

THE INFLUENCE OF LEARNING ATMOSPHERE, PEER INTERACTION, AND FACILITATOR COMPETENCE ON PARTICIPANT SATISFACTION IN ENGLISH CLUB PROGRAMS

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates what drives participant satisfaction in community-based English training programs. The English Club Program serves as the research context, designed as an interactive platform to improve English communication skills among university students. Beyond instructional content, program quality is shaped by the learning atmosphere, peer interaction, and facilitator competence. This study therefore examines the influence of these three factors on participant satisfaction. Findings from 169 respondents show that all three contribute positively to satisfaction, with facilitator competence emerging as the strongest predictor. These results underscore the importance of building a supportive and interactive learning environment, guided by competent facilitators, to improve the overall quality of English language training programs.

Keywords: learning atmosphere, peer interaction, facilitator competence, participant satisfaction, English Club

INTRODUCTION

English proficiency has become one of the most important competencies for university students in the era of globalization. Beyond academic settings, it serves as a key asset in the professional world and in cross-cultural communication. That said, formal English language instruction in the classroom is often felt to be insufficient, particularly in terms of opportunities for authentic communicative practice and building speaking confidence. This gap has driven the growth of community-based English learning programs in higher education settings, including English Club activities, training workshops, and informal learning communities.

As an extracurricular program, the English Club has been shown to make a real difference in students' speaking development. Amri et al. (2023), in their study at Universitas Islam Indragiri, found that English Club activities were effective in improving students' confidence and verbal communication skills through structured discussion activities and presentation simulations. Along the same lines, Desmiyanti (2022) found that participation in English Club activities significantly improved speaking fluency and communication confidence, with peer interaction playing a key role in reducing anxiety and encouraging the use of language in real-life situations.

The success of an English language learning program, however, goes beyond how its activities are designed or how good the materials are. Research consistently points to at least three key dimensions that shape participants' learning experience: the learning atmosphere, peer interaction, and the facilitator's competence in managing the learning process. In language learning contexts, peer interaction has been shown to influence sense of belonging, emotional support networks, and participants' overall satisfaction within academic settings

(Holandyah et al., 2024; Wong & Chapman, 2023). In addition, teaching practices that support learner autonomy have been found to enhance intrinsic motivation and create a more conducive learning atmosphere (Wu & Dong, 2024).

From the facilitator's side, their role in shaping the quality of the learning experience cannot be overlooked. A study involving 213 participants in a lifelong learning program found that instructor facilitation competence had a positive effect on learning immersion, which in turn influenced learning outcomes (Kim & Lee, 2024). This aligns with the view that a competent facilitator is not merely a content deliverer, but someone who creates a positive learning environment, responds to participants' needs, and fosters collaborative behavior among learners (Prananto et al., 2025).

Despite this, studies that specifically measure the combined influence of these three factors on participant satisfaction in the context of university-level English Club programs in Indonesia remain limited. Most existing research tends to focus on linguistic skills as the primary outcome, while the dimension of participant satisfaction and subjective experience as program users has received relatively little attention. Yet satisfaction is an important indicator of a training program's quality and long-term viability.

This study therefore aimed to analyze the influence of learning atmosphere, peer interaction, and facilitator competence on participant satisfaction in university-level English Club programs. The findings are intended to provide data-driven insights for program managers, particularly in designing programs that are not only cognitively effective, but also satisfying and meaningful for participants.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Learning Atmosphere

Learning atmosphere refers to the social and emotional conditions that participants experience during the learning process. In the context of foreign language learning, a positive and supportive classroom climate has been shown to improve motivation, active participation, and participants' emotional well-being. A conducive learning atmosphere fosters positive emotions such as enjoyment, which in turn influence participants' language performance (Derakhshan et al., 2022). Conversely, environments that feel threatening or high-pressure are associated with increased language anxiety, which becomes a significant barrier to oral communication.

A study by Hosseini et al. (2022) found that classroom social climate directly influenced foreign language enjoyment and student engagement in learning activities. The more positive participants perceived the classroom atmosphere, the higher their enjoyment and engagement in the learning process. This reinforces the view that learning atmosphere is not merely a backdrop, but an active variable that shapes the overall learning experience. In the context of English Club programs, where activities take place in a relatively informal and low-pressure setting, the quality of the learning atmosphere becomes one of the key factors in determining whether participants feel comfortable enough to practice speaking actively.

