



## Assessing Speaking Ability: Insights from English Conversation Club among Fifth-Semester Midwifery Students

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**Abstract**

*This study explores the speaking abilities of 5th-semester students involved in the English Conversation Club (ECC) within a Midwifery Diploma Study Program. The research focuses on understanding the challenges faced by students in speaking English and evaluating the ECC's contribution to enhancing their speaking skills. The investigation utilized a mixed-methods approach involving qualitative and quantitative data collection. The study found that while most students performed well, as indicated by their scores falling under the "Good" and "Very Good" categories, notable challenges persisted. Students encountered difficulties primarily related to vocabulary limitations, grammar intricacies, a lack of motivation, and psychological factors impacting their speaking performances. Factors influencing speaking abilities were analyzed through student interviews, highlighting vocabulary, grammar, and motivational issues as key hindrances. The ECC program was perceived positively by students, providing an environment conducive to English practice. However, the infrequent use of English beyond the ECC sessions limited its impact on students' overall speaking skills. To improve speaking abilities, interventions emphasizing vocabulary enhancement, grammar proficiency, motivational support, and better preparation strategies were recommended. Further emphasis on consistent English practice outside the ECC was suggested for more comprehensive improvement. In conclusion, while the ECC positively contributed to students' speaking proficiency, challenges related to vocabulary, grammar, motivation, and insufficient practice outside the program persist. Targeted interventions focusing on these areas are crucial to further enhance students' speaking abilities within the Midwifery Diploma Study Program.*

### INTRODUCTION

Speaking is the process of forming and expressing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols in various situations. By speaking, students can convey opinions, thoughts that includes the production, reception, and processing of information. Its form and meaning depend on the context, including the participants, their skills, the physical environment, and the purpose of speaking.

Speaking English is an important skill to develop and improve as a practice-oriented tool. It is an interactive process of meaning construction that includes the production, reception, and transmission of information. Its form and meaning depend on the context, including the participants, their experiences, the physical environment, and the purpose of the speech. ECC's goal is to help students become familiar with English and encourage them to speak English. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the speaking ability of 5th semester English students participating in the English Conversation Club (ECC) and the contribution of the ECC program in improving students' speaking skills. Nurvita et al. (2019) have similar difficulties in speaking skills, especially pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. Meanwhile, external factors include feelings of anxiety, shame and fear of being judged negatively. Apart from that, speaking problems can also come from teachers and students. These problems can be classified as psychological factors that influence students' speaking abilities (Souisa & Gaite, 2020).

Research shows that many students are still unable to use word choices, discourse markers, or social phrases accurately in their speech (Khairani et al., 2017). Students with high levels of anxiety, worry,



fear, and low levels of self-confidence in foreign language classes may experience difficulties in developing their speaking ability (Tridinanti, 2018). In addition, most ESL students experience problems especially when speaking, such as lack of self-confidence (Yee & Abidin, 2014) and feelings of embarrassment when faced with the attention that other students receive for themselves (Lestari, 2018).

Conversations are a way for students to practice English. When students demonstrate their knowledge and convey their ideas to listeners or audiences, they must express themselves appropriately and clearly so that the audience can receive and understand the message they convey. This means that students must have the ability or ability to become a good speaker, especially when giving a speech. If a student is able to speak English, then of course the student will be able to speak English accurately and effectively in communicating.

Speaking activities are divided into seven types, namely: (1) speaking through pictures, (2) speaking through sound stimuli, (3) speaking through pictures, (4) telling stories, (5) interviews, (6) discussions. and debate, (7) statement (Yee & Abidin, 2014). There are also many different activities depending on the goals they want to achieve. Some programs give students the opportunity to role-play, debate, or chat in groups with friends. Others may ask them to give presentations or speak in front of the class as more stimulating activities (Lestari, 2018).

Several previous studies have investigated students' speaking abilities. For example, Mukammal et al. (2018), and Rukmaryadi (2020) use scenario-based conversations and also ask students to discuss a topic in groups. Students' speaking ability in announcements (Kurniawan, 2020). In speaking activities in group discussion activities in English class. At that time the student's personality lies in the ability to express himself. After that, problems were also found in teaching speaking during the teaching and learning process (Bafadal & Muslimin, 2020).

