ELIMINATING CHALLENGES AND PROMOTING AUTONOMY: THE POWER OF THE ENGLISH CLUB FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract: *The English club is one of the available platforms to learn English that has a lot of potential sides for EFL students. This study aimed to examine the role of the English club for EFL students related to how this program could help the students cope with their challenges and promote autonomy in learning English. This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach to examine and comprehend the level of challenges and participants' standpoints toward the English club. The results revealed participants' positive perception toward the English club alleviates students' challenges while learning English. This program provides a relaxed learning model outside the formal class, which boosts their confidence, engagement, and language ability. When joining an English club, students engage in several activities which promote them to be critical thinkers and autonomous learners in their language acquisition process. As an implication, the English club provides a lot of potential to benefit students in overcoming their challenges in learning English through its activities. The supportive and collaborative environment provided by the English club fostered a sense of less stress and encouraged students to take charge of their language learning process.*

Keywords: *English Club; EFL Challenges; Learning Autonomy*

INTRODUCTION

In the present day of disruption, language is an essential component that cannot be overlooked in any aspect of life; for communicative and persuading purposes, language is a vital component that we cannot disregard (Osborne & Dillon, 2010). In today's interconnected world, the capacity of an individual to communicate effectively is a crucial skill that must be recognized to achieve success. To accomplish this goal, an individual must prioritize becoming fluent in one or more languages, most notably English, which is often referred to as the "Lingua Franca" of the modern global community (Jenkins, 2019; Mauranen, 2003). It is insufficient to comprehend some of the vocabulary in a sentence to indicate an individual's comprehension and mastery of a language. To get the real meaning of a sentence or expression, however, it's necessary to have a much deeper understanding of what it is saying. In addition, English has become vital since it is used and made the

command language of the system of technology that is incorporated into our daily lives. Because of this, all individuals must comprehend English to stay caught up in their attempt to keep up with the rapid growth of information and technology (Jayanthi & Kumar, 2016).

To achieve this goal, the teacher applied several strategies in the learning process. It is carried out to create a better learning environment, experiences, and outcomes (Kadir, 2021). Despite this, there are still a significant number of EFL students in Indonesia who need help with both comprehending and using English appropriately and effectively (Agung, 2019; Mumary Songbatumis, 2017; Sheokarah & Pillay, 2021) Low levels of motivation (Hia, Herdi, & Abbas, 2016; Kurnia, 2019), anxiety when dealing with foreign languages due to a lack of vocabulary mastery (Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020), inadequate access to resources (Mumary Songbatumis, 2017), and poor-quality teaching materials are the challenges that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in Indonesia encounter. Other challenges include a need for more English practice outside of the classroom and limited utilization of technological advances in learning English (Warni, Aziz, & Febriawan, 2018).

Students of English as a Foreign Language may find it challenging to communicate with people in other parts of the globe, expand their social and professional connections, and take advantage of opportunities to continue their education in other countries if they do not have an adequate understanding of the language (S. Alqurashi & A. Althubaiti, 2021). Thus, there needs to be extra effort and assistance from all parties, including the government, educational institutions, families, and the community, to enhance the standard of English learning and assist EFL students in overcoming challenges in mastering English. It will enable EFL students to become more fluent in the language.

The strategy which is used during the process of learning will have a significant impact on the outcome that is expected from the students (Ahmed & Dakhiel, 2019; Teng, 2012). In this context, teachers play an essential role, particularly in the supply of instruction and support, as well as in selecting appropriate learning strategies. A student's cognitive growth, pedagogical awareness, and interpersonal skills will all be significantly influenced by the selection of learning strategies or techniques that are appropriate and on target. Students will experience an enhancement in confidence due to selecting the appropriate strategy, making it easier to cope with anxiousness and a lack of motivation (Biwer, Egbrink, Aalten, & de Bruin, 2020).

Numerous methods can be used to improve students' English language abilities. One is community-based learning, or in this case, the English Club as a platform, which is based on Community Language Learning. (CLL). This strategy is intended to create chances for students who want to study and engage more with English (Bahar & Latif, 2019). They also added that this strategy provides extra learning and typically occurs outside the regular classroom. Students are projected to be able to communicate their thoughts and emotions freely without any score requirements, as in a regular class.