Rusticus et al. (2023) further found that both students and educators agreed that feeling safe to express oneself, including taking the risk of speaking without fear of judgment, is a critical component of a quality learning environment. This is especially relevant for speaking-focused programs such as English Club, where participants can only improve if they feel comfortable enough to try speaking and make mistakes.

Peer Interaction

Peer interaction in the language learning context refers to the verbal and

collaborative exchanges that take place among participants during learning activities. These interactions serve not only as a medium for language practice, but also as a source of emotional and social support that contributes to participants' overall satisfaction.

Tang & Shen (2026), in their study on peer collaborative learning in university libraries, found that the basic psychological need for relatedness, mediated by the quality of peer interaction, significantly influenced students' academic engagement. Another relevant study by Wong & Chapman (2023) analyzed student satisfaction and various types of interpersonal interaction in higher education, involving 280 respondents from one of Singapore's largest higher education institutions. Their findings showed that the quality of peer-to-peer interaction contributed positively and significantly to multiple aspects of student satisfaction, including satisfaction with the program and the overall learning experience.

Peer interaction also affects how learners feel during the learning process. Pan & Yuan (2023), in a survey of 324 non-English major undergraduate students in China, found that peer support positively predicted English learning enjoyment. The study described peer support in two forms: academic support, such as sharing learning methods and helping one another with the material, and emotional support, such as respecting classmates' feelings and not laughing at them when they struggle. Based on these findings, the authors recommended that teachers make more use of interactive and collaborative activities, such as group work and role-play, so that students can receive support from their peers.

In the specific context of English Club programs, peer interaction carries an even more strategic role. Holandiah et al. (2024) found that participants in an English speaking club not only gained opportunities for language practice, but also experienced a sense of friendship and emotional support among club members, which encouraged them to speak English with greater confidence and courage. This suggests that peer interaction in such programs functions beyond the linguistic dimension; it builds a sense of community that in turn enhances participant satisfaction and commitment to the program.

Facilitator Competence

Facilitator competence in nonformal training programs like English Club encompasses a set of abilities that enable someone to deliver content effectively, create a positive learning environment, respond to participants' needs, and encourage active engagement. Unlike formal teachers, facilitators in such programs are expected to be more adaptive, empathetic, and capable of managing group dynamics with flexibility.

Kim & Lee (2024), in a study focused on adult learners in lifelong education programs, found that instructor facilitation competence, which covers the ability to accurately convey core messages within a trusting relationship and encourage self-directed learning participation, had a positive and significant effect on learning immersion and learning outcomes. The study confirms that a competent facilitator can transform an ordinary session into a meaningful and motivating learning experience.

Along the same lines, Prananto et al. (2025), in their systematic literature review on perceived teacher support and student engagement in higher education, concluded that participants' perceptions of instructor support, including responsiveness, availability, and feedback quality, are strong predictors of student engagement. This further underscores the importance of facilitator competence in shaping the overall quality of the learning experience. In English Club programs, which are voluntary and carry no formal academic credit, facilitator competence becomes even more critical because the only incentive for participants to keep attending is the quality of the learning experience itself.

Wu & Dong (2024), using Structural Equation Modeling with 387 university students

enrolled in French language courses in China, found that autonomy-supportive teaching practices, one of the core dimensions of facilitator competence, had a positive effect on students' psychological wellbeing and intrinsic motivation in language learning. This strengthens the argument that facilitator competence is not only about content mastery, but also about how a facilitator creates conditions that encourage participants to engage actively and feel valued throughout the learning process.

The facilitator's influence also reaches the emotional side of learning. Dewaele et al. (2023) surveyed 332 foreign language learners from various countries and found that teacher behaviors, namely how often the teacher used the target language in class and how unpredictable the lessons were, had a positive effect on learners' enjoyment. The authors concluded that a rich and positive emotional atmosphere in the classroom helps learners grow and thrive. This suggests that facilitator competence and learning atmosphere are closely tied, since much of what participants experience as a pleasant atmosphere is shaped by what the facilitator does during the session.

Participant Satisfaction

Participant satisfaction in the context of English language training programs can be understood as participants' subjective assessment of how well the program met their expectations and needs. Wong & Chapman (2023) affirm that student satisfaction is an important indicator of program quality and is influenced by a range of factors, including the quality of interpersonal interactions, the learning environment, and instructor competence. Satisfaction is not simply about whether participants enjoyed the activities; it also reflects whether they felt the program was meaningful, useful, and worth continuing.

