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Students' Perception of Using TED Talks on Speaking Skill in English language Teaching

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Abstract

This study aims to explore students' perceptions of using TED Talks as a medium to improve speaking skills in English Language Teaching. The study was conducted on second-semester students of the English Education Study Program at UIN Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu in the academic year 2024/2025. The research employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and observations. The findings revealed that most students perceived TED Talks positively. They found the videos to be motivating, informative, and effective in enhancing vocabulary, pronunciation, and speaking confidence. TED Talks also exposed students to authentic language use and public speaking models. However, some challenges were identified, including difficulties in understanding native speakers' accents, rapid speech, and technical limitations. Therefore, it can be concluded that integrating TED Talks into speaking classes can significantly improve EFL students' speaking skills if supported by purposeful teaching practices.

Keywords: *students' perception, TED Talks, speaking skill, English language teaching, EFL.*

Introduction

English, often referred to as the language of the millennial generation, has become the most vital medium for communication in the 4.0 industrial era. In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language (EFL) from primary to tertiary levels, making it crucial for both formal and informal education settings to foster English proficiency in students (Gunadiputra et al., 2022). As a global language, mastering English is indispensable, especially for engaging in international discourse, academic collaboration, and professional environments. Among the four fundamental language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—speaking is regarded as a primary tool for meaningful communication. The absence of speaking skills often inhibits learners from expressing thoughts clearly and building interactive dialogue, thus undermining the communicative goal of language learning (Akhter et al., 2020).

Speaking is defined as the active use of language to convey meaning and information effectively. It is not just about producing sounds but delivering comprehensible messages that reflect intention and purpose (Arini & Wahyudin, 2022). In EFL contexts, speaking is essential for students to interact both with native and non-native speakers in diverse real-life scenarios (Jabber & Mahmood, 2020). Furthermore, it is considered a strong predictor of general language competence. Learners with advanced speaking skills often excel in other language domains, as oral communication reflects confidence, vocabulary depth, and grammatical awareness (Rahimi & Fathi, 2022).

Language in essence serves as a medium for communication, and almost every aspect of human interaction is influenced by this function (Suryanto & Nikmatillah, 2020).

Despite its importance, speaking remains one of the most challenging skills to master, especially for students at UINFAS Bengkulu. A pre-observation conducted by the researcher revealed that second-semester English education students often displayed anxiety, reluctance, and a lack of confidence when asked to perform simple speaking tasks like self-introductions. These students exhibited hesitant body language, low voice projection, and fear of making mistakes. Indirect interviews also confirmed that most students struggled with vocabulary, pronunciation, self-confidence, and fear of peer judgment. Some admitted they had ideas but were unable to articulate them orally due to nervousness and linguistic limitations.

Unlike passive language skills such as reading and listening, speaking demands real-time interaction, which increases learners' exposure to error and peer evaluation. According to Penny Ur, speaking involves direct exposure to an audience, which can result in inhibition, fear of being judged, or embarrassment (Ur, 1996). Harmer asserts that this anxiety is often intensified by the learners' unfamiliarity with expressing themselves publicly (Harmer, 2001). Students' reluctance to speak is also affected by the fear of negative peer feedback, which discourages participation in interactive speaking exercises (Peng, 2019). Additionally, ineffective teaching media, methods, and learning materials further exacerbate students' speaking difficulties (Mandasari & Oktaviani, 2018).

Conventional teaching strategies in speaking classes typically include presentations and question-answer sessions designed to encourage spontaneous communication. However, these methods often fail to address affective barriers such as fear and demotivation (Arini & Wahyudin, 2022). In light of this, it is essential for lecturers to adopt innovative pedagogical approaches supported by engaging learning media. One effective solution is integrating digital and multimedia tools that provide learners with immersive, authentic, and motivating language experiences (Baranowska, 2021).