Community Language Learning (CLL) is a humanistic approach to studying languages promoted by Charles Curran (Brown, 1977). This approach emphasizes experiences of learning which take into consideration the psychological, interpersonal, and cognitive aspects of the process of learning a language. In this approach, the instructor is not viewed as an authoritative figure but rather as a facilitator who facilitates the student's learning process. The goal is to establish situations in which students can talk to one another and learn from the experiences of their peers. To create students' feelings of safety and comfort while acquiring a second language, teachers implemented this approach within the framework of an informal and relaxed atmosphere (Ariza, 2002).

Since CLL emphasizes student-centered learning, most of the activities carried out take the shape of group interaction and discussion as a means of creating the language learning process. When studying the target language, students are required to become confident and freely express themselves without feeling any shame or fear. The teacher's responsibility is to play a part in alleviating student anxiety by helping students achieve their learning objectives and providing them with a pleasant learning environment, learning direction, and reinforcement (Su, 2022).

Incorporating the student's mother tongue (L1) into the interaction process to foster clear communication and positive relationships among the students in the classroom is one of the most critical aspects of teaching using the CLL technique (Xu, 2018). It is done to form relationships with other students and instructors, which is one of the critical elements to successfully learning a language. As a result, students will find the environment conducive to learning pleasant and engaging and successfully accomplish their educational goals.

Several previous studies on the application of the CLL method in learning, including in the development of English clubs within the school, revealed good outcomes for stimulating motivation (Ahmed & Dakhiel, 2019; Ekawati & Sarie, 2021; Juliana, 2022; Palupi, Ruspitasari, & Asiyah, 2019), student self-confidence (Sheokarah & Pillay, 2021; Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020; Zulhermindra, 2018), learning awareness (Rahmiani & Malena, 2020; Surahman & Sofyan, 2021), and the ability to think critically (Awalya, Handayani, & Rahmawati, 2010; Elnadeef & Abdala, 2019). Furthermore, this technique can create an enjoyable and relaxed learning environment in which students are motivated to learn more English (Halimah, 2018; Melviza, Bahri, & Erdiana, 2017).

The English club promotes the growth of EFL students' skills, particularly in the areas of speaking (Amaniarsih, Juliana, & Darmayanti, 2022; Awalya et al., 2010; Ibrahim & Mursyid, 2018; Yuliandasari & Kusriandi, 2018), vocabulary awareness (Hia et al., 2016; Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020), and reading (Swatitis, 2020). Furthermore, not only do students improve their cognitive skills, but they can also improve their affective and social skills by engaging and communicating with their group partners (Surahman & Sofyan,

2021). It continues after the real-world setting; they can also do CLL-based learning in a digital environment (Ashraf & Salami, 2014).

Despite the findings of several prior studies centered on investigating English clubs in the context of improving students' spoken skills, additional research is still required to determine how English clubs can overcome the numerous challenges encountered by English learners when acquiring the target language. In addition, there has yet to be much research done on how exactly English clubs can help students become more autonomous in their academic activities. Therefore, additional research is required in this area, keeping in mind that the trend of education centered on students is in an advantageous position to offer significantly more possibilities for students to learn (Anggraeni, 2021). In addition, their cognitive development, as well as their sense of accountability for their education, will improve rapidly.

It is expected that this research will provide further understanding and description regarding how to deal with the various challenges that emerge and are encountered by students by investigating the role that the English club plays in eliminating the challenges encountered by EFL students. Therefore, within the context of the learning process, teachers can select and carry out preventative and successful repressive actions to reduce this. In addition, the results of this study will provide a deeper comprehension of how to encourage independent learning among students by having them participate in activities offered by an English club. To the point where the result is that students can acquire the target language without significant interference, become independent learners, and are responsible for their academic development.

