

## Let's have fun with English: Exploring the Positive Impact of English Club on Peer Learning in an ELT Context

**Zulkifli Akhmad**

*IAIN Sultan Amai Gorontalo, Indonesia*

[zulkifliahmad@iaingorontalo.ac.id](mailto:zulkifliahmad@iaingorontalo.ac.id)

**Enni Akhmad**

*IAIN Sultan Amai Gorontalo, Gorontalo, Indonesia*

[enni@iaingorontalo.ac.id](mailto:enni@iaingorontalo.ac.id)

**Diki Setiawan Abas**

*The University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia*

[dikisetiawanabas@student.unimelb.edu.au](mailto:dikisetiawanabas@student.unimelb.edu.au)

### Abstract

In the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, formal classroom instruction often limits students' opportunities to engage in authentic peer interaction and collaboration. Although English clubs are being used more frequently as extracurricular activities, not much study has been done on how they specifically support peer learning in casual settings. This study aims to examine the positive effects of English Club participation on peer learning among students in an EFL setting by identifying peer interaction types, collaborative learning strategies, and students' perceptions of their educational experience. The researchers employed qualitative case study approach to collect data from 25 English education students at a state university in Gorontalo, Indonesia. For that purpose, semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis were implemented. The findings underpin Vygotsky's sociocultural theory by emphasizing the social component of language learning. This study proposes a theoretical and practical contribution by highlighting the advantages of English Clubs a informal, student-centered environments that effectively uphold peer learning and communicative skills outside of the traditional classroom setting. The research result showed that English Club activities, such as group discussions, pair work, and peer tutoring, encouraged various forms of peer interaction. The collaborative behaviors such as peer correction, cooperative problem solving, and performance tasks are naturally developed in the Club. Students feel calmer and more confident to speak English, besides that their vocabulary and fluency improved.

Keywords: English Club, peer learning, EFL context, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory

### Introduction

In English Language Teaching (ELT) context, improving student's engagement and language skill through interactive and student-centered approaches is the top of educational priority (Ali 2019; Kerimbayev et al. 2023;

Paputungan et al. 2021). Meanwhile, traditional class setting often limits students' opportunities to practice authentic language use and collaborative interaction (Hasan and Habibie 2022; Hyun, Ediger, and Lee 2017; Saud, Otoluwa, and Assifa 2023). Several researches illustrated meaningful peer interaction play an important role in improving students' direct learning and confidence. Students feel more relax speak in English when supported by their peers rather than under direct teacher's monitor (Triwiratman, Nusantara, and Hitipeuw 2023; Wu and Dong 2024).

One of extracurricular and informal learning is English Club. This program give students English environment. Students are surrounded by a set of activity that encourage them to speak English each other actively, relax and collaboratively. (Ali et al. 2019).

English club is a student-centered program that present students the opportunities to participate in a variety of interactive activities, such as chit-chat (small talk), small group discussion, debates, and fun activities. These activities underpin the use of meaningful expression, promote students' motivation to speak English and be autonomous learner (Akhmad, Machmoed, and Sukmawaty 2018; Hamadameen and Najim 2020; Island et al. 2021). English Club empowers students to experience with the target language in real-world and interesting circumstances by setting up areas where they may actively participate, which aids in the development of their social and communicative abilities.

Contrasting to conventional classroom setting, English club create a supportive environment where students feel more comfortable in speaking English with no losing face and fear of making mistakes (Muhibbah and Amalia 2025; Suryanto et al. 2025; Tonenchuk, Danylovysh, and Mudra 2024). This platform supports learning between classmates in a way that feels natural. Because students interact directly with one another, speaking English becomes easier. They share feedback freely, without stress or pressure.

Tavares (2019) explains that peer interaction happens when learners talk together without help from a teacher. Instead of working alone, they team up - sometimes in pairs or small groups - to reach the same goal. The word "peer" suggests common traits, like being around the same age or having similar skill levels. In academic settings, it usually points to college or university students where at least one person speaks English as a second language. Meanwhile, Keerthirathne describes peer learning as a way classmates work side by side, picking up knowledge through direct teamwork (Keerthirathne 2020). Inside ELT classrooms, this approach lets students explore meanings, swap study methods, and give useful comments in a lively yet encouraging space. The advantage of peer learning are crucial for the students to have confidence, to acquire speaking fluency, and vocabulary use (Riese, Samara, and Lillejord 2012).

