

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews literature on students' perceptions of the English Club community as an extracurricular activity designed to improve speaking skills. It covers the concept of students' perceptions in language learning, the role of the English Club Community in language learning, and the importance of speaking skills. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a theoretical foundation and background that support the current study and help the researcher identify the gap between previous studies and the present research focus.

A. The Concept of Students' Perceptions in Language Learning

Perception is one of the most foundational psychological processes through which individuals make sense of the world around them. From an educational and psychological standpoint, perception refers to the active cognitive process by which a person receives sensory information from the environment, selects what is relevant, organizes it into a meaningful structure, and ultimately interprets it in light of prior knowledge, beliefs, and emotional states (Robbins & Judge, 2013). Far from being a passive reception of data, perception is a dynamic and highly subjective act of meaning-making: two students exposed to the same classroom or club environment may construct entirely different understandings of that environment depending on their individual background, prior experiences with language learning, and current emotional condition. This subjectivity is precisely what makes the study of perception so valuable in educational research,

because it reveals not the environment as it objectively exists, but the environment as learners experience and respond to it.

The process by which a perception is formed can be described through a sequential cognitive framework. Perception begins with a stimulus any element of the learning environment that reaches a learner's senses, such as a tutor's tone of voice, the seating arrangement of a club room, the laughter of peers, or the format of an activity. From this stimulus, the learner's attentional mechanism selects which aspects to focus on, a process that is inevitably shaped by personal relevance and emotional salience (Qvortrup et al., 2016). The selected information is then organized through cognitive schemas, mental frameworks built from accumulated experience, before being interpreted as a meaningful judgment or feeling about the environment. In the context of an EFL extracurricular community such as the English Club, this process operates continuously: a student who notices that her tutor smiles and offers clues rather than bluntly correcting errors will attend to this pattern, organize it against her previous experiences of being corrected in class, and ultimately interpret the club environment as safer and more supportive than formal instruction. This interpretive outcome then shapes her subsequent behavior, including how willing she is to speak, take risks, and remain engaged.

Understanding why the study of students' perceptions holds particular importance in qualitative research requires a consideration of what perception ultimately governs in a learning context. Research in educational psychology has consistently demonstrated that learners' subjective perceptions of their

environment are among the strongest predictors of their motivation, engagement, and achievement (Alderman, 2004). When students perceive a learning space as safe, welcoming, and relevant to their personal goals, they are significantly more likely to participate actively and to persist through difficulty. Conversely, when students perceive a learning environment as threatening, evaluative, or indifferent to their needs, avoidance behaviors including unwillingness to speak, passive observation, and eventual withdrawal become predictable outcomes. In the specific domain of EFL speaking development, which is widely recognized as one of the most anxiety-inducing dimensions of language learning (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991), the role of positive perception is not merely supportive but constitutive: students cannot develop oral fluency in an environment they fear, regardless of how technically sound the instruction may be.

The relationship between perception and affective factors in language learning is particularly well-documented and directly relevant to the English Club context. Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis proposed that learners maintain an internal emotional barrier that either permits or blocks the acquisition of new language depending on their current affective state. High anxiety, low self-esteem, and negative attitudes toward the target language or learning environment raise this filter, effectively preventing input from being processed and internalized. By contrast, positive perceptions of the learning environment including feelings of comfort, belonging, and peer support lower the affective filter and create the conditions under which genuine acquisition can occur. When students perceive the English Club Community as a space characterized by mutual

encouragement, shared purpose, and freedom from judgment, they are, in neurological and psychological terms, more open to acquiring language than they would be in a formal, evaluation-heavy classroom. The perception of safety, in other words, is not a soft or secondary concern; it is a prerequisite for the kind of oral risk-taking that speaking development requires.

