

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF NATIVE-SPEAKER INTERVIEWS AS A STRATEGY FOR IMPROVING ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

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Abstract

This study examines the perspectives of non-English major students regarding the role of interviewing native speakers in enhancing their English proficiency at a public online institution in Indonesia. A mixed-method design with a sequential explanatory approach was implemented. Quantitative data were collected from 50 non-English major students using a Google Form questionnaire and subjected to descriptive analysis to discern overarching perceptual trends. After that, we looked at the open-ended responses qualitatively to find out more about the things that were shaping those perceptions. The results show that most students think that interviewing native speakers is a challenging and interesting way to improve their speaking confidence, listening comprehension, and vocabulary since they have to use English directly with the native speakers. The qualitative findings indicate that students regard the activity as a genuine learning experience that enhances real-life communication and boosts their enthusiasm to actively engage with English. In conclusion, the study indicates that incorporating interviews with native speakers is an effective pedagogical strategy for enhancing English competence among learners from non-English academic backgrounds.

Keywords: Interviewing, native speakers, English proficiency, non-English majors.

INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized world, English has become the primary medium of international communication in education, business, technology, and cultural exchange. English proficiency, particularly in speaking and listening, is increasingly successful as a key skill that determines student's academic and professional success in global contexts. As a result, emphasis on improving student's English communicative competence through various pedagogical strategies that promote

authentic and interactive learning experiences.

The proficiency in the English language is not merely an asset, but it is a necessity (Rusmiyanto et al., 2023). As the lingua franca of international communication, English serves as a bridge connecting individuals across diverse cultures and backgrounds (Suzina, 2021). For some students who come from non-English major, such as system and information technology

study program, technology and information study program, entrepreneurship study program, and business digital, hearing English looks like one of the subjects to be avoided (Enesi, 2017) (Kurniawan & Sai'in, 2019). Even though, they must study English course since semester one until three. The expect of the task of English course is able to speak in English, able to listen properly, and able to giving feedback in English. They are assuming English is not priority subject in their study (Aminatun & Oktaviani, 2019).

In non-English speaking countries, English is often learned as a foreign language or second language, making speaking proficiency one of the most challenging skills to master (Richards, 2015). Based on (Newton et al., 2018), one of the effective ways to improve English proficiency is through direct interaction with native speakers (Budiman et al., 2023). However, for the non-English major students, such as interactions are limited, intimidating, and filled with psychological barriers like anxiety, fear in making mistakes, and lack of confidence (MacIntyre et al., 1998)

Over the past few decades, there has been a substantial change in the English language teaching scene, particularly with the rise of communicative language teaching (CLT) approaches. According to (van Lier, 2014), interaction is a fundamental component of the language curriculum (Mogk & Goodwin, 2012), emphasizing the need for students to engage in meaningful communication. The non-English major students often find themselves at a disadvantage (Yu & Wu, 2020), as their exposure to English tends to be limited to formal education settings, which may not adequately prepare them for real-life conversations (Yonata, 2021). This lack of practical experience can lead to a phenomenon known as "language anxiety," where students feel overwhelmed or

intimidated by the prospect of speaking with native speakers (Burns, 2017).

Research by Zhou (2019) highlights that non-English major students who engage in authentic interactions with native speakers demonstrate significant improvements in their language skills, especially in speaking and listening. This result emphasized how crucial it is to give student chances to practice their language abilities in real-world setting (Dilobarkhon Azimova & Dilyorjon Solidjonov, 2023).

Although various studies have examined English speaking difficulties among EFL learners (Evans & Morrison, 2011) (Richards, 2015), most research focuses on students majoring in English or those studying in English-medium institutions. The experiences of non-English major students, who have limited structured speaking practice, remain underexplored.

Additionally, while numerous studies have investigated teaching methods such as role-playing, classroom discussions, and digital tools (Newton & Nation, 2020), there is still minimal research on interviewing native speakers as an effective learning strategy. The role of real-life, interactive communication in improving English fluency and confidence has not been widely examined, especially in non-English-speaking countries (Kirkpatrick, 2011)

Lastly, the most studies in this field are conducted in English-dominant or bilingual environments, where exposure to native speaker is relatively high (Kirkpatrick, 2010). It is still a lack of research in countries like Indonesia, where interactions with native English speakers are scarce, making it harder for students to practice authentic conversations. Thus, this research aims to fill these research gaps by examining on how interviewing native speaker

contribute to increase English proficiency for the non-English major student at Universitas Siber Indonesia.