In recent years, the popularity of English clubs as extracurricular activities within the scope of educational organizations such as schools in Indonesia has increased due to the benefits that can be obtained from participating in these kinds of activities and positive students' perception toward it (Destrianti, Sabaruddin, & Hati, 2019). In the extracurricular activity known as the English club, the emphasis is placed not only on the intellectual development of the students but also on developing their social character, emotional intelligence, and managerial abilities in real-world circumstances (Surahman & Sofyan, 2021). Because the activities carried out in this program are not tied to formal classes during active school hours, it provides students with a comfortable and safe place to express themselves. Students experience lower levels of stress and anxiety due to this, and they have the opportunity to socialize with peers from various classes.

The English Conversation Club (ECC) is an English club founded at MAN 2 Mojokerto as an extracurricular program targeting all students there. This English club was selected for becoming the object of this study because, according to the researchers' preliminary findings, this program demonstrates a positive side to students in the form of increased confidence in speaking English in everyday life and increased motivation to learn English. This club provides the student with extra English learning outside the active classroom

during regular school time. They learn through methods that mainly involve playing games and taking quizzes, as well as engaging in intense conversations with other club members, students, and the club's instructor. Students not only learn but also create mutual understanding and social bonding, in this case, their friends in the English club. The ultimate objective of this program is to provide students with a sense of joy, safety, and comfort in the hopes that this will nurture their levels of self-confidence and their willingness to communicate, mainly through the use of English. In addition, students are equipped with some information associated with English that will later be useful to support their learning process in the classroom. Moreover, facilities and infrastructure that support ECC activities, such as classrooms, Internet access, and electronic devices in the form of LCD projectors and active speakers, are among these. Support from stakeholders in terms of time, location, and finances significantly impacts the organization. In addition, the activities conducted at ECC in the form of study with games and socializing can create an enjoyable English learning environment for students.

This research departs from the assumption that English clubs can have a beneficial effect on the cognitive, social, and learning environment of students in the form of decreasing the challenges that they encounter when attempting to learn English. Instead, it investigates whether or not the data support the assumption. A further benefit of participating in an English club is that it can assist students in developing the skills required to become self-directed learners who are aware of their specific needs, capabilities, and learning habits. It helps to ensure that an efficient learning process can be developed for each student. The purpose of this research is to dig deeper into the role of the English club for EFL students in terms of how this program helps them cope with anxiety caused by discomfort, low motivation, lack of self-confidence, and poor social and communication skills. This study explicitly addresses two significant issues: How does the English club help EFL students overcome their challenges in learning English? Second, how can the English club promote autonomous learning among EFL students?

LITERATURE REVIEW
Community Language Learning (CLL)

Community language learning (CLL) is a communicative language learning strategy that attempts to assist students in the acquisition of a new language via the use of social interaction and valuable conversation in a setting that is encouraging the students and not intimidating to them. This strategy places a strong emphasis on developing a feeling of family-like inside or outside the classroom with the teacher's role as facilitator rather than an instructor (Brown & Lee, 2015). CLL has been applied to various language learning circumstances such as English club or E-club, and the findings have indicated that it has the potential to improve both learners' language competency and motivation (Kurnia, 2019).

One tangible example of CLL's principles in action is the emergence of English clubs as informal learning spaces for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in school circumstance. English clubs represent microcosms of CLL's fundamental principles. These clubs serve as dynamic communities where English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students come together to join a social and collaborative space where EFL students can immerse themselves in English language acquisition (Raskova Octaberlina & Ikhwanul Muslimin, 2022; Swatitis, 2020). It encourages students to participate in a wide range of personalized language-learning models to meet their individual interests, requirements, and objectives (Su, 2022). This personalization of language learning inside English clubs is consistent with CLL's fundamental principle of meeting learners' individual needs while also building a sense of belonging and mutual support.

English Club for EFL Students

Language learning is often fraught with challenges, and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students face unique obstacles in their journey to master English. English clubs have emerged as powerful tools to address these challenges and promote learner autonomy. According to Astari & Hadi (2022), the purpose of English clubs is to give students a learning environment that is more casual and more advantageous to communication so that they may improve their knowledge of the language. Students are expected to utilize English in authentic contexts, which helps to improve their communication skills across all four domains of English skill. In addition, several studies found that students who participated in English club activities had a tremendous motivation to study English than students who did not participate in English club activities (Ekawati & Sarie, 2021; Juliana, 2022; Melviza et al., 2017; Palupi et al., 2019; Rahmiani & Malena, 2020).