The role of the instructor in shaping satisfaction has also been observed in courses taught in English. Murdoch & Lin (2023) surveyed 219 Korean university students taking online English-medium courses and found that academic integration, which covers students' sense of learning success and the support they receive from instructors, had the strongest effect on satisfaction. Students who were content with the quality of instruction reported higher satisfaction across all aspects measured in the study, and they were also more satisfied with instructors who showed care and warmth. These findings suggest that satisfaction depends not only on what is taught, but also on how instructors deliver the material and relate to their students.

In this study, participant satisfaction is positioned as the dependent variable influenced by three independent variables: learning atmosphere, peer interaction, and facilitator competence. This framework rests on the understanding that satisfaction is not a standalone construct, but rather a product of interconnected learning experiences. Interventions targeting any one of these three variables therefore have the potential to affect overall participant satisfaction.

METHODS

This study used a descriptive quantitative approach with a survey method. Data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed to university students who had participated in English language learning activities such as English Club, workshops, training programs, or learning communities. The questionnaire consisted of 28 items measuring four key constructs: Learning Atmosphere (LA1-LA7), Peer Interaction (PI1-PI7), Facilitator Competence (FC1-FC7), and Participant Satisfaction (PS1-PS7). Each item used a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 means strongly disagree and 5 means strongly agree. Of the 198 respondents who filled out the questionnaire, 29 had never participated in any English learning activity at the university level and were therefore excluded, leaving 169 respondents

for analysis. All four constructs showed high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values of 0.957 (LA), 0.958 (PI), 0.955 (FC), and 0.953 (PS). Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis to identify the contribution of each variable to participant satisfaction.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The online questionnaire collected a total of 198 responses. Of these, 169 respondents had participated in English learning activities at the university level and were included in the analysis. Respondents came from various study programs and universities across Indonesia, and had participated in a range of English language activities, from campus English Clubs and workshops to informal learning communities and online programs. The duration of their involvement also varied, from less than one month to more than six months.

The first step in the analysis was to look at how participants rated each aspect of the program they had joined. The results showed a consistently positive picture: the average scores for all variables were above 4 on a 1 to 5 scale, meaning respondents generally gave "agree" to "strongly agree" ratings across the board.

In detail, the average score for Learning Atmosphere (LA) was 4.19 with a standard deviation of 0.894; Peer Interaction (PI) had an average of 4.18 with a standard deviation of 0.913; Facilitator Competence (FC) stood at 4.16 with a standard deviation of 0.891; and Participant Satisfaction (PS) had the highest average at 4.21 with a standard deviation of 0.859.

Looking at the item level, a few statements stood out for receiving particularly high scores. Item LA3 ("The activity took place in an enjoyable atmosphere") had the highest average at 4.28, indicating that participants strongly valued sessions that felt light and stress-free. Next were PI1 ("I had opportunities to discuss with other participants," $M = 4.24$) and PS7 ("Overall, I consider this activity to be of high quality," $M = 4.24$). Item LA4 ("I did not feel afraid of making mistakes when speaking") also scored highly ($M = 4.24$), suggesting that the sense of psychological safety to speak without fear was particularly meaningful to participants.

On the lower end, though still above 4.1, were FC4 ("The facilitator provided constructive feedback," $M = 4.11$), followed by LA7 ("The scheduling and venue of the activity supported learning comfort," $M = 4.12$) and PI2 ("Discussions with peers helped me understand the material better," $M = 4.12$). These are not alarming gaps, but they may point to areas where facilitator feedback quality, activity arrangements, and the depth of peer discussions could still be improved.