Furthermore, Kamridah et al. (2016) found that students' speaking anxiety when speaking in public was transferred to their learning and presentations. In addition, students' speaking and storytelling skills (Idayani & Fitri, 2021). The process of teaching speaking is not only formal but also fun. The Faculty of Education and Training has a program called the English Conversation Club. English Conversation Club (ECC) is simply a forum where people who are generally English language learners, perhaps supported by one or more native speakers, gather to communicate and there by improve their language ability (Latha & Ramesh, 2012). This club was founded to support English learning in a fun and interesting way. This research uses qualitative. This research aims to conduct research with the title An Analysis Of Students' 5 speaking Ability In English Conversation Club (Ecc) On Students In Diploma Study Program of Midwifery.

## METHODS

The research focused on fifth-semester students enrolled in the diploma study program of midwifery. Participants included all students engaged in the English conversation program during their fifth semester, constituting the entire population sample for this research. This study adopted a descriptive research approach, employing an explanatory mixed methods design. As advocated by Creswell & Creswell (2005), explanatory designs, also known as two-stage designs, involve the sequential collection of quantitative data followed by qualitative data to fortify and elaborate on the quantitative findings.

The assessment of students' speaking ability within the English Conversation Club was conducted through various dimensions. Firstly, the organization of speech was evaluated, encompassing the structure of the speech including the introduction, main body with supporting elements and connective statements, and a conclusive ending. Aspects such as pauses, vocal variety, and reinforcement were also considered. Secondly, the linguistic aspects of the speech were examined, encompassing the vocabulary

used and grammatical accuracy. Lastly, the delivery of the speech was assessed, taking into account the speaker's non-verbal elements such as eye contact, gestures, facial expressions, and overall body movements, along with the vocal aspects such as pronunciation and articulation.

Following this evaluation, each aspect contributing to the students' speaking ability was systematically appraised, and scores were tabulated, expressed as a percentage to quantify their performance. Subsequently, the students' speaking proficiency was categorized using a classification system consisting of four divisions: "very good," "good," "fair," and "poor." This systematic classification aided in the comprehensive assessment and categorization of students' speaking products, allowing for a nuanced understanding of their speaking abilities within the English Conversation Club context.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The students' speaking ability in English Conversation Club

The research was conducted to find out the speaking ability in English Conversation Club (ECC) program. As previously stated, the purpose of this research was to find out how the students' speaking ability in English Conversation Club (ECC). The sources of data in this research were based on the speaking test through English Conversation Club (ECC) program in the class by students of the 5th semester students Midwifery Diploma Study Program in Sibuhuan. The students' speaking ability in English Conversation Club (ECC) is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The students' speaking ability

Range of the score	Description	Frequency	Percentage
80-100	Very good	4	40%
65-79	Good	6	60%
50-64	Fair	0	0%
1-49	Bad	0	0%

The table 1 shows that the speaking ability in English Conversation club (ECC) program at the 5th semester students of the program of midwifery ranged from the very good to good. It is noticeable that the average score was 75 which was categorized as good. Meanwhile, 40% of the students were in the category of very good, and no student obtains the score in the category of being fair. In short, it sum up that the students' speaking ability in ECC program.

In this research, based on tests given to students, it was found that many students experienced problems speaking English. This can be demonstrated by the assessment of student speech carried out by speaker evaluators. This includes grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and is supported in interviews as seen in student responses.

### Factors that influence students' speaking ability

#### 1. Lack of vocabulary

This is a common problem that students face when speaking English because they find it difficult to speak English well and fluently due to lack of understanding. The problem for intermediate students is that they often have to search for the right words. They can't find anything that fits the context/content. This is because there is not enough information available for much understanding. This also leads to the promise of communicating in English, which in turn leads to loss of self-confidence and lack of motivation to speak. Therefore, students too often use filler words or make incomplete statements in their speeches and discussions (Latha & Ramesh, 2012). Most students have vocabulary problems, they cannot explain in detail what they want to talk about because they do not have vocabulary.

"What difficulties did you experience when learning to speak?"

Student 1 : I mean vocabulary,

Student 2 : I thought about practicing and dictionary,

Student 3 : I think vocabulary is the main thing, and practice is second.

Student 4 : I don't think I have a problem, but I'm too lazy to talk to other people.

Student 5 : Vocabulary and exercises,

## 2. Grammar

Another thing that influences students' speaking abilities is grammar. When speaking, most of them think about whether a sentence or word order is right or wrong. Therefore, it is difficult for them to speak English fluently. It can be seen student responses in interviews. According to Baker and Westrup (2003), many students have difficulty responding when teachers ask them to say something in a foreign language because they may not know what to say, what vocabulary, or how to use grammar correctly.