To address these challenges, interactive approaches such as interviewing with native English speakers have gained attention as an alternative means to enhance student's real-world language practice. Interviewing native speakers offers students the opportunity to use English in authentic context, improve pronunciation, expand vocabulary, and build speaking confidence. While this approach has been widely applied in English education programs, there is limited research exploring how non-English major students perceive its effectiveness in improving their English proficiency. Most existing studies focus on English majors or teacher education students, leaving a gap in understanding how students from other academic disciplines experience such activities.

Therefore, this research aims to explore non-English major students' perceptions of how interviewing native speakers contributes to the improvement of their English proficiency. Specifically, this research seeks to answer the following research: (1) what are the main challenges faced by non-English major students at Universitas Siber Indonesia when interviewing native speakers, (2) what strategies do these students use to overcome these challenges, (3) how does interviewing native speakers contribute to their English proficiency, especially in fluency, vocabulary, and confidence.

By employing a mixed-method approach, this research provides both quantitative and qualitative insights into students' perceptions, thus offering a comprehensive understanding of the pedagogical value of interviewing native speakers. Interviewing native speakers probably as a learning strategy while existing studies have explored

role-playing and classroom discussions (Nation & Newton, 2009; Richards, 2015), less attention has been given to interview with native speakers as a structured method for improving English fluency, and contextualizing the study in Indonesia of the Most research on English proficiency is conducted in English-speaking or bilingual countries (Kirkpatrick, 2010).

The novelty of this research lies in its focus on non-English major students, a group that is often overlooked in EFL studies, and in its examination of how authentic communication with native speakers can foster English proficiency beyond formal classroom learning. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of innovative, student-centered learning for the English language learning in non-English Department, particularly Indonesian higher education settings.

METHODOLOGY

This research employed a mixed-method design, specifically a sequential explanatory approach, to obtain a comprehensive understanding of non-English major students' perceptions of how interviewing native speakers improve their English proficiency. The quantitative phase was conducted first to identify general trends and the overall perception of the participants. Followed by a qualitative phase that explored deeper insight and explanation for the quantitative findings (Nur Budiono & Hatip, 2023a). This combination allowed for both measurable patterns and rich, contextualized interpretations of the data.

Participants

The participants of this research consisted of 50 undergraduate students from various study programs in even semester 2024-2025 at Universitas Siber Indonesia. They were selected using purposive sampling technique, as they had previously engaged in an

English-learning activity that involved interviewing native English speakers. All participants had completed at least one semester of general English course.

Instruments

Two types of research instruments were employed in this study.

1. Quantitative instruments

A structured questionnaire administered through Google Forms was used to collect quantitative data. The questionnaire consisted of close-ended items measured on a likert scale, designed to capture students' general perception of the interview activity.

2. Qualitative instruments

Open-ended questions were also included in the same Google form to gather qualitative data, allowing participants to express their thought, experiences, and opinion in details. These responses provide rich narrative data that complemented the statistical results.

This research was structured to gather data through semi-structured interviews, which allows for flexibility in responses while ensuring that key topics were covered (Hardani, 2020). This design was particularly effective in capturing the nuances of the participants' thoughts and feelings regarding their academic experiences.

Ethical Considerations

This research was conducted in accordance with established ethical research standards to ensure the protection of participants' rights and the integrity of the research process. Prior to data collection, participants were provided with an information sheet describing the purpose of the study, the procedure involved, and their rights as respondents. Participation in this study was entirely voluntary, and participants were

informed that they could withdraw at any stage without any negative consequences.

Informed consent was obtained from all participants before they completed the questionnaire. They were assured that their response would remain anonymous and confidential, and that the data would be used solely for academic and research purposes. No identifying personal information, such as names or student numbers, was collected. All data were stored securely in password-protected digital files accessible only to the researcher. The researcher also maintained objectivity throughout the analysis process and ensured that the participants' voice were represented accurately and respectfully in the reporting of findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Challenges Faced by Non-English Major Students When Interviewing Native Speakers

This section presents and discusses the findings obtained from a questionnaire distributed to 50 non-English major students randomly at Universitas Siber Indonesia. The main focus is on the challenges faced by the non-English major students when interviewing native speakers.