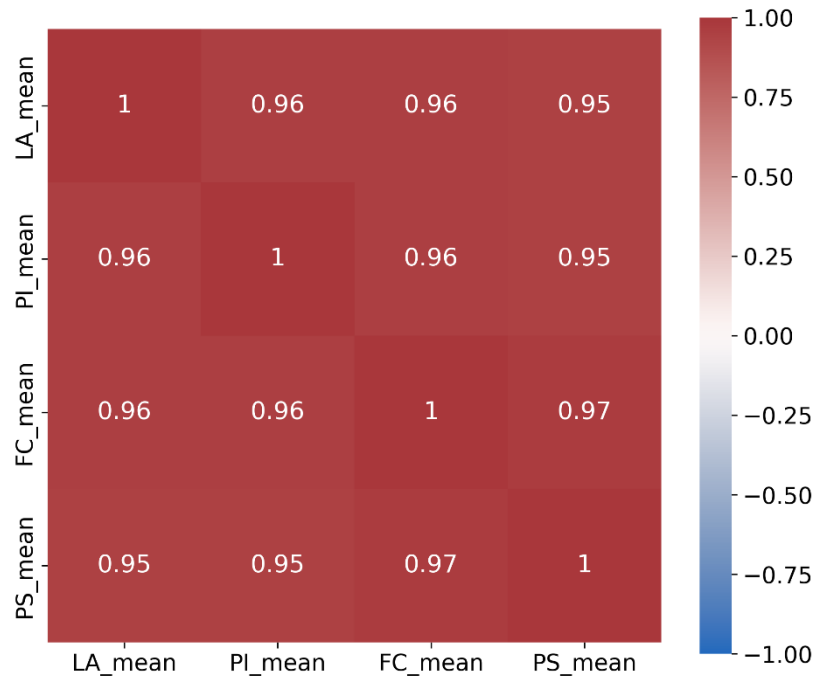
After reviewing the averages, the next step was to examine whether these four variables were correlated with one another. The results are presented in Figure 1 in the form of a correlation heatmap. Each cell shows the correlation coefficient between two constructs, and a darker shade of red means a stronger positive relationship. The cells along the diagonal show a value of 1 because each construct is compared with itself. All the other cells fall within a narrow range of 0.95 to 0.97, which shows a very strong pattern of association across the four variables.

This means that when a participant felt comfortable and at ease with the learning atmosphere, they also tended to rate their peer interactions positively and view the facilitator as competent. The reverse held true as well: if one dimension was rated lower, the others tended to follow. These three dimensions do not operate independently in participants' experience; they support one another and collectively form what participants perceive as a complete learning experience.

As shown in Figure 1, the correlation between Facilitator Competence (FC) and

Participant Satisfaction (PS) was the highest at 0.97, while Learning Atmosphere and Peer Interaction each correlated with Participant Satisfaction at 0.95. The three independent variables were also correlated with one another at 0.96. The closer link between FC and PS provided an early indication of which variable would emerge as the strongest predictor, a finding later confirmed by the regression analysis.

Figure 1 Inter-Construct Correlations



Source: Processed Data, 2026

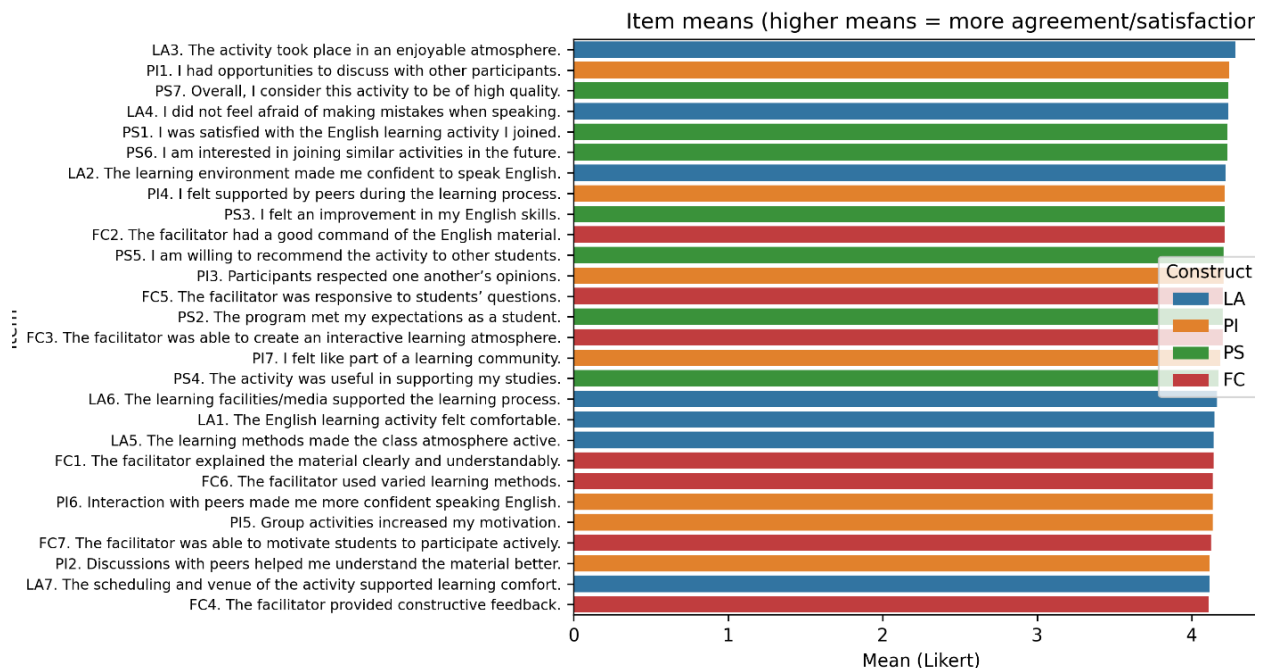
To answer the main research question regarding which variable most strongly predicts participant satisfaction, multiple regression analysis was conducted. The results showed that the model combining all three variables explained 94.6% of the variance in participant satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.946$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.945$), and the model was statistically significant ($F(3, 165) = 968.5$, $p < 0.001$). This is a notably high figure, and its implication is substantial: nearly all of the reasons why a participant feels satisfied or dissatisfied with the program they attended can be accounted for by these three factors alone.

