apparently, a regular meeting in the club benefits them in ways that it enhances their speaking competence. Regarding listening ability, P10 enunciated that his listening had better improvement. Live virtual interactions in the online English-speaking competence led to the change in their listening skills in a positive light. An inquiry by Ordonez and Holguin (2021) unearthed the fact that their participants improved their listening skills in the aftermath of attending online conversations. Still another benefit deal with grammar competence. P10 stated that the community helped to enhance his grammar. To be sure, a series of interactive language rehearsal, namely, speaking with peers in an online platform led to growth in grammar knowledge and competence. Maming et al. (2024) espoused the current research's findings, delineating that the prevalence of English meetings club made the subjects' grammar competence better.

It is undeniable drawing upon the data of interview resulted the members of the online ESC asserted that they able to deal with their psychological issue. This is verifiable true that members are highly motivated and have a capability to hone their leadership skills. These advantages obtained from being a host in a speaking activity. Observing excerpt 18, the participants uttered that the club "give motivation to speak more". It is manifest that involvement in the club empowers them psychologically and enhances their perceived leadership abilities. Octaberlina and Muslimin (2022) proclaimed that the key aim behind the emergence of extracurricular programs like English clubs is to make it easier for students to cultivate motivation and enthusiasm in English language study.

Still another benefit that the members of this online ESC get is the opportunity for a collaborative learning. Due to the fact that the club is a virtual social space, they are benefited in ways that they are given the chance to have a learning partner as well as opportunity to for a concerted learning. P13 claimed that the club's environment accommodate the members to grow and practice their speaking. This clearly allows them to develop their language to a considerable degree. Songpitak and Ekkayokkaya (2022) affirmed this finding that significant improvement was detected as a result of collaborative learning approach for speaking rehearsals. This means that collaborative learning considerably contributes to the growth of learners' speaking competence.

With reference to the holistic results of the test (see Figure 2), the members of the online ESC acquired the score of 8.0. This suggests that the speaking competence of the members falls into category "good" (Harris in Setiowati et al., 2024). This denotes that they are sentenced to owning "good" speaking competence in all the five aspects as theorized by Moedjito (2009), covering

intelligibility, grammar accuracy, vocabulary choice, fluency, as well as pronunciation. A study by Muljani and Suwartono (2020) apparently yielded a similar result. Vocational high school students who joined an online ESC achieved level “good”. The learning circumstance improves motivation because they feel less isolated and more engaged. Therefore, the teachers and learning environment determines the outcomes of speaking competence.

In light of the intelligibility and grammar accuracy, the participants seem to exhibit levels “excellent” and “average,” respectively (see Figures 3-4). The extent to which an utterance is able to be understood with an average score of 9.6 suggests that their utterances are mostly comprehensible (Moedjito, 2009), although phonological features might influence intelligibility (Gurevich & Kim, 2022). The grammar accuracy of the participants has the score of 6.0. Arguably, grammar has invariably been the most complex aspect of speaking competence, which might lead to lower speaking competence (Salada, 2024).

As to vocabulary choice and fluency, the members of the online ESC achieved level “good” (See Figures 5-6). Studies by Harselina et al. (2024) and Rahmawati et al. (2023) affirmed this finding in a way that selecting words is considered challenging in both spoken and written English communications. Yet, in the current study, they acquired 7.9, indicating that they can opt words properly. The ESC members attained an average of 8.3 in fluency – how proficient a language learner is (Salada, 2024), suggesting that they are mostly capable of speaking English fluently with ease.

Still another aspect is pronunciation. The score of the members is 8.3 which fell into level “good” (Harris in Setiowati et al., 2024). Vowel shifts due to mother tongue interference might affect clarity (Listyani et al., 2024), yet the members remain to be able to perform nearly correct pronunciation. In summary, the speaking competence levels of the members among the online ESC falls into category “good” with an average score of 8.0. This denotes that the speaking competence per level is purportedly good across all aspects (Moedjito, 2009).