Moreover, English club is playing essential role in helping students overcome the linguistic challenges they face in traditional classrooms such as anxiety and fear of making mistakes which affect their participation in the class communication (Ariza, 2002; Elnadeef & Abdala, 2019). For many students, the only place they feel comfortable speaking English is in an informal setting, like an English club which less stress (Fitriany, Yuliani, Sulaiman, & Rositasari, 2021). English club provides an atmosphere for learners to participate in meaningful conversations, discussions, and activities that can assist in reducing the challenges of EFL learning (Bahar & Latif, 2019; Kurnia, 2019).

Several studies have emphasized the various benefits of English clubs in addressing the obstacles that EFL learners' encounter. Students may improve their communication skills (Elnadeef & Abdala, 2019), gain confidence in speaking the language (Awalya et al., 2010; Kurnia, 2019), and gain a greater knowledge of vocabulary, lexical awareness and cultural complexity by actively participating in English club events (Bahar & Latif, 2019; Hijrah & Umar, 2021; Surahman & Sofyan, 2021). Furthermore, the interactive format of

English club meetings develops a friendly learning environment in which students may cooperate, exchange experiences, and mutually encourage one another (Kurniasih, Rahmati, Umamah, & Widowati, 2019; Sheokarah & Pillay, 2021). These pleasant interactions help to create a good learning environment, which encourages EFL learners to continue their language learning journey.

Furthermore, extracurricular activities such as English clubs contribute significantly to promoting autonomous learning, as they encourage students to take ownership of their language learning journey (Ashraf & Salami, 2014; Swatitis, 2020). English clubs create a context where students can exercise this autonomy by selecting topics, participating in discussions, and engaging in language activities that resonate with their interests and needs (Köse & Saygılı, 2016; Linh & Yen, 2022; Muhammad, 2020). This sense of ownership not only motivates learners but also equips them with valuable self-directed learning skills that are transferable to other academic domains (Yu, 2020). Students also trained to cultivate their critical thinking in the context of the discussed topic in the club's meeting (Awalya et al., 2010; Elnadeef & Abdala, 2019). In extend, students are able to evaluate their learning progress, which allowed them to measure their achievement in learning English toward their predetermined learning objective (Yuliandasari & Kusriandi, 2018).

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach which aims to explore how an English club benefits EFL students in overcoming English learning challenges and promoting autonomy. The research delves into deeper phenomena within the social context, focusing on the English Conversation Club (ECC) at MAN 2 Mojokerto from November 20 to December 17, 2022. The research subjects were 30 out of 35 active ECC students who were meeting the criteria. The primary instrument is the researcher, which engaged in direct data collection process in the field. While the second instrument is a structured questionnaire aided data collection to assess ECC's impact on addressing challenges and enhancing autonomy in learning English. The data was collected using a validated questionnaire that included Likert scale items that were distributed online using Google Forms. The questionnaire was developed using blueprint in which for each variables was based on the several prior literature reviews. Then the data analyzed using Miles and Huberman's (2014) data analysis methods, containing data compression, presentation, and deriving conclusions. This approach enables an in-depth understanding of the role of ECC in supporting students' language learning journey.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The data reported as a table in this part will be divided into two groups based on variables and indicators from the questionnaire blueprint. The variables that are impacted by the English club for EFL students include challenges and autonomy which derived from several prior literature reviews in above discussions. The results of the questionnaire are then given on a table with the total results in the form of agreement and disagreement.

