

# ENGLISH-RELATED EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AND THEIR IMPACT ON STUDENTS' ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS: A QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND ATTITUDES

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## Abstract

*This study explores the impact of participation in English-related extracurricular activities (ECAs) on students' English speaking skills. The primary aim is to determine whether involvement in these activities enhances students' speaking abilities and their attitudes towards such engagements. A quantitative survey was conducted with 83 first-year students, with results analyzed using the Mann-Whitney U test and descriptive statistics. The findings indicate no significant difference in speaking scores between students who participate in ECAs and those who do not. Although students hold a positive perception of ECAs, the study concludes that these activities do not lead to significant improvements in speaking proficiency. These findings highlight the importance of considering additional factors that may influence language skill development.*

**Keywords:** Extracurricular Activities, English Language Learning, Speaking Performance, Speaking Proficiency

## Hoạt động ngoại khóa tiếng Anh và kỹ năng nói tiếng Anh của sinh viên: Một nghiên cứu định lượng về kết quả và thái độ của sinh viên

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## Tóm tắt

Nghiên cứu tập trung tìm hiểu mối quan hệ giữa việc tham gia các hoạt động ngoại khóa liên quan đến tiếng Anh (ECAs) và kỹ năng nói tiếng Anh của sinh viên. Mục tiêu của nghiên cứu nhằm tìm hiểu việc tham gia ECAs có cải thiện kỹ năng nói của sinh viên hay không, đồng thời, tìm hiểu thái độ của sinh viên với các hoạt động này. Nghiên cứu khảo sát trên 83 sinh viên năm nhất, và kết quả được phân tích bằng Mann-Whitney U và mô tả số liệu. Kết quả cho thấy không có sự khác biệt lớn giữa điểm kỹ năng nói của sinh viên tham gia ECAs và sinh viên không tham gia. Nghiên cứu kết luận rằng mặc dù ECAs được sinh viên đánh giá tích cực, chúng không cải thiện đáng kể kết quả nói tiếng Anh của sinh viên. Điều này nhấn mạnh sự cần thiết phải xem xét thêm các yếu tố khác có thể ảnh hưởng đến sự phát triển kỹ năng nói của sinh viên.

**Từ khóa:** Hoạt động ngoại khóa, học tiếng Anh, kỹ năng nói, năng lực nói tiếng Anh.

## 1. Introduction

In the context of globalization, English plays a crucial role in communication; therefore, mastering the language, especially speaking skills, is essential for students worldwide (Crystal, 2003). However, it may be challenging for non-native speakers to improve English speaking proficiency, as it requires consistent practice and the ability to interact in real-world situations. Therefore, many educators and institutions have found

various methods to enhance students' speaking instead of the traditional classroom environment. One promising approach is the participation of students in extracurricular activities (ECAs) that focus on English speaking skills.

At universities, English-related extracurricular activities, i.e. participating English club, conversing with foreigners, engaging in debates, and joining language exchange programs, are becoming

increasingly popular among students. These activities give students opportunities to practice their speaking skills in real-life situations. However, the question is raised whether participation in these activities actually contributes to improve their speaking proficiency. While some studies suggest that ECAs have a positive impact on language skills (Makarova & Reva, 2017; Chakraborty et al., 2021), there is limited quantitative research on the specific influence of English-related ECAs on students' speaking abilities (Simbolon et al., 2023).

Considering this gap in research, this study aims at investigating the relationship between English-related ECAs and the speaking skills of students. Another objective of this research is to examine these students' attitudes towards these ECAs to see whether the results match with their beliefs. Two research questions are proposed as follows:

Do students who engage in extracurricular activities have higher speaking scores than those who do not?

What are students' attitudes towards ECA?

## **2. Literature Review**

Extracurricular activities (ECAs) have long been recognized as valuable tools in offering real-life situations, which enhance students' skills outside of the classroom (Holt et al., 2012; Luddon, 2012). With the increasing importance of English as a global language, improving English speaking skills has become more and more essential for students' academic and professional success. While research suggests that ECAs can be beneficial in improving speaking skills, their effectiveness is still debated.