Recent technological advancements have introduced various platforms to support second language acquisition, particularly in speaking. Video-based media such as TED Talks, YouTube, and TikTok are widely recognized for their potential to stimulate learners' emotional and cognitive engagement (City & Nam, 2022). Videos, especially those rich in content and delivered with clarity, provide learners with relatable and inspiring material, thereby enhancing motivation and interest. TED Talks, in particular, stand out as one of the most effective platforms due to their credibility, accessibility, and relevance to modern learners (Farid, 2019). TED, which stands for Technology, Entertainment, and Design, is a non-profit organization founded in 1984 by Richard Saul Wurman. It has grown into a global movement known for its high-quality educational videos presented by experts in various disciplines (Farid, 2019). Since becoming publicly available in 2007, TED Talks have been viewed over a billion times, making them one of the most consumed educational video formats globally (History of TED, n.d.). The authenticity of the speakers and the delivery of real-life ideas, personal experiences, and persuasive arguments are among the key factors that make TED Talks ideal for language learners (Nurhidayat & Syarifah, 2019).

In the context of English language teaching, TED Talks offer multiple benefits. They expose students to diverse accents, intonation patterns, vocabulary choices, and public speaking techniques (Sherman, 2003). These elements are instrumental in helping students internalize authentic language usage, improve pronunciation, and build confidence. TED Talks also provide learners with rich thematic content, which allows them to practice critical thinking and idea formulation, key components of speaking

competence. In addition, the inclusion of subtitles, downloadable features, and flexible access enhances students' autonomy in learning (City & Nam, 2022). Several studies have explored the application of TED Talks in English language classrooms. For example, research conducted by Choirunnisa and Sari demonstrated that students responded positively to TED Talks as they helped improve fluency, vocabulary, and critical thinking (Choirunnisa & Sari, 2021). Likewise, Tilwani found that TED Talks served as a valuable tool for developing presentation skills and confidence in speaking (Tilwani, 2022). Farid, in his study involving senior high school students, concluded that TED Talks made speaking activities more dynamic, engaging, and relevant to students' lives (Farid, 2019).

Despite these advantages, certain challenges remain. Students often struggle with the pace and accent of native speakers featured in TED Talks, making comprehension difficult without subtitles (Patty et al., 2023). Others rely heavily on translations, which may hinder listening skills and reduce the effectiveness of the speaking practice. Nevertheless, when strategically integrated into speaking classes with guided tasks, scaffolding, and discussion activities, TED Talks can significantly boost students' oral proficiency. This study aims to explore the perceptions of second-semester students in the English Education Department at UINFAS Bengkulu regarding the use of TED Talks in their speaking classes. Specifically, it seeks to (1) analyze how students perceive the use of TED Talks as a learning medium for speaking improvement, and (2) identify the challenges they face in using TED Talks during English language instruction. By addressing these questions, the study contributes to the ongoing discourse on media-enhanced language learning and provides pedagogical implications for lecturers and curriculum designers.

Theoretically, this research adds to the growing body of literature on multimedia in EFL teaching by offering insights into learners' affective and cognitive responses to TED Talks. Practically, the findings can help lecturers understand the benefits and limitations of using TED Talks, enabling them to make informed instructional decisions. For UINFAS Bengkulu, this study can inform curriculum design, teacher training, and resource development aimed at improving speaking instruction. Moreover, it can serve as a reference for future researchers interested in technology-integrated speaking pedagogy. To clarify, key terms used in this research are defined as follows: Perception refers to the process by which individuals select, interpret, and respond to external stimuli to form an understanding of their environment (Nisa et al., 2023). Speaking skills denote the ability to use spoken language to convey ideas clearly and effectively (Liekas, 2022). TED Talks are educational videos from the TED platform that deliver inspirational, informative, and persuasive speeches in approximately 18 minutes, aimed at spreading valuable ideas (Kumar et al., 2020).

Method

This research employed a qualitative method with a case study design. Qualitative research is widely used to understand human behavior, attitudes, and experiences from the perspective of the participants. It aims to explore and interpret social phenomena rather than generalize findings to a wider population (Creswell, 2016). According to Denzin and Lincoln, qualitative research emphasizes meaning-making, where researchers collect narrative and descriptive data to obtain deep insights into a phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 2021). This approach is particularly useful when the objective is to explore students' perceptions, such as their experiences and challenges in using TED Talks in speaking activities. Furthermore, Sugiyono emphasizes that qualitative research is often referred to as a naturalistic method because the research is conducted in natural settings

and focuses on understanding reality as it is (Sugiyono, 2019). In this study, the natural setting was the classroom environment of the English Education Study Program at UINFAS Bengkulu.