Table 1

Students' standpoints on English Club help them face their challenges

Variables	Indicators	Results
Motivation	I am more motivated to learn English because I participated in the English Club.	28 agreements (93%) 2 disagreements (7%)
	The English Club helps me improve my English language skills.	27 agreements (90%) 3 disagreements (10%)
	English Club has helped me to be more engaged in learning English.	30 agreements (100%) 0 disagreements (0%)
	The English Club provides opportunities for me to practice English with other students.	26 agreements (87%) 4 disagreements (13%)
Anxiety and Fear of Making Mistakes	The English Club has improved my confidence in speaking English.	27 agreements (90%) 3 disagreements (10%)
	The English Club provides a supportive, relaxed, and comfortable learning environment.	19 agreements (64%) 11 disagreements (37%)
	The English Club encourages me to use English in real-life situations.	20 agreements (67%) 10 disagreements (33%)
	The English Club has helped me to overcome my fear of speaking and writing in English.	24 agreements (80%) 6 disagreements (20%)
Vocabulary Mastery and Lexical Awareness	English Club has helped me to expand my vocabulary.	16 agreements (53%) 14 disagreements (47%)
	Participating in English Club has made it easier for me to remember new vocabulary words.	20 agreements (67%) 10 disagreements (33%)
	The English Club has helped me develop my ability to read and understand English texts more effectively.	25 agreements (83%) 5 disagreements (17%)
	I am motivated to seek the meaning of each vocabulary I never knew before.	12 agreements (40%) 18 disagreements (60%)

Table 1 summarizes student perspectives on the role of English Club extracurricular activities concerning the challenges students address when studying English as a foreign language. The majority of the correspondents' responses, which totaled 93%, revealed a good view of the English club's effect on their learning motivation. It was seen in the student motivation variable in the table above. On the other hand, a pattern of positive impressions is observable concerning the impact the English club has made students engaged in enhancing their English skills and knowledge. It can be observed that the number of respondents who opted to agree was more than half of the

total, but the number of respondents who decided to disagree was just about 7%. In addition, all of the correspondents concluded that the English club was crucial in allowing them to study with other students.

90 % of the informants said that the English club helped them develop their self-confidence, particularly in speaking and talking with their interlocutors. It was in response to a question on the degree to which they feared making errors. The English club not only helps students overcome their fear of making mistakes in verbal communication, but it also makes them more courageous when utilizing English in everyday circumstances. It is because the role of English club focuses on both written and verbal communication. Furthermore, according to the opinions of those who feel this way, the English club contributes to developing an atmosphere conducive to learning on how it provides students with comfort and support as they pursue their academic goals. On the other hand, according to the findings of the survey presented earlier, eleventh responses indicated that they did not think that the English club facilitated an atmosphere conducive to comfortable learning.

In addition, it is considered that the English club assists students in expanding their English vocabulary and remembering and using the terms in the appropriate context when constructing sentences. It was demonstrated by the fact that the number of votes submitted that were in agreement reached fifty percent (53%) of the total. On the other hand, 47% of the people who responded to the questionnaire claimed that they disagreed with the statement that attending the English club boosted their vocabulary. In addition, by taking part in the English club, students are put in the position of having to figure out the meaning of new terminology that they have either been exposed to or have acquired as a result of taking part in the activities of the English club and gaining knowledge from their peers.

Table 2
Students' standpoints on English Club improve their autonomy in learning

Variables	Indicators	Results
Self-regulation	The English Club helps me to be more independent in learning English.	23 agreements (77%) 7 disagreements (23%)
	The English Club helps me to learn English at my own pace and take responsibility for my learning.	23 agreements (77%) 7 disagreements (23%)
Critical Thinking	I feel that the English Club has helped me to develop my critical thinking skills in English.	24 agreements (80%) 6 disagreements (20%)
	English Club activities have helped me to think more deeply about the topics discussed.	17 agreements (56%) 13 disagreements (44%)
	English Club has helped me develop my opinions and ideas about various topics.	24 agreements (80%) 6 disagreements (20%)
Learning Strategies	I have become more aware of my learning style and needs through English Club activities.	15 agreements (50%) 15 disagreements (50%)

Self-evaluation	I have made progress in learning English since joining the English Club.	27 agreements (90%) 3 disagreements (10%)
	The feedback I receive from English club activities helps me to understand my language learning needs.	25 agreements (83%) 5 disagreements (17%)

The findings of the questionnaire used to evaluate the role of the English club in fostering students' capacity for autonomous learning are presented in the second table that can be seen above. Table 2 focuses on students' ability for autonomous learning in the context of the English-learning process, both inside and outside the classroom. Over 70% of positive responses dominantly demonstrate that the English club does play a part in stimulating students to study autonomously at their own pace and in their own time. Participants in the questionnaire all believed that joining the English club empowered them to take on more responsibility for their English language acquisition process.

