

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING AS AN EFFORT TO EMPOWER COMMUNICATION SCIENCE STUDENTS' SPEAKING ABILITY IN FACING GLOBAL COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES

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Abstract: This qualitative study aims to examine how English language learning functions as an effort to empower Communication Science students' speaking ability in facing global communication challenges. As English has become the dominant language in international discourse, proficiency in English speaking skills is essential for Communication Science students who seek to participate actively in global professional and academic environments. The research focuses on how students perceive and experience English language learning as part of their personal and academic empowerment, especially in their speaking ability, which is critical in preparing for international communication demands. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews with selected Communication Science students at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Halu Oleo, who have been involved in various English learning activities. The data were analyzed using an interpretative-descriptive approach to explore how students construct meaning around their efforts to improve speaking confidence, enhance communication skills, and strengthen readiness to engage in global interactions. The findings indicate that students regard English language learning as a crucial factor in developing their speaking competence, expanding international networks, and increasing their competitiveness in the digital and global era. The study underscores the importance of integrating English speaking skills development into communication education to reinforce student empowerment and equip them for the challenges of global communication.

Keywords: English language learning; personal empowerment; academic empowerment; speaking ability; communication science; global communication

1. Introduction

English has long been recognized as the global language of communication and is widely used in academia, business, diplomacy, and digital interaction. For Communication Science students, fluency in English is no longer optional but has become an indispensable skill for engaging in the global professional sphere and academic community. Without adequate speaking competence, which includes fluency, accuracy, vocabulary mastery, and clear pronunciation, students may struggle to convey ideas effectively, contribute to discussions, or build cross-cultural connections.

At Universitas Halu Oleo, English is included as parts of the curriculum, yet many Communication Science students continue to experience difficulties in expressing themselves confidently in spoken English, particularly in formal or high-stakes situations. These difficulties are often linked to limited opportunities for authentic communication practice, anxiety about making mistakes, and a lack of sufficient exposure to international communication contexts.

Previous studies have shown that language learning is most effective when it is contextualized, interactive, and connected to learners' personal and professional goals. For Communication Science students, integrating English language learning into both academic and extracurricular activities can be a powerful way to strengthen speaking abilities and

enhance confidence. This study aims to examine how students perceive and experience English language learning as a means of personal and academic empowerment in preparing for the demands of global communication.

2. Literature Review

2.1 English as a Global Communication Tool

In the contemporary era, English has firmly established itself as the dominant lingua franca, serving as a primary medium for cross-cultural interaction and professional discourse. Recent reports indicate that approximately 90% of data used to train artificial intelligence systems is in English, reinforcing the language's pivotal role in global technological, academic, and corporate communication (1). This dominance not only extends to traditional domains such as higher education, media, and diplomacy but also increasingly dictates access to emerging fields like AI-driven industries and international research collaboration. For Communication Science students, mastering English—particularly in speaking—equips them with the ability to access global knowledge networks, present ideas effectively to international audiences, and compete in a labor market that privileges multilingual and cross-cultural competence.

2.2 Speaking Skills and Student Empowerment

Speaking remains a cornerstone of communicative competence, requiring the integration of linguistic accuracy, pragmatic awareness, and socio-cultural adaptability. A recent study on law students revealed that interactive e-learning modules significantly improved speaking performance ($p = 0.000$) while simultaneously reducing speaking anxiety levels from 60.03 to 44.74 (2). This suggests that beyond linguistic gains, speaking activities can foster personal empowerment by enhancing students' confidence, critical thinking, and leadership presence in group settings. In the field of Communication Science, the ability to articulate messages persuasively and adapt speech styles to diverse audiences is not merely an academic skill but a professional imperative, particularly when navigating complex media and public relations environments.

2.3 English Language Learning in Higher Education

Innovative pedagogical approaches have increasingly incorporated technology-mediated interaction to bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world communication demands. Recent research found that AI-mediated speaking activities—such as conversational practice with interactive chatbots—are more effective in improving both speaking proficiency and willingness to communicate (WTC) than traditional face-to-face classroom methods(3). This aligns with the shift in higher education toward experiential and learner-centered methodologies, which encourage autonomy, adaptability, and intercultural sensitivity. For Communication Science students, such approaches not only refine their language skills but also prepare them for dynamic communication contexts, from virtual international conferences to real-time cross-border media collaborations.