More specifically, the individual contributions were as follows: Learning Atmosphere had a standardized coefficient of $\beta = 0.196$, Peer Interaction $\beta = 0.160$, and Facilitator Competence $\beta = 0.628$. All three predictors were statistically significant: Learning Atmosphere ($p = 0.006$), Peer Interaction ($p = 0.032$), and Facilitator Competence ($p < 0.001$). These figures show that facilitator competence is by far the most dominant factor, with a coefficient more than three times larger than those of the other two variables. However, the multicollinearity test showed high VIF values ranging from 15 to 17, which reflects the strong correlations among the three independent variables shown in Figure 1. Because of this, the individual coefficients should be interpreted with some caution.

Figure 2 brings the item-level results together by showing the average score of all 28 questionnaire items, sorted from highest to lowest and colored by construct. The chart makes it clear that every item scored above 4, with LA3 at the top and FC4 at the bottom. It also

shows that the items of each construct are spread across the ranking instead of being grouped in one place. Facilitator Competence is a good example of this. Although it was the strongest predictor in the regression model, its items appear at almost every level of the chart, from FC2 (“The facilitator had a good command of the English material”) in the upper half to FC4 at the very end. This suggests that participants valued the facilitator’s mastery of the material, while the feedback they received still left room for improvement.

Figure 2 Average Scores Per Item



Source: Processed Data, 2026

DISCUSSION

Facilitator competence proved to be the strongest predictor of participant satisfaction, with a coefficient more than three times larger than those of the other two variables ($\beta = 0.628$). This means that the quality of the facilitator, covering how clearly they deliver the material, how well they create an interactive session, how responsive they are to questions, and how effectively they motivate participants to engage, is the single most determining factor in whether a participant walks away satisfied. This finding is consistent with Kim & Lee (2024), who found that instructor facilitation competence positively influenced learning immersion in adult learners, and with Prananto et al. (2025), who established that perceived instructor support is a strong predictor of student engagement. Similarly, Murdoch & Lin (2023) found that university students’ satisfaction was closely tied to the quality of instruction and the care shown by their instructors.

This also aligns with the practical logic of English Club programs: participants may enjoy a relaxed atmosphere and appreciate talking with fellow learners, but if the facilitator is not up to the task, whether that shows up as unclear explanations, poor responsiveness, or an inability to keep sessions engaging, their overall satisfaction takes a significant hit. A competent facilitator, on the other hand, tends to be better positioned to create a comfortable learning atmosphere while also encouraging meaningful peer interaction, two things that independently contribute to satisfaction as well. This is consistent with Wu & Dong (2024),

who found that autonomy-supportive teaching practices improved students' psychological well-being and intrinsic motivation in language learning.

Learning atmosphere had the second-largest positive contribution at $\beta = 0.196$. This is in line with Hosseini et al. (2022), who found that classroom social climate directly influenced enjoyment and engagement in foreign language learning. An atmosphere that feels enjoyable and free from the fear of making mistakes creates the conditions participants need to practice speaking more boldly and authentically. In the English Club context, where willingness to take linguistic risks, trying out new vocabulary or experimenting with sentence structures, is key to progress, this kind of psychological safety matters a great deal. This also matches Rusticus et al. (2023), who found that feeling safe to speak without fear of judgment is a key part of a quality learning environment, which is reflected in the high score for LA4 ("I did not feel afraid of making mistakes when speaking," $M = 4.24$) in this study.