The students meet face to face directly with the native speakers. These findings aim to provide a deeper understanding of the real obstacles students face when engaging in direct conversation with native English speakers.

This means that when the non-English major students have challenge to begin the conversation with the natives. The data show below:

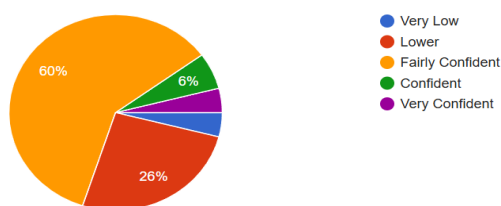


Figure 1. Confidence Level in Speaking English before interview with native speaker

The data shows that there are 30 students or 60% who have fairly-confident before they begin to interview the native. There are 3 students or 6% only who have confident only to talk face to face with the native. Two students are very confident before they talk to the native (4%). At the other hand, there are 13 students or 26% expressed that they have lower confidence before begin and talk with the native. The are 2 students or 4% the students have a very low confident.

This highlights the common issue of language anxiety among non-English majors due to limited exposure and practice in real-life communication settings. In can be sum up that some of the students are ready to meet the native directly with their confident. They are ready to begin interview with the native with all the limitation they have, on of them is confidently.

Another sides that the researcher found is about the biggest challenges the student has when they are facing interview with the native speaker. That data show below:

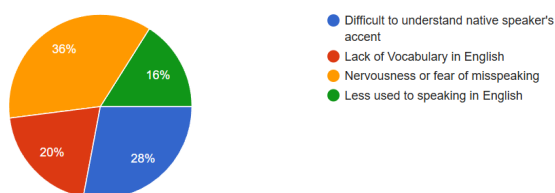


Figure 2. The biggest challenge you faced when speaking to a native speaker before an Interview

The data above shows that there are eighteen students or 36% have nervousness when they speak to the native. The are 14 students or 26% have difficulties to understand of native's accent. The 20% or 10 students have lack of vocabularies to build their dialogue with the natives. Then, there are 8 students or 16% less using English to speak regularly.

From the data above, it can be concluded that the nervousness becomes the biggest challenges for the non-English majored to speak directly, face to face, with the native. In general, students who are not majoring in English tend to feel nervous when facing interviews with native speakers due to their lack of direct exposure to real-life communication situations in English.

Students' Strategies in Overcoming the Challenges.

This section also explores the strategies employed by non-English major students to overcome the challenges they face when interviewing the native speakers. Based on the responses collected from 50 participants, the analysis describes various mechanisms, including preparation techniques, use of translation tools, peer support, and efforts to build confidence. These strategies reflect the students' adaptability and resourcefulness in navigating linguistic and cultural barriers during real-life interactions.

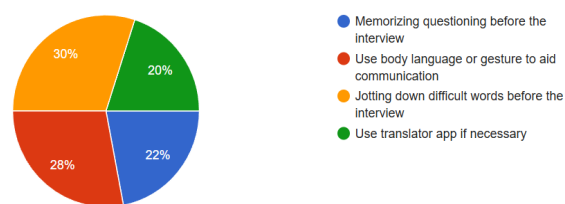


Figure 3. Strategies did the student use to overcome the language barrier during the interview

The data shown that 15 students or 30% are preferring to write the difficult words as

preparation before they begin to deliver some questions to the native. The are 14 students or 28% delight to use their body language or gesture to aid communication more comfortable and run smoothly. There are 11 students or 22% likes to memorize some questions before the questions delivered. Then, 10 students or 20% prefers to use mobile assistant such as translator apps for the interviewing.

It can be sum up by preparing well and continuously practice become significant chosen. The reliance on practical strategies indicates the students active efforts in coping with communication anxiety and linguistic limitations.