### **2.1. ECAs and Language Development**

The role of ECAs in language development is based on the theory of experiential learning proposed by Knutson (2003). Knutson emphasized that learning through real-world experiences is more effective than abstract theories studying in class. According to this opinion, ECAs give opportunities for students to engage in language practice in real-world situations. In addition, participation in English-related ECAs such as debates, language exchange programs and English clubs helps students to expose practical language use, enhancing fluency and confidence (Simbolon et al., 2023; Kardiansyah & Qodriani, 2018). These activities encourage students to use English beyond academic environment, which is valuable opportunities for language development.

### **2.2. Motivation and Attitudes towards ECAs**

Makarova and Reva (2017) indicated that motivation is a crucial factor helping students improve speaking skills through joining in ECAs. Students often view ECAs as helpful in promoting their confidence, skills, and involvement, and students who desire to seek opportunities and persist in language practice are typically associated with higher engagement and gain great benefits from ECAs (Lien, 2024). On the other hand, students who perceive these activities as obligations or external requirements may not gain the same outcomes (Fredricks & Eccles, 2008). This emphasizes a key factor: students' enjoyment and how they perceive of the activities can significantly influence their engagement and development outcomes.

### **2.3. Challenges and Limitations of ECAs**

Although ECAs have the potential improvement of language skills, there are some studies in Vietnam and other countries showing that there are no differences between the performance of students who join ECAs and those who do not (Chan, 2016; Dang, 2021). One issue can be the quality and organization of these activities. Not all ECAs are well-structured and focused on developing language skills. For example, Ayalew (2019) indicated that some activities lack clear learning objectives and opportunities for practicing speaking, which reduces their impact on students' speaking abilities. Besides, for some students, participating in ECAs is considered time-consuming, and they might find it hard to balance extracurricular commitments with their academic responsibilities. Murff (2005) pointed out that students being overwhelmed by their academic workload may not fully participate in ECAs, which reduce effectiveness. In addition, students' initial levels also may impact of ECAs' success. According to Zakhir (2019), students with higher proficiency levels may not experience as much improvement from ECAs as those with lower levels because they may already be proficient in English. This highlights the need for ECAs to be justified to different proficiency levels.

While ECAs can provide valuable opportunities for enhancing English-speaking skills, their effectiveness is influenced by several factors, including program structure and student engagement. Structured activities with clear goals and objectives tend to be more effective in enhancing language proficiency compared to informal or poorly organized activities.

Challenges such as inconsistent quality, time constraints, and varying student engagement need to be addressed to maximize the potential benefits of ECAs. Research should continue to explore the impact of ECAs on specific skills, examine how online platforms can supplement traditional face-to-face activities, and investigate how ECAs can be better tailored to meet the needs of students at different proficiency levels.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Research Design

In this study, we will combine the quantitative and qualitative research design to investigate the relationship between students' participation in ECAs and their speaking performance, as well as their attitudes toward ECAs. The research is designed to systematically collect and analyze numerical data, thereby identifying patterns and relationships between the variables under investigation. Specifically, the research will examine whether students who engage in ECAs have higher scores in English Social and Communication (ESC) assessments compared to those who do not participate. This study will also explore students' attitudes towards ECAs using data from Google Forms survey. By using numerical methods, this research will systematically analyze data to identify patterns and relationships between the key variables.

#### 3.2. Participants

This study involved 83 students who are in the second semester of their first academic year. Their speaking skills were evaluated in the speaking course in the first semester, which resulted in scores that could be used for comparison. A random sampling method

was used to ensure a representative sample and minimize biases. The sample includes both students who participate in English-related ECAs and those who do not.

#### 3.3. Data Collection

The first research question is addressed using the Man-Whitney U test to find the difference between the ESC scores of students who participate in ECAs and those who do not. For the second research question, students' attitudes towards ECAs are surveyed on a Google Form. This survey is designed to capture students' confidence in speaking English after participating in ECAs, their perceived usefulness of these activities, and any challenge when participating.

The respondents received a description of the research goals and methods within the online form. There were full explanations of the purpose of the study so as to get their approval before proceeding further. Respondents' identities were kept anonymous, and they were encouraged to give honest answers.

#### 3.4. Data Analysis

After obtaining the survey results, all raw data were filtered to ensure consistency. The numbers of students in EACs group and in no-EACs group are kept relatively equal to reduce the bias (Table 1). After the data cleaning process, 75 values were retained and imported into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version 26.0.2.0, for further analysis. Mann-Whitney U test was utilized to test the relationship of speaking scores of students who take part in ECAs with those who do not, allowing us to determine whether there is a significant difference between the two groups.