Beyond reducing anxiety, students' perceptions of their learning community also directly shape their willingness to communicate (WTC), a construct introduced by MacIntyre et al. (1998) to describe the likelihood that a learner will initiate communication in a given situation when free to do so. WTC is not a fixed personality trait but a dynamic, situation-specific state that is strongly influenced by how students perceive their interlocutors, the activity at hand, and the social atmosphere of the group. Students who perceive their club peers as non-judgmental friends rather than evaluating audiences are substantially more likely to volunteer responses, attempt complex vocabulary, and sustain speaking turns even when they make errors. This connection between perception and WTC is especially significant in the English Club Community context, where voluntary participation is the norm and there is no formal compulsion to speak: students whose perceptions of the community are positive will choose to engage, while those with negative perceptions are likely to withdraw into silence. Investigating what those perceptions are, therefore, provides researchers with direct insight into the social and emotional conditions that either support or inhibit speaking development.

In sum, the concept of students' perceptions is not a peripheral consideration in language education research but a central lens through which the lived experience of learning becomes legible. Perceptions mediate the relationship between a learning environment and a learner's actual behavior within it, determining how much anxiety they feel, how willing they are to speak, how motivated they remain, and how much of what they encounter they ultimately acquire. In the context of this study, exploring students' perceptions of the English Club Community at MTsN 3 Kediri is therefore not merely a methodological choice but a theoretically grounded decision: it acknowledges that the effectiveness of any extracurricular program depends not only on its design but on how that design is received, interpreted, and internalized by the students it serves. As Dornyei (2001) has argued, the affective and social dimensions of language learning are inseparable from its cognitive ones, and any account of speaking skill development that neglects the inner voices, attitudes, and emotional responses of learners is, by definition, incomplete.

B. The Role of English Club Community in Language Learning

English Club Community play an essential role in the language learning process, particularly in regions where English is not the primary language. These clubs provide a supportive platform for students to engage in practical language use, allowing them to develop their speaking skills through a variety of interactive activities such as debates, storytelling, and public speaking exercises (Yuliandasari & Kusriandi, 2018). By participating in these activities, students not only practice their language skills but also cultivate essential soft

skills such as critical thinking, creativity, and teamwork. This multifaceted approach to language learning fosters a rich environment that encourages students to communicate freely and confidently.

One of the significant advantages of English Club Community is the informal atmosphere they create, which differs markedly from traditional classroom settings. In formal educational contexts, students often experience heightened anxiety related to performance and evaluation, which can hinder their willingness to speak. English Club Community mitigates this pressure by fostering a community where learners feel comfortable making mistakes and experimenting with language. According to Melviza et al. (2017), this relaxed environment significantly enhances students' speaking abilities by providing ample opportunities for practice and interaction. As students engage in discussions and collaborative exercises, they build confidence and fluency in their speech, which translates to improved communication skills.

Research conducted by Wahyuniati et al. (2020) supports these findings, revealing that students who actively participate in English Club Community exhibit greater speaking proficiency compared to their peers who do not engage in such extracurricular activities. This improvement can be attributed to the increased exposure to English in a practical context, where learners can apply their knowledge in meaningful ways. Moreover, the interaction among club members fosters social bonds, which further enhances motivation and engagement in language learning. By participating in English Club Community, students not

only enhance their speaking skills but also gain valuable experiences that contribute to their overall personal and academic growth.

In conclusion, English Club Community serve as a vital component in the language acquisition journey for students in non-English speaking regions. By offering a supportive and interactive environment, these clubs empower learners to practice speaking in a manner that reduces anxiety and fosters community. The positive impact of English Club Community on speaking skills, as evidenced by various studies, underscores the importance of integrating such extracurricular activities into educational frameworks to promote effective language learning and equip students for success in a globalized world.

C. The Importance of Speaking Skills

Speaking is a central aspect of language proficiency, serving as the primary means through which individuals express ideas, emotions, and information. As noted by Brown (2001), effective communication through speech is not merely for personal expression; it is crucial for building relationships and participating meaningfully in both academic and social contexts. In educational settings, speaking skills significantly enhance learners' overall communicative competence, enabling them to articulate understanding, engage in intellectual discussions, and demonstrate critical thinking. Therefore, developing speaking proficiency should be a foundational goal in language education, which encompasses not only linguistic mastery but also the confidence to use language flexibly in diverse situations.