Topping delineates peer learning as a process in which “people from similar social groupings who are not professional teachers help each other to learn and learn themselves by teaching” (Topping et al. 2017). This perspective emphasizes the reciprocal nature of learning between peer, where both parties actively benefit from the interaction. Peer learning creates a bond among students different from regular teacher-class dynamics. While one shares knowledge, another learns it this back and forth builds teamwork naturally. Ideas flow freely when everyone takes turns giving and receiving.

The likeness among learners matters most in Topping’s description. Because they’re close in age, schooling, or setting, classmates can build a relaxed space where learning flows easier - this cuts down strict teacher-student lines. With fewer power gaps, students speak up more freely, using what they know without stressing over grades. Trust grows stronger this way, while nerves fade out. When picking up a new language, feelings like drive and self-belief shape success - and peer setups boost those exactly.

On top of that, Topping points out how peer learning boosts involvement, accountability, plus connections among learners. Unlike classes run by teachers, when kids help each other, work together on tasks, or chat in groups, they meet fresh ideas while getting more time to try things out and get responses.

The key thing about peer learning, It lets learners help each other - boosting the one being taught while sharpening the teacher’s own understanding. That's why you'll often see it in places like English Club; it works well for everyone, building thinking skills along with social ones.

Some people think peer learning comes from Vygotsky’s ideas about culture and society shaping how we learn. What really matters here is how talking and working with others helps our thinking grow. It was through him that the idea of the ZPD started getting attention. When stronger students support weaker ones, it can boost their grasp of lessons - assuming this theory holds up (Clapper 2015; Erbil 2020). Young people here usually step up as helpers or partners during English Club sessions - guiding one another while building better language abilities bit by bit. Because of this setup, chatting, teaming up, besides swapping personal stories shape how knowledge sticks, making growth feel more like a group effort than solo grind. (Paputungan et al. 2021; Sukkaew and Whanchit 2020).

Even though English Club has been become subject of study particularly for its role in improving language proficiency, such as speaking proficiency, vocabulary acquisition, and learner motivation (Ali et al. 2019; Raskova Octaberlina and Ikhwanul Muslimin 2022). Previous research frequently focuses on individual language results while ignoring the peer relationships, group activities, and student experiences that occur in these unofficial, student-led settings. The potential of English Clubs as

venues for significant peer-to-peer learning is not fully understood as a result of this lack of focus.

Considering the above reasons and argumentation, this study aims to explore the positive impacts of English Club participation on peer learning for ELT students. Explicitly, it investigates the types peer interactions that emerge, the collaborative learning methods that take place. By targeting these elements, this current study addresses the existing gap in the literature, offering insights into how English Club play the role as informal, student-centered environment that adopt significant peer-to-peer learning, thus advancing theoretical knowledge and useful application in ELT.

### **Methodology**

To look at how joining an English Club helps ELT learners learn from each other, the research went with a qualitative case approach. Since this method reveals detailed views of complex, situation-based interactions, the team chose a case setup (Mali 2023).

A group of twenty five undergrads from an English Ed program at a public uni in Gorontalo took part in this research. These learners were picked deliberately by meeting specific conditions: first, they're currently involved in the campus English Club; second, agreed to join interviews and let researchers watch them; also, each one completed at least one term inside the club before joining the project.

English Club gives kids a fun space to build their speaking abilities outside regular class. While it's organized, each session stays open enough to fit different ways of learning. One thing leads to another - confidence grows along with creative ideas through real talk. These get-togethers push everyone to jump in and stay involved. Doing so helps improve language use while growing key personal strengths such as working together, taking initiative, or thinking things through.

To keep students interested and hit English Club's aim, a few key activities are planned. These include Chit-chat (a warm-up), small-group talks, or a time for corrections. During Chit-chat, learners get moments to chat freely - this helps them use English naturally when speaking off the cuff. With discussions, members build sharper thinking skills while working together, thanks to sharing views on chosen topics.

In the review time, you get useful tips about words, sentence structure, or how things sound - this helps learners spot weak points while slowly improving. Things like quick talks, spoken poems, telling tales, acting parts, singing tunes, or playing fun challenges add flavor and keep energy high. All together, these tasks push actual speaking practice along with classmates helping each other, plus show the active classroom where results came from.