**Table 1.** Numbers of Participants in EAC Group and No-EAC group

Ranks				
	Group (1 = Extracurricular, 2 = No Extracurricular)	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Student's Speaking Test Score	Extracurricular	40	38,98	1559,00
	No Extracurricular	35	36,89	1291,00
	Total	75		

In addition, the collected data regarding students' attitudes towards ECAs was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The responses were presented in percentage to illustrate the distribution of students' perceptions of the usefulness and enjoyment of ECAs.

### 4. Results & Discussion

#### 4.1. Do students who engage in extracurricular activities have higher

#### *speaking scores than those who do not?*

To address this research question, we used the Mann-Whitney U test to compare the speaking scores of students who participated in extracurricular activities (ECAs) and those who did not. The results of the Mann-Whitney U test indicate that there is no statistically significant difference in speaking scores between two groups.

**Table 2.** Results of Mann-Whitney U Test on the Difference Between Two Groups

Test Statistics <sup>a</sup>	
	Student's Speaking Test Score
Mann-Whitney U	661,000
Wilcoxon W	1291,000
Z	-,420
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,674

a. Grouping Variable: Group (1 = Extracurricular, 2 = No Extracurricular)

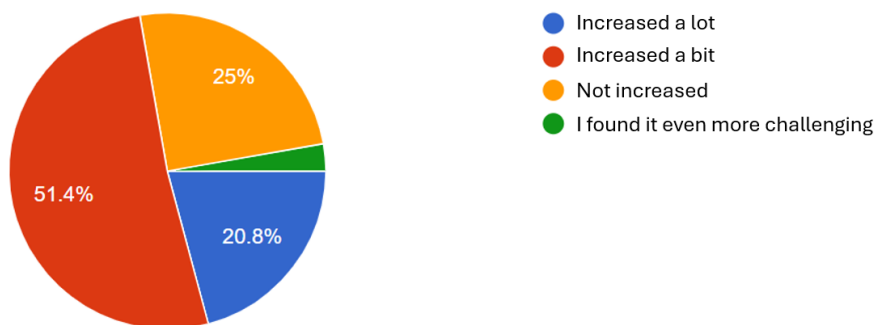
Since the p-value (0.674) (Table 2) is greater than the standard significant level of 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis. This shows that there is no significant difference in speaking scores between students who took part in ECAs and those who do not.

The results contrast with those of some previous studies such as Makarova & Reva (2017) and Chakraborty et al., (2021), which found a positive relationship between extracurricular activities and improved language skills, especially speaking. However, they match with the findings of Dang (2021) which are also in the context of Vietnam. This suggests that Vietnamese students' English-speaking skills may not substantially benefit from ECAs, and there could be other factors that influence their speaking proficiency.

#### 4.2. What are students' attitudes towards ECAs?

To address the second research question, the survey asked students to evaluate their attitudes towards extracurricular activities (ECAs), particularly in terms of their confidence in speaking English and the perceived usefulness of these activities.

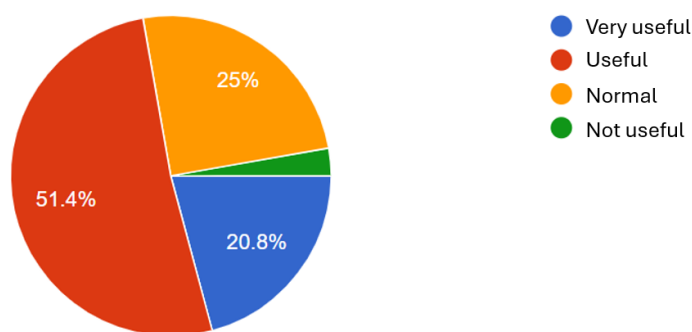
When examined about their confidence in speaking English after participating in ECAs, 51.4% of students reported feeling a little more confident, while 20.8% indicated they felt much more confident. In contrast, 25% of students stated that there was no change in their confidence level, and 2.8% reported that speaking English had become more difficult after participating in ECAs. These results suggest that for most students, ECAs have a positive influence on their confidence in speaking English, with the largest proportion feeling slightly more confident after their involvement. (Graph 3)

**Graph 3.** Students' Views of Their Confidence in Speaking English after Joining ECAs

Regarding the perceived usefulness of ECAs in improving English speaking skills, the responses showed mixed opinions. 38.4% of students rated ECAs as average in terms of usefulness, while 37% found them useful, and 19.2% considered them very useful. Only a small portion, 5.5%,

reported that they found ECAs not useful for improving their speaking skills. This indicates that while a significant number of students find ECAs helpful, there is also a notable portion of students who view them as having a limited impact on their language skills. (Graph 4).