Effective speaking relies on several key components:

- **Pronunciation:** This refers to the accuracy of sounds and the stress and intonation patterns in speech. Good pronunciation ensures that the speaker is intelligible, minimizing the risk of miscommunication. Clear pronunciation allows listeners to understand the speaker's message quickly and correctly, which is essential for effective communication.
- **Vocabulary:** A rich vocabulary enables precise and nuanced expression. Different contexts require different vocabulary; therefore, knowing how to use a wide range of words helps speakers convey their thoughts more clearly and appropriately. It is also essential for articulating complex ideas and for understanding varied topics in conversations.
- **Fluency:** Fluency is the ability to speak smoothly and without hesitation. It involves not only the speed of speech but also the capacity to construct sentences naturally during conversations. Developing fluency requires consistent practice, allowing speakers to build the confidence to express themselves without unnecessary pauses or errors.
- **Grammatical Accuracy:** This component involves using the correct structures and rules of the language. Grammatically accurate speech ensures that the message is clearly understood and maintains the credibility of the speaker. While minor errors may not always obstruct communication, consistent grammatical accuracy strengthens the overall clarity of the speaker's message.

- **Comprehension:** Comprehension refers to the speaker's ability to understand others during interactions and respond appropriately. It is an active skill that requires the speaker to process incoming information quickly and formulate responses. Strong comprehension skills enhance the ability to engage in meaningful conversations, allowing speakers to adapt their language to fit different communicative situations.
- **Cultural Awareness:** Understanding cultural nuances and context is also vital for effective speaking. Cultural awareness helps speakers interpret messages accurately and respond considerately to diverse perspectives, which is particularly valuable in multicultural environments.
- **Non-verbal Communication:** Aspects such as body language, gestures, and facial expressions play a significant role in speaking. Non-verbal cues can reinforce the spoken message, clarify intent, and enhance understanding. Being aware of these signals can improve how well speakers connect with their audience.

Speaking is not merely a static skill; it is an inherently interactive process requiring the real-time negotiation of meaning. Bailey and Nunan (2005) emphasize that effective speaking involves constructing and conveying messages in dynamic exchanges where active listening and quick responses are essential. Through participatory settings like the English Club Community, learners engage in authentic communicative tasks such as debates, role-plays, and group discussions that mirror real-world interactions. These activities help develop not only linguistic skills but also social awareness, adaptability, and confidence, as

students learn to navigate diverse perspectives and communicative challenges. By focusing on these components, learners can significantly enhance their speaking abilities and effectively communicate in various contexts.

However, many students face significant challenges in developing speaking skills. Anxiety is a prevalent issue; learners often fear making mistakes in front of peers, which can lead to reticence in participating during speaking activities (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). The fear of negative evaluation can stifle their willingness to engage, thus limiting practice opportunities that are crucial for improvement. Additionally, learners may struggle with vocabulary limitations, making it difficult to express their thoughts clearly. Grammatical inaccuracies can also impede effective communication, further exacerbating feelings of insecurity and frustration during speaking tasks (Skehan, 1998).

Moreover, external factors such as the classroom environment and teaching methodologies can impact the development of speaking skills. Large class sizes often mean that individual speaking opportunities are limited, which can hinder students' progress (Nunan, 1999). Traditional teaching methods that prioritize rote memorization over participatory activities can leave learners unprepared for real-world speaking scenarios. Cultural aspects can also affect students' comfort levels, as differing norms around communication may lead to misunderstandings and reluctance to engage fully in speaking tasks (Ehrlich, 2003). Therefore, it is essential for educators to create engaging environments that encourage practice and foster confidence, enabling learners to overcome these challenges and excel in their speaking abilities.

D. Previous Studies

Several previous studies have explored the influence of English Club Community as extracurricular activities on students' speaking skills and their perceptions toward participation in such programs. These studies collectively emphasize that English Club Community provide an essential platform for learners to enhance their communicative competence, confidence, and motivation in speaking English.

