

## ENGLISH BEYOND THE CLASSROOM WALL AMONG INDONESIAN COLLEGE STUDENTS OF ENGLISH

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### Abstract

This research was to find out patterns of speaking English activities among Indonesian learners of English. This is to find out their lacks, needs, and wants regarding out-of-class English activities to improve their speaking English proficiency when in an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) context like Indonesia. As many as 107 respondents of college students of English of 4 universities in Indonesia participated in this research by responding to closed and open items provided in questionnaires. After a deep descriptive qualitative analysis, results show that most respondents perceived that they *lacks* speaking skills amongst other English skills. They lack chances to speak the language. They *wanted* to have ample extramural activities to practice speaking English. They needed to be “forced” to venture to speak English when outside classroom. In conclusion, there is a discrepancy (lacks) between the ideal proficiency that they perceived and the current level of speaking skills. They need to be provided with learning policies to provide them with chances events or venues to practice speaking English. Extramural speaking activities need to be explored and then written into a school policy so that students will not only speak English when in class but also when outside classes. Participatory-yet-mandatory extramural English activities need to be promoted

**Keywords:** extramural, lacks-needs-wants, speaking proficiency, out-of-class activities, participatory-yet-mandatory

### INTRODUCTION

English departments (English education, English literature, and English linguistics) especially among private universities in Indonesia are confronted with the fact that many of their freshmen carry a low level of English proficiency. Results of TOEFL-like tests at one of the private universities of year 2013 and 2016 taken by 55 (for 2013) and 47 (for 2016) freshmen have showed average scores of 396 and 416 respectively, a low indicator of English proficiency, not to mention the level of speaking skills proficiency among the students.

This is probably because, in one classroom meeting, the students’ time-on-task in each classical meeting of a speaking class is limited. In a 2-credit-hour session of a speaking class of about 100 minutes of 30 students, for instance, the time allocated for a speaking skill practice cannot exceed 70 minutes for the maximum noting that the rest is allocated for such sessions as motivation strategy, presentation, wrap-up, and classroom assessment. When evenly distributed, the 70-minute slot, if lucky enough, can only provide 2.5 minutes maximum for each student to speak. For the whole semester, each individual will only receive not more than 50 minutes for the maximum for output (still, when lucky enough) for one speaking class, considering that one semester is composed of 15 to 16 meetings.

Group work or pair work is usually employed to deal with the time constraint. But still, the student time-on-task cannot be sufficiently multiplied. One problem originating from limited class hours is also reported by Lau (2017:9), for which he states, "Self-directed learning is important because class time cannot cover everything".

Students are only exposed to and use the language when in classes. English exposure is limited, not to mention when their teacher speaking proficiency is insufficient. Indeed, class meeting is necessary, yet beyond-classroom English activities are potential to be considered.

Out-of-class English experience potentials have been left unattended. To make the story gloomier, an EFL context is poor with extra class language exposures.

In this regard, it is highly important to provide another design that operates along with the credit courses (classical meetings) to provide students with an extra yet systemic pathway, one that will fairly help all students, those with various points of departure of English proficiency to succeed. They cannot rely only on the formal credit hours, for these hours may carry various limitations regarding the time constraints and the input-interaction-output drawbacks.

This research investigates whether students of English majors need more than what they have been doing in class. It looks at whether they view out-of-class speaking activities as one of the determining success factors in improving their speaking proficiency. This research identified needs and wants regarding speaking activities. In more detail, this research also identified factors that prevented them from venturing to use English.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **EFL Context Paradox**

Teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Indonesia presents special challenges. Amongst others the EFL setting does not provide a social context that allows students to use their English in their immediate living room. They learn English only in classes with limited hours and when outside the classroom, they are confronted with the fact that they lack of opportunities to use or to get exposed to the language in their next environment.

Suffice to say that one of the probable English acquisition problems is students' lack of exposure and practice as an impact of the EFL context where English is merely an object of learning with extremely minimum chances for real communication practices in its authentic environmental setting. This is of course not the case of those who study in an ESL (English as a Second Language) setting where opportunities of real-life English exposure are abundant. For this reason, Solak & Bayar (2015) in their research about current challenges in English language learning in an EFL context suggest that English courses be designed as practice-based rather than theory-based. Students may want to practice their English not only within the formal classroom environment.