Interviewing native-speakers affecting students' fluency, vocabulary, and confidence

This part of the discussion focuses on how interviewing native speakers contributes to the English proficiency of non-English major students, particularly in the areas of fluency, vocabulary acquisition, and self-confidence. Based on data collected from 50 respondents, the findings reveal that direct interaction with native speakers serves as an effective way for students to practice real-time communication, expand their lexical knowledge, and gradually build their speaking confidence. These improvements indicate that authentic conversational experiences play a significant role in supporting language development beyond the classroom setting.

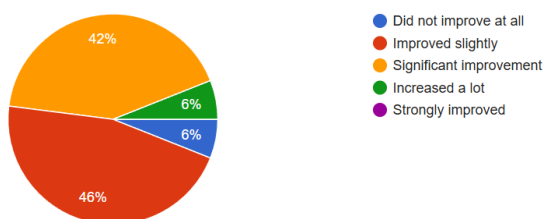


Figure 4. The Confidence in Speaking English Improved After the Interview

The data above explains that 23 students or 46% says after interview with the native to their English proficiency proof improve slightly. While 21 students or 42% after having interview with the native becomes significant improvement for their English proficiency. Only 3 students or 6% have increased a lot after getting interview with the native. The three students or 6% unfortunately did not give any effect to their English proficiency.

From the data explanation above, it can be concluded 88% students improved the English proficiency significantly. The reported says an improvement in their confidence level after conducting the interview. This suggests that authentic communicative experiences contribute positively to self-assurance in English usage.

The next data below about the part of English skill have improved mostly after the non-English student interviewed with the native. The data as follow:

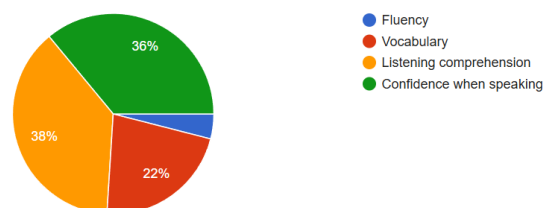


Figure 5. Part of English Skill Improved Mostly After the Interview

The data above shows after student of non-English major interview a native speaker directly and face to face, The listening have 38% or 19 students have listening comprehension improved after interview the native. For the confidence, 18 students or 36% have significantly improved for the their confident. The, there 11 students or 22% for the vocabular student improved.

In general, a persons' English language skills tend to improve after interviewing with a native speaker because the experience provides real and challenging communication practice. Direct interaction with a native speaker forces a person to think quickly, choose the right vocabulary, and adjust their pronunciation to be understood well. This means that real-time interviews significantly aid in developing the ability to speak more smoothly and with a richer vocabulary.

The last data found is about the impact of student's ability in communicating in English after Interview with Native speaker. The data found as follow:

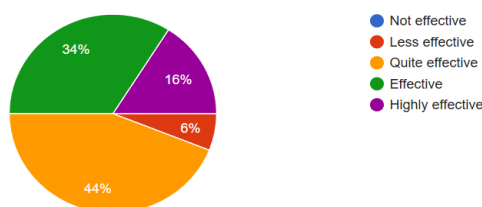


Figure 6. The Impact on Student's Ability in Communicating in English After Interview Native Experience

The data shows that there 22 students or 44% says the interview have quite effective to increase their English proficiency. There 17 students or 34% says effective and give positive for their English progressing. There are 8 students or 16% shows highly effective that it is true the interview gives impact to their English proficiency. Then, there are 3 students or 6% says negative that did not effective at all.

Interacting with native speakers exposes students to accents, natural expressions, and styles of language that are not always found in classroom learning materials. Therefore, this interview assignment is an effective and practical means of developing comprehensive English language skills.

DISCUSSION

Challenges Faced by Non-English Major Students When Interviewing Native Speakers

Table 1. Confidence Level of Student Non-English Major Before the Interviewing with Native Speaker

Level of Confidence	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Very Confident	3	6%
Confident	10	20%
Neutral	7	14%
Less Confident	20	40%
Not Confident at All	10	20%
Total	50	100%

Table 1 shows that most non-English major students at Universitas Siber Indonesia felt unsure about their English language skills before interviewing native speakers. Of the total 50 respondents, 40% stated that they were 'not very confident', while 20% stated that they were 'not confident at all'. Only 6% felt 'very confident' and 20% felt 'confident', while the rest were neutral (14%).