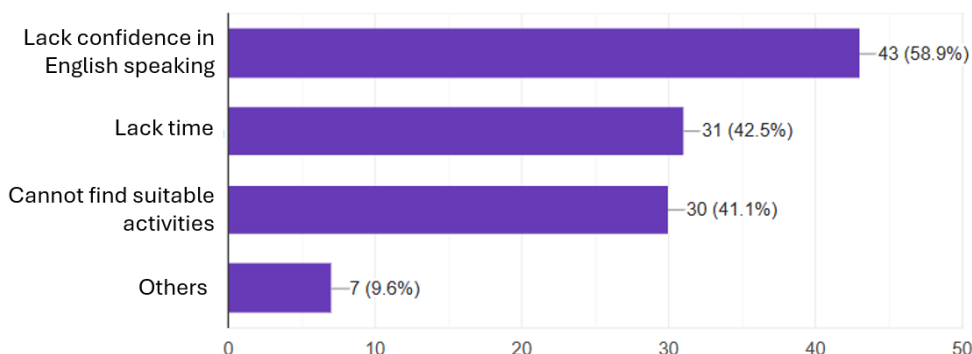
**Graph 4.** Students' Views of the Usefulness of ECAs



When asked about the factors that make students hesitant to participate in ECAs, several reasons were identified. The most common concern was lack of self-confidence when speaking English, with 58.9% of students citing this as a challenge. 45.5% of students mentioned lack of time as a factor preventing

their participation, while 41.1% stated that they could not find suitable activities to join. These findings suggest that despite the positive perceptions of ECAs, students face challenges related to self-confidence, time management, and finding appropriate activities that align with their language learning needs. (Graph 5).

**Graph 5.** Factors hindering ECAs participation



Students offered various suggestions for improving ECAs at the university, including organizing more frequent and diverse programs, creating events for introverted students, and providing more cultural exchange opportunities. Several students also emphasized the importance of regular language practice events, such as celebrating international holidays or creating spaces where students could engage in English conversation with peers, including international students. These suggestions reflect a desire for more varied and accessible activities that could further support the development of English-speaking skills.

The findings suggest that students generally hold positive attitudes toward ECAs. Most respondents reported feeling at least slightly more confident after participating, and that ECAs are useful. Barriers like time constraints agree with the finding of time management in Murff's study (2005). New

challenges like low self-confidence and lack of suitable activities are discovered. These highlight the importance of creating more accessible, inclusive, and engaging ECAs.

## 5. Conclusion

This research explores the impact of extracurricular activities (ECAs) on the English-speaking skills of university students. As effective communication in English become increasingly vital in both academic and professional settings, improving speaking skills has become a primary objective for students. The study investigates whether participation in English-related ECAs, such as language exchange programs, English clubs, and debates, can contribute to the improvement of speaking proficiency. The significance of this research lies in providing insights into how such non-academic activities may complement formal education, fostering essential language skills outside the traditional classroom environment.



Despite the belief that ECAs might provide real-life practice and increase speaking confidence and students' favours of these activities, the study found no significant differences between students' participation in English-related ECAs and their improvement in speaking skills. This outcome suggests that factors other than ECAs may play a larger role in language development. Challenges such as lack of confidence in speaking and time constraints may explain for the insignificance of ECAs in improving speaking performance.

There are still several limitations in this study. Firstly, the sample size was relatively small, which may affect the reliability of the results. Additionally, the lack of significant findings suggests that further research is needed to explore other factors that could influence the relationship between ECAs and language learning. Future studies could

expand the sample size and include students with different levels of English proficiency and students who participate in ECAs for a longer time to examine the impact of these activities. It would also be beneficial to investigate how specific types of ECAs (e.g., structured language workshops vs. informal English practice) might differently influence speaking skills. Another area for future research could be to conduct longitudinal studies to track improvements over a longer period, providing a clearer picture of how ECAs impact language development over time. These findings are important for educators and universities looking to enhance language learning through extracurricular activities, as they suggest that simply participating in such activities may not be enough to improve speaking skills without careful planning and support.

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