That language environment influences English acquisition is widely agreed upon. Language environment be it classroom (thus sheltered) or out-of-classroom environment (thus more authentic) is important to mediate the interactive function of a language. Learners interact in the language learned to attain such targeted competences as linguistic, pragmatic, discourse, and sociolinguistic. Environment plays an important role acquiring those competences.

Classroom setting that provides students with only sheltered English cannot provide the whole set of intake factors and intake frameworks following Kumaravadivelu (1994) work necessary for impartial language acquisition, one of which is the sustainable linguistic environment for richer linguistic exposure.

Alzubaidi et al.(2016) from their research about *Motivation, Self-regulation and Learning Environment Perceptions* note that there is a positive relationship between social interactions among students and engagement to the learning task and that successful peer relationships and student cohesiveness are also important for academic achievement. To create a cohesive learning environment, teachers could increase opportunities for students to use their language skills in direct communication with their peers in real-life situations out of class premises, and this has never been sufficiently attended. Commonly, research has been geared toward problems in teaching and learning the language with class interactions as the main learning premises as its foci.

Krashen (1988) contrasted two linguistic environments, artificial (formal) environments, which are found for the most part in the classroom; and natural (informal) environments found out-of-classroom premises. Krashen further hypothesized that the informal environment can be efficiently utilized by the adult second language learner.

He also suggests the role of informal linguistic environments is to provide “exposure” to the language learned. To the extreme, there is a research report that reveals classroom-based learning was not superior to other learning measures. Upshur from Krahne & Krashen (1983) reveals that there is no significant effects on language learning attributable to amount of language instruction and that foreign language learning may at this time be a less effective means for producing learning than the use of language in other activities(p. 41).

Language skills, psycholinguistically, especially speaking require more linguistic environments to provide continuous opportunities for students to exercise the language to learn it in a more authentic setting to stimulate them to produce comprehensible input. Bottom line, language learning environments play a big role in language acquisition.

### **Input and (pushed) output**

In fact, in addition to the the input factor, students should also sufficiently produce so-called forced output. This output is required to help them restructure, regrammaticalize, and recycle all kinds of language input all of which will help them acquire the language in a faster mode.

Scholars like Dulay et al. (1982) consider input to be the main factor in the development of grammatical accuracy, while others put greater emphasis on learners' active involvement in the production of target language output [Swain & Lapkin (1995); Izumi & Bigelow (2000); Adams (2003); Shehadeh (2001)]. Productive skills stayed far from native like, particularly because of lack of output.

Current perspectives on SLA emphasize the significance of learners'L2 output in the process of language learning. Ellis (2014), in his specification of the principles of instructed second language learning, highlights the importance of learner output arguing that "Successful instructed language learning also requires opportunities for output" (p. 39).

Current perspectives on Second Language Acquisition (SLA) emphasize the significance of learners'L2 output in the process of language learning. Ellis (2014), in his specification of the principles of instructed second language learning, highlights the importance of learner output arguing that "Successful instructed language learning also requires opportunities for output" (p. 39).

Indeed, the role of language learning output in fostering the immediate result of language acquisition has been widely reported. To account for this Swain then proposed what she called the Comprehensible Output Hypothesis. She stated that language production also helps push learners to move from semantic processing to syntactic processing (Swain & Lapkin, 1995).

Output thus has a potential role in language acquisition. Swain and Lapkin (1995) says that output carries three functions beyond fluency. They are noticing function, the hypothesis testing function, and the reflective/metalinguistic function. They clarifies that any or all these functions operate when learners produce the target language.

The essential nature of output in language learning is also reported by Ngwenya (2006), for which he says that negotiated output is an important feature of Communicative Language Teaching. Negotiation in his views includes negotiation for both form and meaning.