Yeni et al. (2022) investigated an English communication program implemented at SMAN 1 Tembilahan and found that extracurricular programs such as English Club and English Performance Competition significantly contributed to improving students' speaking proficiency. The English Club provided intensive practice in debate and speech, while the competition fostered motivation and self-confidence among students.

Similarly, Kardiansyah and Qodriani (2018) examined the role of English extracurricular activities at Universitas Teknokrat Indonesia and discovered that such programs had a strong positive influence on students' English-speaking competence. Their findings suggested that consistent participation in extracurricular activities enables students to communicate more effectively and confidently in English.

Further, Jayanti, Ulyani, and Susanti (2022) focused on students' perceptions toward the Sixta Speaks Up Club, an English-speaking club at a vocational high school. The study revealed that most students experienced marked improvements in pronunciation, vocabulary, and fluency, along with increased confidence in

sharing ideas in English. The authors concluded that speaking clubs create a supportive and interactive environment for language learning. Consistent with these findings, Nawati et al. (2024) identified that students from Universitas Abulyatama gave strongly positive perceptions (83.5%) toward English club activities, noting that participation enhanced their confidence, critical thinking, and enjoyment in learning English. The activities such as film reviews, discussions, and tourism-based tasks were instrumental in supporting students' speaking development.

At the school level, Nahdah and Fatimah (2018) conducted a qualitative study at SMAN 1 Ngaglik, showing that the majority of students perceived the English club as a crucial extracurricular space for practicing and improving speaking skills. Students associated the club with increased motivation, broader vocabulary, and more opportunities to interact in English, although some noted limited participation due to external commitments. Similarly, Yuliandasari and Kusriandi (2015) found that English club extracurriculars at Madrasah Aliyah Pembangunan Mandirancan enhanced students' speaking performance and created an informal yet effective learning atmosphere. The researchers emphasized that extracurricular clubs fill the gap in limited classroom speaking practice by providing flexible and student-centered learning opportunities.

In more recent studies, Harzanah et al. (2024) explored students' perceptions toward the English Meeting Club at an Islamic boarding school and found that participants viewed the club as a means to improve pronunciation, communication skills, and self-confidence. The club environment also helped students overcome

anxiety and fear of public speaking. Supporting this, Hijrah and Umar (2021) reported that students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar regarded English meeting clubs as an effective platform for developing speaking fluency and overcoming hesitation or nervousness during oral communication.

Additionally, Aeni (2025) conducted a comprehensive qualitative study at MTsN 1 Jenepono and concluded that English club extracurriculars substantially improved learners' vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and self-confidence. The research highlighted that active participation in extracurricular programs fosters meaningful language exposure and strengthens motivation for lifelong learning.

Quantitative evidence was also presented by Simbolon et al. (2023), who examined the effect of taking English Club extracurricular activities on students' writing and speaking skills at SMA St. Thomas 2 Medan. The results indicated a 56.06% improvement in speaking performance after participation in the club, affirming the significant impact of structured extracurricular engagement on students' linguistic output. These findings reinforce that English Club Community play a crucial pedagogical role in extending learning beyond the classroom and addressing the limitations of formal instruction time.

In conclusion, the existing body of research underscores the positive influence of English Club Community activities on students' speaking skills and perceptions; however, a significant participant gap remains regarding junior high school students, whose developmental needs and challenges differ from those of older learners. Previous studies primarily focus on high school and university contexts, leaving an uncharted territory concerning how these extracurricular

programs operate within junior high schools. Understanding the unique experiences of younger students who may face distinct social dynamics, varying motivations, and levels of anxiety in language learning is essential for tailoring interventions that effectively meet their linguistic and emotional needs. Therefore, this research seeks to bridge that gap by investigating the perceptions of junior high school students engaged in English Club activities, aiming to provide valuable insights that can enhance instructional strategies and enrich the educational experience for this critical age group. By addressing this gap, the study not only contributes to the academic discourse on language acquisition but also informs educators and program developers about the specific requirements necessary to foster a supportive and effective learning environment for junior high school students.