Peer interaction, while having the smallest coefficient among the three variables ($\beta = 0.160$), still contributed meaningfully to participant satisfaction. This finding is consistent with Wong & Chapman (2023), who found that the quality of peer-to-peer interaction positively contributes to satisfaction across multiple aspects of the university learning experience. Holandyah et al. (2024) further emphasized that in English speaking club settings, peer interaction builds a sense of community and emotional support that encourages participants to be more confident and committed to the program.

The item-level results also point to specific areas that need attention. FC4 ("The facilitator provided constructive feedback") had the lowest average of all items, followed by LA7 ("The scheduling and venue of the activity supported learning comfort") and PI2 ("Discussions with peers helped me understand the material better"). This section focuses on feedback and peer discussion, while activity arrangements are addressed in the suggestions. Regarding feedback, Liu & Feng (2023) explained in their review that corrective feedback only works well when learners actually engage with it, which is why teachers need to give learners strategies for working with the feedback they receive. For English Club facilitators, this means feedback should not stop at pointing out mistakes; participants also need guidance on how to use it in their next attempt. Regarding peer discussion, the lower score for PI2 suggests that discussions may have been more helpful socially than academically. Since Pan & Yuan (2023) described peer support as covering both emotional and academic support, English Club programs may benefit from giving group discussions a clearer learning goal, so that participants not only encourage one another but also help each other understand the material.

One important point to note is that although Facilitator Competence emerged as the strongest predictor, all three variables showed very high inter-correlations, as also reflected in the high VIF values reported earlier. This indicates that in practice, these three aspects do not work in isolation from one another. A competent facilitator, for instance, is likely better able to cultivate a comfortable learning atmosphere while simultaneously encouraging meaningful peer interaction. In other words, facilitator quality can act as a triggering factor that lifts the other two dimensions along with it. This is in line with Dewaele et al. (2023), who found that what teachers do in class has a direct effect on how much learners enjoy the lesson.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This study aimed to analyze the influence of learning atmosphere, peer interaction, and facilitator competence on participant satisfaction in English Club programs and similar English language learning activities at the university level. Based on the analysis of 169 respondents, all three variables together had a significant effect on participant satisfaction, with an R^2 value of 0.946, meaning the model accounted for 94.6% of the variance in

participant satisfaction.

Among the three variables, facilitator competence proved to be the most dominant predictor at $\beta = 0.628$, considerably outpacing learning atmosphere ($\beta = 0.196$) and peer interaction ($\beta = 0.160$). This finding highlights that facilitator quality, encompassing clarity of content delivery, ability to create an interactive atmosphere, responsiveness to participants, and capacity to motivate engagement, is the most decisive factor in shaping overall participant satisfaction.

That said, all three variables showed very high correlations with one another, indicating that learning atmosphere, peer interaction, and facilitator competence in practice work as a single, interconnected learning experience rather than separate elements. A holistic approach to program development is therefore still needed, while keeping facilitator competence as the primary focus.

Based on these findings, there are several suggestions for program managers to consider. First, more attention should be given to facilitator recruitment and development. Since facilitator competence has been shown to be the most influential factor in participant satisfaction, rigorous selection processes and ongoing pedagogical training should be built into the program structure rather than treated as a one-time setup. Second, a structured evaluation and feedback system should be implemented consistently. The findings show that items related to facilitator feedback quality and the depth of peer discussion scored relatively lower than other items, making these two areas concrete targets for improvement. Third, while logistical aspects such as scheduling and venue arrangements are not the primary drivers of satisfaction, the relatively low score for LA7 shows that they should still be managed well enough not to interfere with the overall learning experience.

For future research, it is recommended that the scope of variables be expanded to include other factors that may influence participant satisfaction, such as learning motivation, curriculum design, or individual participant characteristics. A qualitative approach could also be valuable in exploring aspects of participants' experiences that survey data alone cannot fully capture. In addition, respondents in this study came not only from English Clubs but also from workshops, online programs, and informal learning communities, so future studies could focus on English Club participants alone to see whether the same pattern holds. It should also be noted that a small group of respondents gave consistently low ratings across almost all items, which strengthened the correlations among the variables. Future studies with a more varied sample, as well as analysis methods that handle highly correlated variables better, such as Structural Equation Modeling, could help test whether these relationships remain as strong.

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