### **Output and Out-of-class Interaction**

Benefits of output in interactive out-of class speaking activities have also been explored by Coşkun (2016). His work has shown that out-of-class activities by the learners provide benefits to their fluency,vocabulary, pronunciation development, and even problem solving skills. The same is also revealed by Hakanson & Norrby (2010). Their longitudinal research has revealed that

learners' L2 pragmatic skills and lexicon are to benefit from being in a target language environment (p. 645).

Out-of-class language learning has been found to be positively associated with both language learning gains and positive affective outcomes, such as enjoyment of and confidence in language learning, and the construction, experimentation and performance of multiple identities via varied and creative modes of self-expression especially via diverse online communities.

In fact, language learners perceive autonomous out-of-class learning as playing a qualitatively different but complementary role from in-class learning (Richards, 2015).

Long and Pica in Kumaravadivelu (1994) state that negotiated interaction entails the learner's active involvement in clarification, confirmation, comprehension checks, requests, repairing, reacting, and turn-taking (p. 43). These learning processes are essential in helping the students testing their hypothesis operating in their interlanguage. More output opportunities will help improve learners' language performance.

Mitchell (1998) also say something similar to that of Gass. According to them, the learner as an autonomous actor processes the language data available in the environment to test a range of internally generated hypotheses concerning language structure (thus form). Output is necessary to provide an opportunity for learners to test the structures of a language learned.

Supporting the positive effects of output, Ellis (1993) proposes that learners' production of linguistic output during form focused instruction can lead to the development of their formulaic, proceduralized, and implicit L2 knowledge.

They were intended to find out data regarding such information as, amongst others, their:

1. perceived current level of English speaking competence;
2. amount of talk when in class;
3. amount of talk when out of class;
4. skill(s) that they urgently need to improve;
5. problems areas of their English skills

As for the open-ended questions, they were to find out further information regarding such opinions, among others, as whether:

1. they think that in-class speaking activities had sufficiently contributed to the improvement of their English speaking proficiency;
2. they had employed certain out-of-class learning strategies to improve their speaking skills;
3. they indicated distinctive "needs" to help them improve their English speaking proficiency'
4. they showed certain reactions when there is an off-class system that facilitates them to better improve their proficiency; whether they college friends also need to be "forced" to use English when outside classroom;

5. they spelled certain 'wants' to complement their current formal-curricular measures, at all;

They were all designed to tap their current information and strategies to improve speaking proficiency and their expected measures to help them improve their especially speaking skills.

The questionnaire was designed in Google Forms and distributed to some student email lists, students' phone numbers, and WhatsApp (WA) groups.

## **METHOD**

### **Data collection**

This is a qualitative research. According to Creswell & Creswell (2018), the qualitative research is best suited to address a research problem in which researchers do not know the variables and need to explore. The literature can result in little information about the phenomenon of study, and the researcher needs to know more from the participants through exploration.

To explore richer information, the researcher distributed a questionnaire of open and closed items. As many as 107 university student participants ventured to provide feedback.

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The questionnaire was designed in Google Forms and distributed to some student email lists, students' phone numbers, and various WhatsApp (WA) groups.

## Data analysis

The data were then analyzed using Google Forms distribution analysis and simple Spreadsheet to find out various pieces of information such as data distribution and data frequency or tendency. Responses obtained from the closed-ended questions also provided information if there were different characteristics of students of private and state universities regarding such issues as level of perceived English proficiency, their amount of talk, and their off class English speaking activities.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data obtained reveal rich information regarding the problems the students have been facing to improve speaking skills; the expectations that they have been keeping so far; what they need; and the information regarding a future systemic design to help them improve their speaking skills along with the curricular design in a more challenging yet enjoyable way.