These results indicate a high level of discomfort or anxiety when facing authentic communication situations with native speakers. In Second Language Acquisition (SLA) studies, high levels of anxiety often have a negative impact on spoken language production skills. This is consistent with Affective Filter Hypothesis, which suggests that affective filters such as fear, shyness, or lack of confidence can hinder language acquisition.

This low level of confidence may also reflect a lack of direct exposure to the use of English in real-life contexts. As non-majors, it is likely that they are not accustomed to actively communicating in English outside of passive academic environments such as reading or writing. Therefore, this condition poses a significant initial challenge in the process of improving speaking skills.

From a learning perspective, this data implies that students need more authentic interaction simulations and public speaking training in English. Assignments such as interviews with native speakers can be a good approach, but they must be preceded by intensive training so that anxiety can be gradually reduced.

Table 2. The Majored Challenged Faced by Student of Non-English Majored in Interviewing a Native Speaker

Type of Challenge	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Limited Vocabulary	18	36%
Pronunciation	12	24%
Lack of Fluency	10	20%
Grammar Usage	7	14%
Nervousness / Anxiety	3	6%
Total	50	100%

Table 2 presents data on the main challenges faced by non-English major students when interviewing native speakers. Of the 50 respondents, 36% admitted to having limited vocabulary, making it the biggest challenge. Other challenges include pronunciation (24%), lack of fluency (20%), difficulty in using grammar (14%), and feelings of nervousness or anxiety (6%).

This finding is in line with Nations' theory (2021), which states that vocabulary mastery

is a fundamental element in second language communication. Limited vocabulary can make it hard to express ideas clearly and smoothly. In the context of interviews with native speakers, this becomes even more challenging because students must respond spontaneously in a short time.

Problems with pronunciation and fluency also reflect a lack of active speaking experience. Lack of fluency can stem from minimal practice speaking in real-life situations. Meanwhile, difficulties with grammar, although only experienced by 14% of respondents, are still important because they can affect the clarity and structure of sentences when speaking.

Interestingly, only 6% of respondents cited nervousness or anxiety as a major challenge. This could mean that most students feel their challenges are more technical (language) than psychological. However, it should be noted that these affective factors are still relevant and can exacerbate linguistic challenges if left unaddressed.

Students' Strategies in Overcoming the Challenges.

Table 3. Strategies for Overcoming Language Barrier

Strategy	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Practice and Preparation	20	40%
Using Simple Vocabulary	12	24%
Watching English Media (videos, etc.)	8	16%
Memorizing Key Phrases	6	12%
Seeking Peer Support	4	8%
Total	50	100%

Table 3 illustrates the various strategies used by students to overcome barriers in English

language learning. The most chosen strategy was practice and preparation (40%), followed by using simple vocabulary (24%), watching English-language media (16%), memorising key phrases (12%), and seeking support from friends (8%).

The main strategy, namely practice and preparation, reflects the proactive approach of students in improving their speaking skills. This supports the task-based learning approach, in which success in language tasks is highly dependent on prior preparation. This strategy is also in line with (Heger et al., 2021) output hypothesis approach, which states that language production (speaking) encourages learners to reorganise their internal linguistic systems.

Using simple vocabulary is an effective strategy for intermediate or beginner language learners because it helps them convey messages in an understandable way, even with limited abilities. This is in line with the principle of communicative competence, which is the ability to communicate effectively, rather than grammatically perfectly.

The strategy of watching English-language media, such as videos or films, although used by only 16% of respondents, is a very useful indirect method for improving understanding of accents, intonation, and cultural context. Meanwhile, memorising key phrases is a form of pattern-based learning that can help students when faced with certain questions.

Although seeking support from friends was chosen by only 8% of respondents, this strategy is important in the context of collaborative learning, especially because it can reduce anxiety levels and provide emotional support when facing challenges.

Table 4. Confidence Improvement

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	42	84%
No	8	16%
Total	50	100%

In Table 4, 84% of respondents stated that interviews with native speakers successfully increased their confidence. Only 16% felt that they did not experience any improvement.