Further, there was an overall increase in positive feedback from respondents to the questionnaire concerning the English club's effectiveness in enhancing respondents' capabilities for critical thinking. Around 80% of people agree with the statement that the English club encourages them to think more thoroughly about a subject covered in each activity that the English club conducts. In addition to that, a total of 80% of the respondents agreed with the statement that the English club assists them in developing their ideas on a variety of topics. It also influences their learning style, as demonstrated by the fact that as many as 50% of them have reported that they now have a better knowledge of the learning style that is most suited to meet their specific needs. Moreover, about 90% of correspondents agree that they can understand their progress and their needs for learning English.

Discussion

The purpose of this research was to explore the role of the English club in decreasing the challenges that students encounter while learning English, along with promoting the students' autonomy in the learning process. According to the results of this research, students who participate in an English club have exposure to an atmosphere that not only supports their academic success but also is enjoyable and relaxed. Students will have the chance to practice their speaking and listening abilities and their entire language skills in an atmosphere free of judgment, which will further boost both their confidence and their notion of confidence.

The role of the English club in eliminating students' challenges

One of the most significant issues that EFL students experience is a lack of exposure to actual language usage outside of the formal classroom context. Due to a lack of practice, they may lose confidence in their ability to communicate effectively in English. English clubs provide a unique approach by offering a supportive environment for students to

communicate with their classmates in a casual setting. It is in line with the finding which underlined students' improvement in their motivation while learning English in the English club settings. Students may use their language abilities in real-life circumstances through interesting conversations, debates, and group projects, eventually overcoming their hesitation and growing confidence. It is in line with Elnadeef & Abdala (2019) who emphasizes the importance of English clubs in encouraging practical language use outside the typical classroom locations.

However, English club offers an enjoyable atmosphere for students to further develop their English abilities with their peers, which may boost their confidence, positive perception, and language ability (Bahar & Latif, 2019; Sheokarah & Pillay, 2021). It is in accordance with students' perception which conveyed that the English club offers a relaxed and family-like environment. Additionally, according to Harisiswana (2017), students still in high school will be very excited to explore different learning models outside the classroom. This makes the English club one of the feasible platforms to conduct in order to fulfill students' needs and wants, or in advance, this platform will help to eliminate students' challenges in studying a language. So the students can express their language use freely without the fear of judgment and criticism.

Furthermore, the outcomes of this study are consistent with prior research, which has demonstrated that English club activities may assist in decreasing anxiety about making errors among EFL students (Awalya et al., 2010; Fitriany et al., 2021; Su, 2022). They can improve their English abilities without fear of being criticized when participating in English club activities since these activities typically occur in a friendly setting. In addition, regular sessions of English clubs often include a variety of games and activities that enable students to practice English in an environment that is low-stress, which in turn may assist in the reduction of anxious feelings (Kurniasih et al., 2019; Palupi et al., 2019). Based on the findings, it showed that students have high agreement on English club has a less judgmental environment and when their anxiety or fear was decreased by those kinds of pleasurable activities in the English club, it will enable students to become more relaxed during their process of gaining new knowledge about the targeted language.

Another challenge is mastering vocabulary, it is one of EFL learners' most encountered challenges (Hia et al., 2016; Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020). Having adequate vocabulary mastery will be beneficial when communicating in the target language. That is why it is essential to enhance students' vocabulary mastery through several strategies, one of which is by performing English club/community. Thus, the findings of this research imply that participation in English club activities are suitable for enhancing EFL students' understanding of vocabulary. It aligns with prior studies that stated the same finding (Amita, Tavriyanti, & Ernati, 2015; Hijrah & Umar, 2021; Melviza et al., 2017). Students reported feeling assisted when participating in an English club, particularly when increasing their vocabulary. By participating in exciting English club activities, students

find it much simpler to remember the new vocabulary they have just been taught. In addition, students are encouraged to check the definition of each new term they found during the learning process in the dictionary (Ariza, 2002).