### Speaking as the Most Demanded Proficiency to Attend

Data shows that when asked about a skill that the respondents think as the most important one and to be seriously attended, it is speaking. Some of the answers are as follows (copied as is):

1. *berbicara, menurut saya hal itu yang terpenting, karena di kehidupan percakapanlah yang merupakan jendela segalanya.*  
(Speaking, in my opinion, is the most important skill because speaking is a window to everything).
2. *Berbicara, karena melatih apa yang sudah kita simak menjadi lisan yang baik dan benar.*  
(Speaking. This is because what we hear will help correct and make appropriate spoken words).
3. *Berbicara, karena dalam dunia kerja, bahasa Inggris digunakan untuk berbicara pada umumnya*  
(Speaking. This is because speaking English is used in the job).
4. *Berbicara.....Karena dengan berbicara, Saya tahu kemampuan menguasai vocabulary dan grammar saya sudah sampai dimana. Juga sesuai dengan pengalaman Saya, dengan berbicara bahasa Inggris di depan teman2 di kelas, bisa melatih saya lebih percaya diri dan kadang2 teman2 saya dan juga dosen mengoreksi kesalahan Saya secara langsung.*  
(Speaking...through speaking, I know my competence, how far I have acquired vocabulary and grammar. Also in my experience, speaking English in front of my classmates can train me to be more confident and sometimes, my friends and my lecturer correct me when I make a mistake immediately.)

Speaking is reported to be the most favored skill to develop. The respondents believe that it can help as well enrich vocabulary, improve grammar mastery, and other skills. Good speaking competence is considered the most important skill needed for a job. It helps open a better chance to secure a good job.



Current Perceived Speaking Competence

Regarding the level of speaking competence, the figure indicates a left-skewed data distribution with the mean value of 6.39 on the scale of 10. Data also show that out of the 104 respondents that sent replies, 46.6% of them reported that their speaking skill has not been satisfactory yet (score of 6 or less). Figure 1 below shows the data.

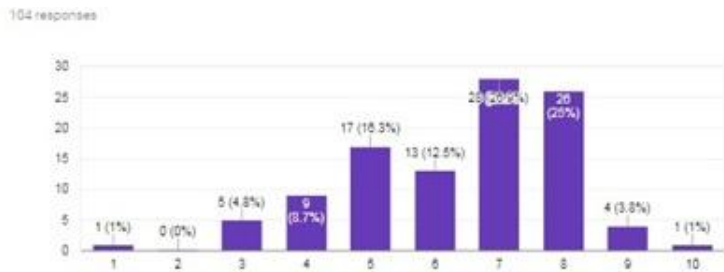


Figure 1: Perceived level of speaking competence

As well, Figure 1 above indicates that only 5 respondents thought that their speaking competence was at the scale of 9 to 10 (4.8%). The interpretation of this data can be twofold. First, their classroom-based learning that they have received since primary to high school may not have provided sufficient incentives to speaking output; and second, they want some for help.

Language Components Inhibiting Speaking

When asked what language components stop them from practicing speaking, data reveals that most of them equally put grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation within a medium level of inhibiting factors. On average, they put scores of 5.5 which means that they are not so worried about the three language components (score 1 for not worried at all, score 10 for extremely worried) when speaking.

The following 3 figures show the data.

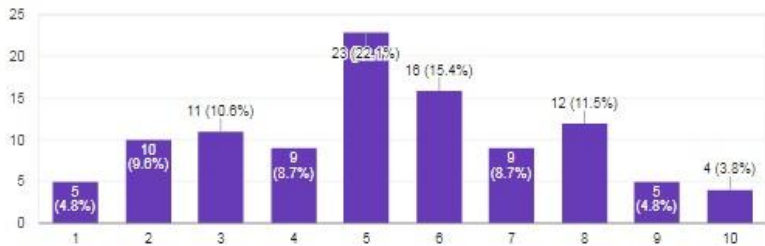


Figure 2. Speaking Halted by Feeling of Poor Pronunciation (1 for Never; 10 for Always)



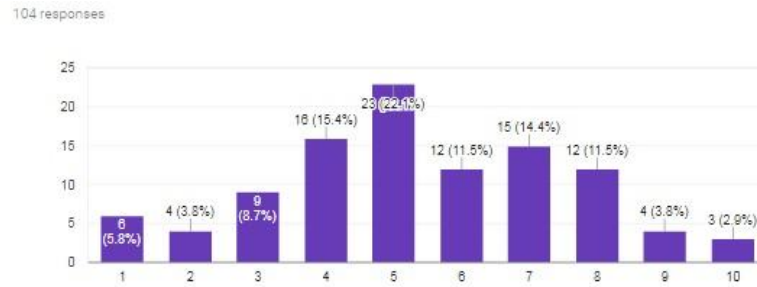


Figure 3. Speaking Halted by Perceived Grammar (In) Competence (1 for Never; 10 for Always)