The case study design was chosen as it allows an in-depth and comprehensive investigation of a bounded system, which in this case is the second-semester students' perceptions of TED Talks as a speaking medium. Creswell describes a case study as a detailed exploration of a specific phenomenon within its real-life context, using various data collection methods over a determined period (Creswell, 2016). This design enabled the researcher to focus on the unique experiences of the students and uncover patterns related to motivation, confidence, and learning outcomes through TED Talks. By applying a case study approach, the research was able to highlight the contextual factors and individual variations in student responses, thus providing a nuanced understanding of the research questions.

The study was conducted at UIN Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu, specifically in the English Education Department, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Tadris. The location was selected because the implementation of TED Talks as a learning medium is relatively new and underexplored in this context, offering a valuable opportunity to generate original and relevant findings. The research took place from May 23 to June 23, 2025, and utilized three data collection instruments: observation, interviews, and documentation. These methods were chosen to triangulate the data and ensure its credibility. According to Moleong, the primary data in qualitative research consists of spoken and observed behavior, while documents serve as secondary data that supports the main findings (Moleong, 2005). The primary data in this research were gathered from semi-structured interviews with selected students, aimed at understanding their perceptions of TED Talks in the speaking classroom. The secondary data consisted of related documents such as classroom materials, videos, and images from observations, as well as literature that supports the interpretation of the findings. Braun and Clarke highlight the importance of incorporating previous research and relevant documents to build strong arguments and validate qualitative analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

The subjects of this study were second-semester students from the English Education Study Program who were selected using purposive sampling. According to Arikunto, research subjects are individuals or groups from whom data are collected in accordance with the research objectives (Arikunto, 2010). The researcher specifically selected students who had prior experience using TED Talks in their speaking classes. This allowed the collection of detailed and relevant responses regarding students' motivation, difficulties, and perceived benefits. The object of the study focused on students' perceptions, particularly their evaluation of TED Talks as a medium for improving their speaking skills.

For data collection, the researcher used three methods: observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation allowed the researcher to witness how students interacted with TED Talks in real classroom settings. As noted by Hardani et al., observation is a systematic method of data collection where researchers examine subjects in their natural environment (Hardani et al., 2020). Interviews served as the main technique for gathering in-depth information from students. According to Ary et al., interviews are valuable for exploring personal insights that cannot be obtained through observation alone (Ary et al., 2010). The interviews were conducted face-to-face in the Indonesian language to ensure students could articulate their thoughts clearly and comfortably

Questionnaires were also distributed to gather quantitative support data. The researcher used a close-ended questionnaire to assess students' views and experiences with TED Talks based on predefined indicators. This questionnaire was constructed using a Likert scale, which measures students' level of agreement with specific statements. Sugiyono explains that the Likert scale is effective for evaluating attitudes and perceptions in social research (Sugiyono, 2019). The questionnaire consisted of 50 items covering topics such as motivation, vocabulary improvement, pronunciation, ease of access, and comprehension difficulties.

Finally, for data analysis, the researcher adopted the interactive model by Miles and Huberman, which includes three key steps: data reduction, data display, and verification. Data reduction involved selecting relevant information from interviews and questionnaires. Data display organized the data into tables and narratives for clarity. Verification entailed interpreting patterns and themes to draw conclusions (Sugiyono, 2019). To ensure validity, the researcher applied the triangulation technique, which involves comparing data from multiple sources to verify consistency and trustworthiness (Nurfajriani et al., 2024).

Results

This study investigates the perceptions of second-semester students at UINFAS Bengkulu's English Education Study Program regarding the use of TED Talks as a medium to improve their speaking skills. Data were collected through observations, interviews, and questionnaires, and then analyzed using the techniques of data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions. The results of the research are described in relation to two research questions: (1) How do students' perceptions of using TED Talks as a medium to improve their speaking skills? and (2) What are the challenges students in using TED Talks as a medium in English Language Teaching?

1. Students' Perceptions of Using TED Talks as a Medium to Improve Speaking Skills

Table 1. Research Informants Data

P1	Male	SM
P2	Male	AA
P3	Male	SR
P4	Male	ZJ
P5	Female	BA
P6	Female	NA
P7	Female	VT
P8	Female	TL
P9	Female	DK
P10	Female	AS

Based on observation data of second semester students of the English Education Study Programme at UINFAS Bengkulu, the majority of students show a

strong interest in visual and inspirational learning media such as TED Talks. The students were enthusiastic when watching TED videos, often taking notes or repeating sentences to practise pronunciation and intonation. Many of them actively participate in follow-up speaking exercises. The platform not only provides authentic and professional speaking models, but also offers flexibility in choosing topics relevant to students' interests. Thus, utilising TED Talks in speaking lessons can increase students' motivation and participation, and help them develop more effective and confident speaking skills.