The role of the English club in promoting students' autonomy in learning

On the other hand, the English club also plays a vital role in promoting language learning autonomy. Based on the finding, revealed that students tend to learn at their own pace, understand their needs and take their own responsibility for their learning. Actually, it is an accordance with Swatitis (2020), students who participate in self-directed learning activities, such as joining a language club, tend to be more motivated and autonomous in their learning. Similar findings were made by Subekti, Winardi, Susyetina, & Lestariningsih (2022), Hijrah & Umar (2021), and Surahman & Sofyan (2021) who discovered that joining language clubs can improve students' intercultural competency, understanding of other cultures, and communication abilities including the expansion of their vocabulary mastery. Students may personalize their learning experiences to fit their objectives by engaging in activities that speak to their unique interests, which will eventually foster learning autonomy.

Another significant factor is students' critical thinking ability as revealed in the finding that the English club plays a significant role in enhancing students' critical thinking by engaging them in various topics, debates, opinions, and activities. It is in accordance with several prior studies which stated that participation in activities organized by English clubs can help students learning English as a foreign language develop their abilities for critical thinking (Awalya et al., 2010; Elnadeef & Abdala, 2019; Rahmawati, 2022). They argued that the English club allows students to participate in discussions and debates, express their viewpoints, and think critically about many topics relating to the English language. These discussions enhance critical thinking and encourage a more in-depth engagement with language content. Students exhibit cognitive autonomy by considering many points of view and verbalizing their opinions.

Other findings revealed that English club leads students become aware about what they learn and its progress. Similarly, Zulhermindra (2018) and Yuliandasari & Kusriandi (2018) discovered that English clubs could assist EFL students in enhancing their self-evaluation abilities by offering opportunities for students to become independent in learning, evaluate their language competency, and create objectives within their capabilities. Students may discover areas for growth, adjust their learning tactics, and monitor their progress via frequent reflection, which is an important part of autonomous language acquisition.

The English club encouraged collaborative learning, which was critical to strengthening students' autonomy. Students in the group collaborated on various tasks, including arranging language events, developing learning tools, and peer tutoring (Melviza

et al., 2017). Collaborative activities improved students' language abilities and helped them develop crucial skills like communication, cooperation, and problem-solving (Swatitis, 2020). Students learned from each other, shared their expertise and knowledge, and took charge of their own and their peers' learning through cooperation (Palupi et al., 2019; Subekti et al., 2022). This collaborative method enabled students to actively participate in the learning process, make collective decisions, and build a sense of ownership over their learning process.

Furthermore, the development of autonomy within English clubs is closely linked to broader concepts of learner autonomy in language education. The skills and attitudes cultivated through autonomous learning within the club context can significantly contribute to students' overall language proficiency and their ability to independently engage with language resources beyond the club's scope. This not only benefits them in their language-learning journey but also equips them with valuable skills for lifelong learning and personal growth.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study investigated the importance of the English Club in assisting high school students overcome common language learning challenges like lack of motivation, anxiety, and vocabulary comprehension issues. According to the study, involvement in the English Club encourages student motivation, engagement, and relaxation in learning, which improves language proficiency, self-assurance, and autonomy. The collaborative atmosphere of the club fosters active learning, self-directed learning, and the growth of critical thinking and communication abilities in both teachers and students. It is advised that, in order to increase the club's effectiveness, activities should be varied to meet the needs and interests of different students, experienced advisers should continue to provide guidance, and all stakeholders should support the club, including teachers, parents, and the school administration. However, the study's limitations include its exclusive focus on an English Conversation Club (ECC) in MAN 2 Mojokerto using a qualitative approach, which limits generalizability. It suggests the potential for future research to use mixed methods to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the English club's role in overcoming learning challenges and nurturing student autonomy.

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