Student 1 : vocabulary and grammar

Student 2 : can't speak English (grammar, vocabulary),

Student 4 : Vocabulary and Grammar

Student 5 : Vocabulary and Grammar

Student 6 : Vocabulary and Grammar

6th grade students: grammar and vocabulary.

## 3. Lack of motivation

Low motivation or lack of motivation is another reason that prevents students from actively participating in performance activities (Latha & Ramesh, 2012). This creates a reluctance to actively participate in speaking, leading to poor or incomplete practice.

Student 2 : Vocabulary and exercises.

Student 3 : I think vocabulary and practice

Student 4 : I don't think I have a problem but I'm too lazy to talk.

## Factors influencing Speaking

Related to this, student interviews are used to answer factors that influence students' speaking abilities. It can see the answer below:

"What factors influence your speaking ability?"

Student 1 : Nervous and afraid of making mistakes

Student 4 : If I have no preparation before the presentation and my speaking skills are poor.

Student 6 : Just vocabulary,

Student 7 : nervous and unprepared. Student 5: There is no preparation for speaking.

Students' speaking ability can be influenced by factors related to performance (time pressure, planning, performance standards and amount of support), affective factors (such as motivation, self-confidence and anxiety), listening skills and feedback during speaking activities (Tuan & Mai, 2015). It can be concluded that the factors that influence students' speaking abilities are current knowledge, self-confidence, preparation, inspiration, readiness and lack of practice speaking English. The Contribution of the English Conversation Club (ECC) Program.

Based on student interviews, all students answered that the English Debate Club program gave them a positive perception of their speaking abilities. This can be seen from students' answers to questions

"Do you think the ECC program can help your performance?"

Student 3 : I think yes because ee from ECC can improve our English.

Student 5 : I think.....because of the ECC program my English can improve my ability in speaking.

Student 6 : Yes, I think because we can learn speak English well.

Student 7 : Of course, because we can practice English with our friends and seniors and juniors, our instructor at ECC said we should try speaking English,

Student 5 : yes because we can practice English, Yes, I think The ECC program is good for us because it can support us to practice our English conversation and should make you confident.

Based on interviews, students' perceptions of the English Conversation Club (ECC) program are positive, but the daily frequency of English is rare, this affects students' speaking skills, it is not enough to provide a positive perception.

This research shows that students' speaking ability are at a failing level. Descriptive statistics reference for analyzing students' speaking abilities. They may not be fluent in English several problems and factors that influence students' speaking abilities. There is a lack of vocabulary, grammar, and preparation. Most students are confused when speaking, and most of them use repetitions I also understand the language itself. Second, the English Debate Club does not provide additional support to students to improve their speaking ability. Based on data analysis and student interviews, the results obtained by ECC vary widely. Based on data analysis, students' speaking ability are at a failing level, but students' perceptions of the English Conversation Club (ECC) program are positive, but the frequency of speaking English is rare, which means there are problems. with the English Conversation Club. speaking skills Common problems in students' speaking ability are lack of vocabulary, grammar and motivation. Current knowledge, self-confidence, preparation, inspiration, preparedness and lack of English language ability are factors that influence students' speaking abilities.

Speaking preparation is an important factor that influences speaking ability, students must prepare what they say, and if they do not have preparation for relevant topics, they will not spontaneously adapt to speaking English because they need time to memorize the words. For words that's why they can't speak freely. Therefore, evaluate the program English debate clubs should be competitive to improve students' speaking ability, making good rules to improve in the future.

## CONCLUSION

The research highlighted the overall satisfactory speaking abilities of the 5th-semester Midwifery students involved in the ECC program. However, despite the majority falling into the "Good" and "Very Good" categories, identifiable issues such as vocabulary limitations, grammar concerns, lack of motivation, and affective factors significantly affected the speaking performances of students.

The findings emphasized the critical role of vocabulary enrichment, addressing grammar intricacies, fostering motivation, managing anxiety, and enhancing preparation strategies to improve students' speaking abilities. Additionally, consistent exposure and practice in an English-speaking environment, like that provided by the ECC program, were seen as beneficial, but the frequency of English practice outside the program appeared insufficient for optimal improvement. Addressing these concerns through targeted interventions, enhanced practice sessions, and motivational support can contribute significantly to enhancing the speaking abilities of Midwifery students and potentially mitigate the identified challenges.

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