The research results indicate that students have generally positive perceptions of TED Talks. Data from interviews showed that a significant number of students agreed that TED Talks increased their motivation to learn speaking. The speaking materials provided in TED Talks contain inspirational content, often delivered by experts and professionals in their fields, which greatly influences students' interest and engagement in learning. One student stated in the interview, "*The videos from TED Talks are very interesting to me and also very inspiring."* Another student commented, "*It is very helpful, especially pronunciation because the video is from a native speaker." "It helps to expand my vocabulary because I've heard new words while watching TED Talks."* These responses show that TED Talks helped students develop an understanding of how to structure their ideas, use appropriate vocabulary, and deliver presentations with clarity and confidence.

This is consistent with findings from the questionnaire, in which most students answered *"strongly agree"* to items, 79,46% of students had a positive perception of the purpose of using TED Talks in learning to speak such as *"I use TED Talks to improve my speaking skills."* In terms of learning motivation, 82,06% of students gave positive responses such as *"I feel more motivated to speak after watching TED Talks."* In terms of the impact of using TED Talks, 78,53% of students stated that the use of this media had a positive impact such as *"TED Talks helped me practise my pronunciation and intonation."* And the advantages of using TED Talks, 82,89% students feel that there many benefits to using this media *"TED Talks material is easily accessible and freely available."* These responses show that TED Talks serve not only as exposure to English language use but also as learning models to improve students' speaking skills. The study also found that students used TED Talks as a reference to expand their vocabulary and improve pronunciation. With the availability of subtitles and transcripts, students could understand difficult words and imitate correct pronunciation. These features made TED Talks more accessible and learner-friendly, especially for students still building their language proficiency.

2. Challenges: Difficulties in using TED Talks for Learning Speaking Skills

Although students generally had positive perceptions, some challenges were also identified during the learning process. The first challenge was the difficulty in understanding the speaker's accent and speech speed. Some students reported that they had to replay the video multiple times to understand the content, especially when the speaker used idiomatic expressions or spoke too fast. One student stated in the interview, *"that the speakers in the videos often spoke too fast."* Another student commented, *"Maybe the accent of the speaker is difficult to understand."* Another challenge was related to the absence of Indonesian subtitles. One student stated in the interview, *"Maybe the accent of the speaker is difficult to understand and there are also some videos without subtitles."* In some videos, this was also an obstacle for some students who were not used to full English subtitles.

Furthermore, some students also experienced technical issues such as unstable internet networks, especially for those living in areas with low connectivity. In this case, they overcame it by watching the videos offline or using home Wi-Fi to ensure smooth learning. Student stated in the interview, *"Usually, when I'm at home or in my rooming house, I use Wi-Fi so the network is stable."* Another student commented, *"You can download the video first and then initially use subtitles first, then don't use subtitles afterward so you don't depend on subtitles."*

These difficulties can be attributed to Krashen's (1982) idea in the Input Hypothesis, which states that language input that is too difficult or incomprehensible will not contribute significantly to language acquisition. In the case of TED Talks, if the speed of speech or accent variations exceed the students' ability to listen, then the effectiveness of this medium may decrease. Nonetheless, students in this study showed initiative by using English Subtitles as an aid, or downloading the videos in advance to play, as a strategy to adjust the input to make it easier to understand.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the majority of second-semester students in the English Education Study Program at UINFAS Bengkulu have a positive perception of the use of TED Talks as a medium for improving their English speaking skills. This perception is based on a number of benefits that students feel after using TED Talks in the learning process, such as increased confidence, increased vocabulary, improved pronunciation, and increased motivation to speak English. These findings are not only consistent with data from questionnaires and interviews but also align with relevant language learning theories.

Additionally, these findings are supported by Utami & Noviana's (2021) research, which states that the use of TED Talks in speaking classes significantly helps students understand how to speak well and effectively. In their study, students revealed that watching TED Talks made them more motivated to speak, and they felt they gained a concrete understanding of good speaking techniques from native speakers. The research also noted that TED Talks helped students overcome speaking anxiety, as they learned how speakers remain calm, smile, and command the stage while speaking.