3. Method

This study employed a qualitative research approach with an interpretative–descriptive design to examine the experiences of Communication Science students in learning English and its impact on their speaking ability, designed as a case study focusing on the subjective experiences and perceptions of students regarding English language learning as an empowering tool for global communication readiness. The population consisted of undergraduate students from the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Halu

Oleo, with five students purposively selected based on their active participation in both curricular and extracurricular English learning programs, such as English clubs, debate teams, and international seminar participation. Data were collected using a semi-structured interview guide to explore students' perceptions of their speaking ability, their involvement in English learning activities, and the challenges encountered in preparing for global communication. In-depth, face-to-face interviews lasting 45–60 minutes were conducted over a four-week period in October 2024 at the Universitas Halu Oleo campus, with audio recordings made with participants' consent and field notes taken to capture non-verbal cues and contextual details. Data analysis involved verbatim transcription of interviews, open coding to identify meaningful information units, grouping of codes into categories, and organization into broader themes related to student empowerment, speaking skill development, and readiness for global interaction, with triangulation through cross-checking participant responses and researcher field notes to ensure validity.

4. Finding and Discussion

The analysis of in-depth interview data revealed three main themes that illustrate how English language learning empowers Communication Science students' speaking ability in preparation for global communication challenges.

4.1 English Learning as Personal Empowerment

Students consistently reported that engaging in English learning activities significantly enhanced their self-confidence, particularly in public speaking contexts. They felt more capable of expressing opinions, engaging in academic debates, and addressing audiences in both local and international forums. One participant noted, "*Sebelum bergabung dengan klub Bahasa Inggris, saya merasa gugup berbicara di depan banyak orang. Sekarang, saya merasa percaya diri dalam menyampaikan ide-ide saya di kelas dan bahkan dalam sesi tanya jawab saat webinar*" (Participant 2). This reflects the personal empowerment dimension highlighted in the abstract, where speaking confidence is a key factor for global readiness. Recent studies (4) also emphasize that authentic and interactive speaking opportunities—such as role plays, debates, and public presentations—are effective in building learners' self-assurance and fluency.

4.2 Academic Empowerment and Skill Development

The integration of English-speaking tasks into coursework—such as group discussions, debates, and presentations—improved students' ability to articulate ideas clearly and cohesively. Proficiency in English also expanded their access to international academic resources, enabling them to reference foreign literature and participate in global scholarly communities. As expressed by one participant, "*Belajar bahasa Inggris membantu saya membaca lebih banyak jurnal dari luar negeri, sehingga dalam mempresentasikan tugas saya lebih kredibel*" (Participant 4). This finding aligns with recent research (5) showing that English proficiency enhances academic competitiveness by opening access to global knowledge networks. These results reinforce the view that English education should integrate practical speaking exercises into academic contexts to bridge linguistic competence with academic performance.

4.3 Readiness for Global Communication Challenges

Participants expressed that English proficiency enabled them to build connections with peers from different countries via online platforms, conferences, and social media networks. They saw this as a vital step toward establishing professional networks and increasing employability in the global job market. One participant shared, "*Saya sering mengikuti*

webinar internasional dan terhubung dengan orang-orang secara online.Semua itu bisa terjadi karena bisa berbahasa Inggris” (Participant 1). This is consistent with recent perspectives (6) that view English proficiency as a strategic skill for international collaboration and career advancement. These experiences also support the argument that learning contexts should simulate real-life communication scenarios to prepare students for authentic global interactions.

Overall, these findings highlight that English language learning for Communication Science students should go beyond grammar instruction toward immersive, communicative, and contextually relevant speaking activities. Such an approach fosters both personal and academic empowerment while equipping students with the confidence, skills, and readiness required to thrive in an interconnected, globalized environment.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

This study concludes that English language learning plays a crucial role in empowering Communication Science students by improving their speaking abilities, enhancing academic performance, and preparing them for global communication challenges. To maximize the impact, it is recommended that Communication Science programs integrate interactive and contextualized English speaking activities into the curriculum, provide extracurricular English clubs or debate teams, and offer opportunities for students to engage in international academic or professional exchanges.

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