In the aftermath of the presentation of the results in the preceding section, linguistic challenges and psychological challenges were faced in the midst of their attempt to acquire speaking competence. Salada (2024) affirmed these findings, enunciating that challenges in struggling with speaking competence may include linguistic problems and psychological problems. Linguistic challenges may include vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation mastery (Salada, 2024). The current study discovered another extra finding that belongs to the 5 aspects of speaking competence by Brown (2020), i.e. unintelligibility. The linguistic challenges that the participants had to encounter include: unintelligibility, inaccurate grammar use, improper word usage, lack of fluency, as well as mispronunciation.

P2 said that he failed to “recognize the accent”. This issue is caused by differences between the sounds of English and the sounds of the participants’ first language. Identical phonetic features and unfamiliar sounds might be reason that impedes intelligibility (Iadkert et al., 2024). This indicates that the participant’s difficulty in comprehending utterances in the English language might be due to the different sound patterns in both languages. P5 admitted that they had problems with “structuring” words. Harmer as cited in Ghafar and Sawalmeh (2024) remarked that grammar serves speakers in crafting syntactically accurate sentences, employing suitable word forms, tenses and aspects appropriately, upholding subject-verb concordance, and structuring cohesive discourse. This case indicates that the participants might have had problems with constructing words into sentences that are comprehensible. P11 said that he had a trouble with finding “precise words”. Vocabulary contains the entirety of words speaker’s understanding and actively employing within a specific language (Uchihara & Clenton, 2022). This illustrates the members’ difficulty in selecting suitable words to use. P4 claimed that she spoke with noticeable long pauses. Mejía and Llor (2024) exclaimed that fluency emphasizes the competence to utilize a language in a natural and assured manner, decreasing

unnecessary pauses or interruptions in discourse. This case exhibits that the participant might have had interruptions which distract their fluency. P7 presented an illustration that mispronunciation was the greatest hinderance they faced. Yates in Gilakjani (2016) noted that pronunciation is conceptualized as the act of producing speech sounds in a manner that effectively conveys intended meaning. In addition, he failed to produce accurate sounds with the aim of transmitting the intended meaning effectively. This cause pronunciation tends to the main problem experienced by these participants.

The second challenge faced by members of online ESC belongs to psychology factor, including the fear of committing errors, lack of confidence, and anxiety (Thao & Nguyet, 2019). From the series of interviews, these factors are divided into three: fear of making mistakes, self-assurance, and anxiousness. P8 was fear of mispronouncing words in front of public. Getting to complaints led him to dread of making errors. P9 was underestimated by society when having a conversation with other people. This might cause uncertainty pertaining to his speaking competence. Lastly, P1 represented the feeling of anxious when trying to practice their speaking skill. Under the circumstance, she experienced nervousness in the midst of being asked by host in a discussion.

6. Limitations of the Study

The absence of control that can support a causal claim as in experimental studies is one of the weak points of research employing a mixed-methods approach. The possibility of alternative factors causing the online ESC members to achieve level “good” at speaking competence – other than because of joining the online ESC – is open.

7. Suggestions and Practical Implications

These findings provide practical implications. Firstly, English learners who are attempting to acquire speaking competence are encouraged to get actively engaged in collaborative speaking activities such as English club, whether online or offline as per their preferences and needs. Secondly, it is suggested that English tutors adjust their teaching methods which allow for collaborative learning to take place, whether within the classroom or beyond. In addition, researchers who appear to be captivated by similar issue under study are recommended to undertake further studies employing straightforward methods yet taking ethics (research involving human) into full consideration, such as causal-comparative (ex-post facto) research, to ensure a significant impact of English-speaking club or, to be specific, online English-speaking club.

8. Conclusion

In summary, employing a case study, this research has brought to light the contribution of online ESC to their speaking competence, the level of its members speaking competence, and their speaking challenges. The benefits of the online ESC to its members encompass language development, psychological benefit, as well as opportunity for collaborative learning. With an average score of 8.0, the club members’ speaking competence falls into category “good”. The speaking challenges that they faced include linguistic and psychological challenges, incorporating unintelligibility, inaccurate grammar use, improper word usage, lack of fluency, and mispronunciation. Psychological challenges include fear of making errors, lack of confidence and anxiety.

Declarations

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