These figures show that direct interaction with native speakers has a significant positive impact on learners' affective state, particularly in terms of self-confidence. Such authentic interaction has a stronger effect than passive learning because it encourages learners to step out of their comfort zone.

This increase in self-confidence can also be linked to (Mendoza et al., 2022) concept of self-efficacy, which states that successful experiences in facing challenges will increase self-confidence in facing similar situations in the future. In this case, interviews become a learning experience that validates students' ability to use English in real life.

The implication is very important in the context of language learning: the more often students are given the opportunity to speak in authentic situations, the higher the likelihood that they will build stable confidence in their English language skills.

Table 5. Improved English Skill

Skill Area	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Fluency	22	44%
Vocabulary	15	30%
Confidence	10	20%
Grammar	3	6%
Total	50	100%

Data from Table 5 shows that the skills that improved the most were speaking fluency (44%), followed by vocabulary (30%), confidence (20%), and grammar (6%).

The improvement in fluency and vocabulary can be attributed to the spontaneous and unstructured nature of the interviews. Students were required to speak directly and quickly, which forced them to access their active vocabulary. As a result, their fluency improved with increased exposure and experience.

Self-confidence as an improving skill also supports the findings in Table 4. However, only 6% of students stated that their grammar had improved. This is quite reasonable because interviews are communicative in nature, where linguistic accuracy is not always the top priority. In practice, fluency is prioritised over accuracy in spontaneous conversation situations.

From these findings, it can be concluded that direct speaking practice, especially in an interview format, is more effective in developing communicative skills (fluency and vocabulary) than structural aspects (grammar). To improve grammar, students may need a different learning approach, such as explicit feedback or written exercises.

Table 6. Effectiveness of the Task

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Very Effective	25	50%
Effective	18	36%
Neutral	5	10%
Not Effective	2	4%
Total	50	100%

The final table shows students' perceptions of the interview assignment. Fifty percent considered this assignment to be very effective, and 36% considered it to be effective. The rest were neutral (10%) or considered it to be ineffective (4%).

These results indicate that most students recognise the value of authentic experiences in improving their language skills. This task is seen as helpful not only from a linguistic perspective but also in terms of building confidence and the ability to handle real-life communication situations. This aligns with the experiential learning approach, which emphasises the importance of learning through direct experience.

Students may find this assignment effective because it provides real-world context that they have not previously encountered in class. Interacting with native speakers forces them to think quickly, listen actively, and compose responses spontaneously—all of which are important components of communication skills.

This high level of effectiveness also suggests that project-based learning methods such as interviews can increase motivation to learn because they provide real and meaningful challenges.

Many students agreed that the interview native speaker is an effective way (50%) in improving English proficiency, such as

Speaking and Listening. The students more comfortable speaking English afterward and believed that the experience gave them lasting benefits, especially in terms of real-life conversational skills, self-assurance, and motivation to keep improving.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this research revealed that non-English major students at Universitas Siber Indonesia encountered several challenges when interviewing native speakers, particularly in terms of self-confidence (60%) and vocabulary limitations (36%). Pronunciation difficulties (24%) and grammatical accuracy (14%) also appeared as notable issues, reflecting the students' limited exposure to real communication situations. Despite these challenges, students demonstrated proactive effort to overcome them through preparation and practice (40%), using simple vocabulary (24%), watching English media (16%), memorizing key phrases (12%), and seeking peer support (8%). Such strategies indicate students' awareness of the need for continuous language exposure and self-directed learning.

The results further that interviewing native speakers had a significant positive effect on students' English proficiency. Approximately 84% of the respondents reported increased confidence, while 44% experienced improvement in fluency, 30% in vocabulary, and 20% in overall communicative competence. This suggests that authentic, real-time interaction with native speakers fosters not only linguistic growth but also psychological readiness and self-efficacy in using English. These experiences help students reduce language anxiety and enhance their ability to communicate effectively in spontaneous contexts.

However, this research is limited by its small sample size and focus on a single university context, which may constrain the generalizability of the results. Future research could expand to include larger and more diverse student populations from various institutions and disciplines. Longitudinal studies are also recommended to examine the long-term impact of authentic interactions with native speakers on learners' language proficiency and intercultural competence.

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