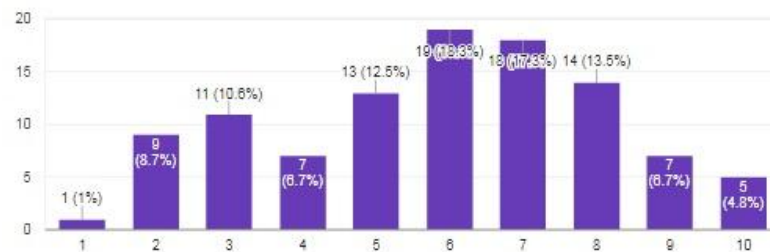


Figure 4. Speaking Halted Because of Perceived Poor Vocabulary Mastery (1 For Never; 10 For Always)

The three figures above indicate very much similar score distribution. The scores make a similar pattern of a normal curve. They reveal that the three areas of competences contribute similar impact to speaking inhibition. However, when a similar question was raised in the open item question many reported as follows.

1. *Takut salah ketika ngomong karena prononku jelek.*  
(Afraid of making mistakes, my pronunciation is bad)
2. *Kadang-kadang grammar jadi masalah kalau ketauan gak benar.*  
(Sometimes, grammar is the source of problem when I speak because I am afraid of people know that my grammar is not correct)
3. *Kalo vocabnya banyak lancar bicaranya tapi kalo dikit jadi bingung.*  
(If I have a lot of vocabulary, I will speak fluently but if not I can be confused)

### Frequency of Opted Out-of-class Activities

Through also the open item questions, when asked about the efforts they usually make to improve their English, the student respondents reported video-making (VLOG, YouTube) as the least frequently opted activity and singing in English as the most frequent activity. The following Figure indicates the finding of those lowly rated activities to improve their English (speaking) skills.

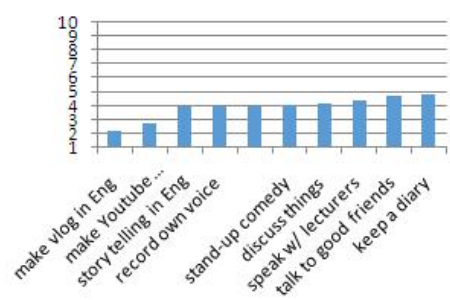


Figure 5. Lowly Rated Out-of-class Activities (Scored 1-4.6)

It is indicative that they do not frequently speak with lecturers and even the frequency of speaking is much less than that of speaking English with friends. Lecturers are expected to serve as models of speaking through ample exposure both in and outside classroom, as a matter of fact.

Through a closed item as well, when asked about the frequency of speaking English with teachers in a separate question, data confirms that they did not even speak English with their teachers after class. This confirms the finding that even within the campus premises English is rarely used. The table below indicates the phenomenon.

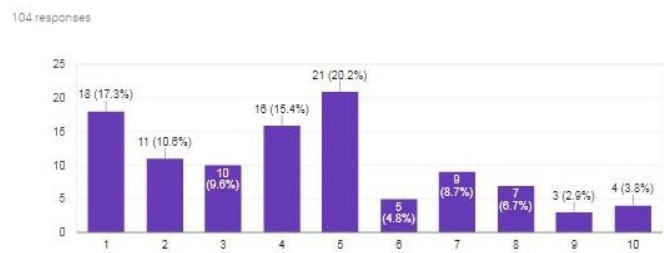


Figure 6. Rate of Speaking with Lecturers (1 for Never, 10 for Always)

However, when such items as speaking to foreign people, reading song lyrics out loud, and singing in English were factored in, they reported that such activities were of their favorites. The following graph indicates the phenomenon.