The way we gathered info involved checking records, watching people closely, or just chatting casually. Talking with a loose setup gave room to explore but kept things focused on what mattered. (Cresswell 2009). Each chat ran about half an hour or a bit longer face to face, recorded, then written down later for closer look. Instead of just one-off visits, six straight English Club meetings were sat in on to catch how students really interacted and helped each other out. While watching, the observer jotted detailed notes focusing on helpful actions, how groups worked together, who spoke up, who stayed quiet. To better understand what shaped this peer support, stuff from the club got collected too - worksheets, prompts for talking, guides for activities and checked carefully.

## **Findings**

This part shows what we found by looking at three main things: kinds of peer interactions that came up, ways students learned together, also how they felt about being in the English Club.

### *Types of Peer Interaction*

A mix of casual talks helped folks pick up English while connecting with others - thanks to the English Club. Take small talk sessions, for example. In those, people teamed up on the spot. They got four basic questions, then matched at random to chat loosely about everyday stuff. No strict rules here - it opened space to just talk and share naturally.

In this relaxed chat, someone said it seemed easier to join in since it felt like normal talks, pointing out that just like real life it didn't feel forced or stiff

*“In small talks or light chats, I relax easier since it's only me and a buddy around - keeps my nerves calm. No crowd means no pressure, which helps me speak up without holding back.”*

In this relaxed chat, kids get to use English freely while sharing real thoughts. Meanwhile, it takes place during small talks among peers. However, each mini-group is run by a committee person who brings up topics and keeps things moving.

Some people said they felt less scared to talk when working in small groups where help was welcome. One learner explained how peers who offered tips or fixed mistakes actually pushed them to join the conversation more:

*“Chatting in tiny groups feels good - your buddies back you up while tossing honest tips your way, which helps you speak English more smoothly.”*

This peer tutoring activity illustrates Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development, where more skillful friends scaffolded the learning of others (Erbil, 2020). Students served not only as learners but also as valuable learning resources for each other, creating a network of mutual support (Keerthirathne 2020).

### *Collaborative Learning Practices*

English club supports teamwork through shared activities like group talks, for example. In these sessions, students build understanding together, sharing views while questioning or expanding on what others say. Everyone gets a chance to speak, where listening matters just as much as talking.

In the chat groups, folks viewed it as a chance to learn together. Pupils picked up tips from peers instead of just waiting on the instructor. A member pointed out:

*“In our chat time, it kinda feels like I’m picking up tips from pals instead of a lecturer. One shares an idea, then another adds on top - like building blocks piling up naturally”*

A different part of English Club is the correction time. During this, either club leaders or fellow learners offer feedback about grammar and speaking. Instead of seeing it as negative, many students said they started noticing their usual errors. This also pushed them to try harder without pressure.

This type of feedback from peers was seen in a good light too - participants liked how casual and encouraging it felt. A club member said getting tips from buddies seemed way less scary, plus it sank in better:

*“I noticed where I went wrong by watching my buddies so things got lighter, almost like a weight lifted once I let it in.”*

In addition, another collaborative learning activity such as role-playing assisted foster language creativity and team work, supporting the view that learning is the process of social construction (Sukkaew and Whanchit 2020).

### *Students' Perceptions of Their Experiences*

Participants frequently contrasted the atmosphere of the English Club with formal classroom settings. They emphasized that the club provided a more relaxed environment where mistakes were not feared. As one participant explained:

*“Learning English in the club is not like in the classroom; here we are not afraid of making mistakes.”*

Most participants highlighted a perceived improvement in speaking fluency, vocabulary acquisition, and pronunciation accuracy over time, attributing this to consistent peer interaction and regular exposure to spoken English.

Observing peers who spoke fluently also served as motivation for other participants. Seeing classmates take risks in speaking encouraged them to try as well. As one student noted:

*“When I see friends speaking fluently and confidently, I feel motivated to try too.”*

These perceptions align with findings by (Rosada et al. 2025), who argue that peer-led environments can enhance student confidence and intrinsic motivation, particularly in EFL contexts.

### **Discussion**

The findings of this research underpin the argument that English Clubs has an urgent role in supporting peer learning in informal EFL settings. Peer interaction through pair work, small group discussions, and peer tutoring offer students genuine chances for language practice, reinforcing the significance of social interaction that highlighted by Vygotsky's socioculture theory (Clapper 2015; Erbil 2020). Collaborative learning practices like group discussions, feedback sessions, and shared tasks also enhance the growth of learner autonomy and communication skills. These findings correspond with (Kumar et al. 2023), who highlighted that peer learning can enhance critical thinking and cooperative ability in language education.