One of the most notable effects was an increase in "confidence in speaking." Many students stated that watching professional speakers in TED Talks videos provided inspiration and encouragement to speak more confidently in class. The clear, expressive, and convincing delivery style of TED speakers provides concrete examples for students in conveying their ideas verbally. This can be explained through Bandura's "social learning theory," which states that learners can learn new behaviors by observing and imitating models they consider competent. In this context, TED speakers act as social models who demonstrate effective speaking techniques. The more students are exposed to these models, the more likely they are to imitate the speakers' style and confidence in their own speaking practices.

In addition, students also feel that TED Talks are very helpful in "enriching their vocabulary." Many of them admit to discovering new vocabulary that they had not previously learned from textbooks. However, because the vocabulary appears in a real context and is accompanied by visuals and the speaker's verbal expressions, students are still able to understand its meaning. This aligns with Krashen's "input hypothesis," which emphasizes the importance of comprehensible input—language that is slightly above the student's current ability level but still understandable with the help of context. TED Talks provide this type of input by presenting authentic content in a visually and verbally

supportive format. Over time, exposure to this input can enrich the vocabulary and expressions students use in speaking.

The use of TED Talks has also been shown to have a positive impact on students' pronunciation. Many students report that by repeatedly listening to native speakers, they become more attuned to correct pronunciation, word stress, and intonation patterns in English sentences. Some students even use the 'shadowing' technique, which involves imitating the speaker's words directly or immediately after the video is played. This strategy aligns with "behaviorist theory," which views imitation and repetition as important ways to form correct linguistic habits. By directly imitating how TED speakers speak, students can improve their fluency and pronunciation accuracy.

From an affective perspective, students feel that learning through TED Talks is far more "enjoyable and motivating" compared to traditional learning methods. The topics covered in TED videos are often relevant to real life and presented in an engaging manner. This aligns with Syafrizal & Syamsun (2023), who note that TED Talks expose learners to natural and contextual English usage, which is vastly different from textbook materials or traditional exercises. Students feel that they are not only learning the language but also gaining insights, inspiration, and new perspectives. This supports the principle of "constructivism theory," which states that learning becomes more meaningful when students are actively involved in the process of building knowledge based on real experiences and contexts. TED Talks enable this by providing content that is not only linguistically educational but also activates personal and critical reflection.

However, the results of the study also revealed several "challenges" faced by students. Some of them admitted to having difficulty understanding the content of the videos due to the speakers' fast pace of speech, diverse accents, and overly complex or technical vocabulary. Others felt that some topics were too abstract and not suited to their language proficiency level. This situation shows that although TED Talks are very useful, their use requires an "appropriate pedagogical approach." Instructors are advised to select videos appropriate for students' proficiency levels and provide learning support such as vocabulary explanations before watching, guiding questions, or group discussions after the video is viewed. This strategy aligns with Vygotsky's "Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory," which states that learners achieve higher understanding when guided by more experienced individuals, such as teachers or peers.

Thus, it can be concluded that TED Talks are an "effective" medium for improving students' speaking skills when integrated appropriately into the learning process. Their success lies in their ability to provide authentic input, increase learning motivation, and serve as an engaging and inspiring source of speaking practice. However, this effectiveness heavily depends on how instructors manage the use of TED Talks in the classroom to align with students' needs and abilities.

Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussions in the previous chapter, it can be concluded that students of the English Education Study Program at UINFAS Bengkulu generally have positive perceptions toward the use of TED Talks in improving their speaking skills. TED Talks are considered effective in increasing students' motivation, expanding vocabulary, improving pronunciation, and fostering confidence. The visual and auditory presentation, combined with authentic language use and inspirational content, helps students develop speaking strategies and become more engaged in classroom activities. However, several challenges were also identified. Students encountered difficulties in understanding the speakers' accents and speech speed, unfamiliar vocabulary, and sometimes lacked

guidance during the learning process. These obstacles suggest the need for structured instructional support when using TED Talks as a learning medium. Despite these challenges, TED Talks remain a highly valuable resource for enhancing speaking proficiency, especially when integrated thoughtfully with appropriate pedagogical strategies.

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