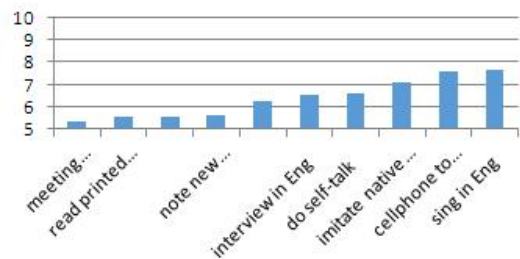


Figure 7. Highly Rated Out-of-class Activities (Scored 5-10; 1 for Never, 10 for Always)

The figure above shows that most respondents love to do such activities as self talk, to imitate how native speakers of English speak the language, and to sing in English. That song-related activities of English are the most favored out-of-class activity confirms the work of Lamb (2004) on Independent Language Learning in Indonesia State School. He reported that listening to songs was found 12 times as much as doing conversation when at home (p. 235).

As a whole, out of 100 subjects responding to this item, when asked the frequency of speaking English when outside classroom, data indicate that they did not frequently venture to speak English. Most of them declared that they do not venture to speak English when out-of-class as indicated below (score 1 for never, score 10 for always):

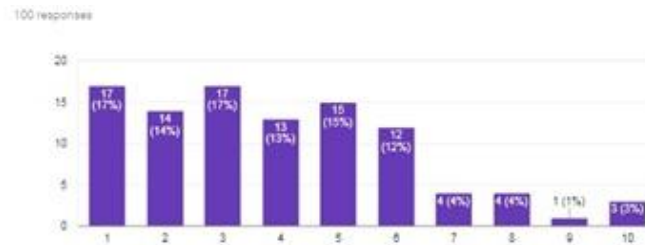


Figure 8. Frequency of Speaking English When Out-of-class (1 for Least Frequent, 10 for Very Frequent)

However, it is also indicative that the high performers showed more substantial investment to improve their English compared to those whose competence is perceived low. The previous would even create a setting in which they would be forced to speak the language learned. Some would consistently speak English with friends and some even have the luxury to speak English with other family members when home. This again confirms that off-curricular language activities are highly contributive to learning.

Next, data surprisingly indicate that most of the respondents learn English independently. Almost all of the respondents selected the score of 7-10 to show that they relied on independent learning which in this case means that they do not work together with other parties to improve their English as indicated in the figure below:

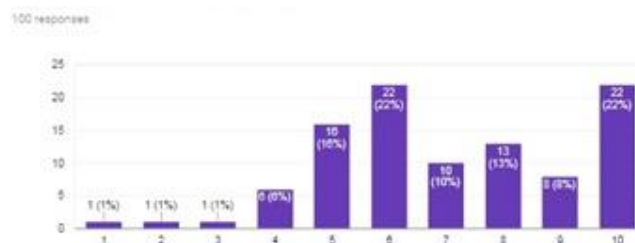


Figure 9. Rate of Independent Learning (1 Always Working with Others, 10 for Never Working with Others)

Within the independent thus individual learning, they would utilize gadgets for their learning measures. Most of them indicate that they are familiar with gadgetries to help learning. When asked to list what (social) media they were familiar they came up with WA as the most familiar one followed with Instagram, FB, and Line.

This only confirms that the respondents are highly technology-literate. They would use internet to obtain information regarding their learning. This fact further supports the shifting roles of an English teacher. It is probably proper to claim that students learn more from their gadgets

than from their teachers. They can even confront their teachers' class explanation by surfing the internet, especially for word meaning and word phonology.