In addition to confirming the prior researches, the current results highlight the importance of peer-learning setting in context where conventional classrooms frequently focus on teacher-centered instruction. Students insight illustrated that the Club's supportive and fun environment lowers anxiety, boots participation, and motivates learners to take risks in their communication. This reinforces the emotional benefits of English Club noted by (Ali et al. 2019; Hamadameen and Najim 2020), while indicating informal settings could address shortcomings in formal curricula that often

fail to offer adequate speaking opportunities. In this regard, English Clubs not only enhance classroom education but also support wider educational objectives like confidence construction, learner autonomy, and social development.

The findings of this study carry important implications for language education in real-world contexts. For educators, the results highlight the value of incorporating English Club style activities, such as informal conversations, peer-led discussions, and collaborative tasks into classroom practice. These activities can create a more supportive atmosphere that lowers anxiety, encourages students to take risks in communication, and promotes learner autonomy through peer feedback. Beyond enhancing communicative competence, such practices also help cultivate confidence and motivation, making language learning more meaningful and enjoyable. Institutions, including universities and language centers, may also benefit from recognizing and supporting English Clubs or similar extracurricular platforms. By allocating resources and institutional backing, they can provide students with safe, non-evaluative spaces that foster both linguistic development and essential soft skills such as teamwork, social engagement, and leadership.

Meanwhile, this work points to new directions for follow-up projects. Even though results now show quick gains from peer-based practice in an English Club, deeper look is required into lasting effects on speaking skills, how learners at various levels engage one another, or whether similar outcomes appear in different schools or countries. Looking at bigger, mixed groups over time might confirm and broaden what we've found so far. These efforts may also check how casual group learning fits alongside regular classes, giving clearer clues about mixing textbook lessons with free-form, learner-led tasks.

Although this study provides valuable insights into peer learning within an English Club, certain limitations should be noted. First, the sample size was relatively small (25 participants), which restricts the breadth of perspectives represented. Second, the study was conducted in a single university context, and therefore the findings may not be fully generalizable to other institutions or cultural settings. Finally, because much of the data relied on participant self-reports and perceptions, there is the possibility that stated experiences may not fully reflect actual behaviors during peer interactions. These limitations do not diminish the significance of the study but rather point to areas where future research can build upon and extend the present findings.

## **Conclusion**

This research explored the positive impact of the English Club on peer learning among students in an EFL context. By employing in-depth interviews to 25 participants, conducting observations, and analyzing documents, the research found that English Clubs provide as powerful platforms for supporting peer interaction, collaborative learning and learner motivation.

The findings show that numerous types of peer interaction appeared during English Club activities especially in the form of pair work, group discussions, and peer tutoring. These activities boosted spontaneous communication among participants of English Club and created a supportive learning environment where students learned not only from the materials but also from one another. These kinds of interactions are in line with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, particularly the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), in this case, the more capable peers underpin the learning of others.

Learning together through things like working on problems in pairs, giving classmates feedback, or doing group tasks - is what the English Club is built around. These kinds of activities help students improve how they communicate, feel more sure about themselves, while getting better at using correct language - all in a relaxed, friendly environment.

Students clearly enjoyed being part of the English Club. Their feedback showed higher drive, fewer fears about using English, also better confidence when speaking plus richer word use. Because the club felt relaxed and welcoming, it helped them practice naturally. This laid-back setup played a big role in making learners feel at ease while using the language.

This study shows English Clubs matter because they're casual spaces where students take charge - acting like extra help outside regular classes. These groups boost speaking ability while building independence, friendships, and teamwork among learners. Educators plus course designers should back these clubs at schools since they create real chances for classmates to learn from each other in English-learning settings.

In the end, these results add value to teaching English by showing how casual peer interactions help link formal lessons with real-life language use. Since they focus on emotional and social sides - like growing confidence, lowering stress, maybe sparking teamwork - the study shows learning English isn't just about grammar or words, it's also about connecting with others. Because of that, English Clubs provide a solid example for boosting not merely speaking ability, yet things like adaptability, interaction, even mindset needed in worldwide settings.

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