Surprisingly, most of them agree if students of English are pushed to carry out off-class activities for which they reason copied as is) as follows:

1. *Betul. Alasannya, krn dgn semakin sering berlatih, akan semakin cepat mahir & terampil.*  
(Correct! The reason is that the more they practice they will be more skillful in a faster mode).
2. *Ya. Perlu adanya tindakan nyata untuk berkomunikasi dengan bahasa Inggris langsung.*  
(Yes. It is necessary to provide real measures to communicate using the language directly).
3. *Ya. Karena kebanyakan dari mahasiswa bahasa inggris disini kemampuan bahasanya masih sangat terbatas*  
(Agree. This is because many English students do not have sufficient language mastery).
4. *Sangat perlu. Karena mahasiswa sastra inggris belajar bahasa inggris / pelajaran utama.*  
(Extremely agree. This is because English students must study English as priority.)
5. *Yes. Agar dapat membentuk suatu kebiasaan dalam berbicara menggunakan bahasa Inggris.*  
(Agree. This is to help form good habits with speaking English).
6. *Perlu supaya kemampuan mereka bisa meningkat*  
(It is necessary. This is to help their skill improved).
7. *Ya. To apply the skill that they have.*  
(Yes (agree). To help students apply what they have got (in class).

They think that by somewhat "pushing" them to carry out extra class practices, learners will finally improve their proficiency of English.

From the open items, when asked about the possible English activities that they like doing when out of class, they come up with many suggestions some of which are as follows:

1. *Diskusi dlm bahasa inggris karena dapat meningkatkan vocabulary dan kemampuan berbicara. Presentasi dan menulis juga mampu meningkatkan vocab, kelancaran berbicara, dan grammar*  
(Discussion in English can help increase vocabulary and speaking competence. Presentation and writing can also improve vocabulary mastery and speaking fluency, and also grammar.)
2. *bertemu orang asing, karena kita langsung mempraktikan kemampuan berbahasa kita.*  
(Meeting foreigners can help up us directly practice our language proficiency.)
3. *Dengan belajar secara otodidak melalui menonton film luar negeri (yang berbahasa Inggris) tanpa menggunakan subtitle dan mendengarkan musik nya tanpa harus mencari terjemahan dari lirik tersebut*  
(Through self-directed learning that is by watching foreign films of English without subtitles; and listening to music without looking at the translation of the lyric.)
4. *Memakai bahasa inggris karna secara tidak langsung melatih otak untuk berpikir bahwa bahasa inggris itu sama seperti bahasa sehari-hari*

(Using English in every day activities to help the brain think that English is the same as the day-to-day language.)

5. *Dengan cara melakukan tutor sebaya, lalu di praktikan dengan teman dekat seperti bahasa sehari-hari.*  
(Carrying out peer-tutoring, and then practice it with close friends as a daily language.)
6. *Berbicara dengan native speaker, karena dengan berbicara dengan native speaker tsb sama saja dengan melatih kemampuan dalam berbicara.. Juga lebih mengetahui penggunaan grammar, pronunciation yg baik.*  
(Talking to native speakers (of English) trains us to practice our competence in speaking. It also helps improve grammar and pronunciation.)

When summarized, the activities they have proposed are (1) peer tutoring, (2) reading books of English, (3) listening to music, reading song lyrics, (4) using English in daily speaking, (5) practicing with close friends, (6) meeting with foreigners, (7) discussing things in English, (8) presenting ideas(presentation), (9) writing in English, listening to music, (10) watching movies, (11) reading song lyrics, (12) singing, and (13) practicing the language for real communication (day-to-day conversation). These suggestions are worth our attention, for they are what the learners want and in fact what they need also.

## CONCLUSION

This research finding confirms that students speaking skill is low. This can be because of lacking chances to practice both when in class and out of class. It also proves that students are quite worried about their linguistic competence that in turn inhibits their willingness to speak. The student respondents they are aware that they need to invest more to be better English speakers for which they suggest for pushed out-of-class speaking activities to help increase their learning outcome. They also suggest that there will be interesting yet challenging activities advocated by the school management one way or another.

The results also help conclude that teachers' roles need to be redefined and redesigned consonant with the current technological development in teaching and learning; at least, they need to be able to use the technology for learning. This is to level up with the tech-savviness of the students. This is because this research also reveals what they expect. Importantly, they want more involvement of technology in learning and teaching. It is no longer valid to ban the use of cell-phones in class, for this is already part of their daily activities even probably part of their soul mate. Instead, teachers can optimize the use of cell-phones for learning.

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