



## WATCHING TED TALK ON STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILL

Sartika Dewi Harahap<sup>1</sup>, Muhammad Habibi Syaumi<sup>2</sup>, Fani Azizah<sup>3</sup>, Aulia Nur Khotimah<sup>4</sup>

[sartikahrp12@gmail.com](mailto:sartikahrp12@gmail.com) , [hsvaumi836@gmail.com](mailto:hsvaumi836@gmail.com) , [faniazizah29@gmail.com](mailto:faniazizah29@gmail.com),

[aulianurkhotimah1409@gmail.com](mailto:aulianurkhotimah1409@gmail.com)

<sup>1</sup>STAIN Mandailing Natal, Mandailing Natal, Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>STAIN Mandailing Natal, Mandailing Natal, Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

<sup>3</sup>STAIN Mandailing Natal, Mandailing Natal, Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

### ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore students' perceptions of watching TED Talks as an authentic medium for developing English speaking skills. The research employed a qualitative approach involving first-semester students of the English Education Department at STAIN Mandailing Natal during the odd semester of the 2025 academic year. Twenty students were selected through purposive sampling based on preliminary observations indicating difficulties in speaking English. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations to gain in-depth insights into students' experiences and perceptions. The data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that students generally perceive TED Talks positively as an effective learning medium that enhances motivation, confidence, and awareness of speaking components. Exposure to TED Talks helps students develop greater awareness of pronunciation, grammar usage, fluency, and vocabulary in authentic communicative contexts. Although some students initially feel intimidated by the speakers' proficiency, repeated exposure gradually reduces anxiety and encourages reflective and independent learning.

*Keywords:* TED Talks, Students' Perceptions, Speaking Skills, Authentic Materials, EFL Learners

### A. INTRODUCTION

Speaking is a crucial skill in English because it enables learners to express opinions, feelings, and ideas in real communication (Asmae & Sakale Sana, 2024). Brown in (Ebadi et al., 2025) explains that speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving, and processing information, which means learners must be able to speak, listen, and understand simultaneously. Despite its importance, many students still face



difficulties in developing speaking skills, Problems such as anxiety, limited vocabulary, inaccurate pronunciation, and low self-confidence often hinder students from speaking English actively (Fadlan et al., 2025). As a result, they tend to avoid using English during classroom discussions or communicative activities, which further limits their speaking development (Puspasari et al., 2025).

During the odd semester, preliminary data was collected from first-semester English Education Department (Tadris Bahasa Inggris) Class B students at STAIN Mandailing Natal. There is a discernible difference in the English speaking proficiency of the twenty students in the class, three of whom are male and seventeen of whom are female. The majority of students exhibit limited speaking competence, which is characterized by hesitation, few verbal responses, and low confidence in oral communication. Only four students exhibit relatively adequate speaking skills, as evidenced by their active participation and ability to express ideas orally during classroom activities. Furthermore, only one student has previously encountered real English-speaking content, such as TED Talks, indicating little exposure to spoken English outside of the classroom.

In the digital era, the integration of internet-based resources has expanded opportunities for developing speaking skills through exposure to authentic language input (Giglio & da Costa, 2023). Online materials such as podcasts, films, and interactive discussions allow learners to practice pronunciation, fluency, and confidence independently (Anton et al., 2025). Speaking competence extends beyond linguistic production to include appropriate language use in social contexts, requiring fluency, accuracy, and interaction developed through continuous practice (Harmer) in (Intang et al., 2023). From a communicative perspective, speaking is viewed as a meaning-construction process that involves both producing and responding to spoken language in real communicative situations (Burns & Joyce,) in (M. Riadi et al., 2025).

TED Talks is an online platform that supports the development of students' speaking skills by providing exposure to authentic language, diverse speaking styles, and real-world communication contexts (Sukrutrit, 2025). Through visual and auditory input, learners can observe pronunciation, fluency, body language, and presentation techniques, which contribute to improved speaking and listening comprehension (Reinders & White) in (Rayes & Albelaihi, 2023). Similar digital platforms such as YouTube also promote autonomous learning by



allowing students to access authentic spoken English and select materials based on their interests and proficiency levels (Godwin-Jones) in (Faziah et al., 2024). Furthermore, repeated exposure to TED Talks enhances learners' motivation and speaking performance, including pronunciation, vocabulary, and fluency, while encouraging independent learning beyond the classroom (Rahimi & Fathi, 2021; Chapelle,) in (Tran & Nguyen, 2024a).

Moreover, besides the advantages of using online platforms, it's also important to understand students' perceptions further. According to (Suriyah, 2022), explain that perception is the way people arrange and understand the information they receive through their senses to make sense of what is happening around them. In relation to language learning, perception plays a role in the way students adapt to and participate in the learning process (Dey, 2021). The positive perception that was gained can develop students' interest in active learning. In contrast, a negative perception may reduce their interest. When students use internet media, such as TED Talks, as interesting and enjoyable, they may feel motivated to learn English (Salainti & Fansury, 2024). Furthermore, exploring students' perceptions of using online media is essential to comprehending how technology can effectively support their speaking ability (Hairul & Nurhayati, 2023).

Although previous studies have highlighted the role of online media in improving students' speaking performance, limited attention has been given to learners' perceptions of internet-based learning, particularly the use of TED Talks. Since students' perceptions influence motivation, participation, and learning effectiveness, this study aims to explore how learners perceive TED Talks as a medium for developing English speaking skills. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on authentic spoken input delivered by professional speakers and its investigation of first-semester English Education students at STAIN Mandailing Natal, a context that remains underexplored. The findings are expected to provide pedagogical insights into designing more engaging and authentic speaking activities through online media.

## **B. METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative research approach to explore students' perceptions of using TED Talks in relation to English-speaking learning. Qualitative research was selected because it aims to understand participants' lived experiences, interpretations, and meanings within their natural educational context rather than to measure learning outcomes quantitatively (Zulfa



Amalia & Nur Laila Sulistyani, 2025). Rather than emphasizing numerical measurement, this study prioritized depth of understanding by examining how students experienced the integration of authentic spoken input during their regular learning process. The study was conducted during the odd semester of the 2025 academic year at the English Education Department of STAIN Mandailing Natal, where TED Talks were incorporated as part of classroom instruction in the Basic Speaking subject. Within this instructional setting, students were exposed to selected TED Talk videos during scheduled class meetings across the semester, allowing them to observe and reflect on natural spoken English as presented by various speakers. The videos functioned as supporting learning materials that aligned with course objectives, particularly in relation to pronunciation, vocabulary use, fluency, and confidence in speaking. Through this consistent classroom exposure, students engaged with TED Talks not only as viewing materials but also as references for speaking practice and reflection, which provided the contextual foundation for exploring their perceptions of TED Talks as a learning medium for speaking. (Kantor et al., 2025).

Data were collected primarily through in-depth structured interviews, as this method allows the collection of rich qualitative data while maintaining consistency across participants (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018) in (Elisa, n.d.) The interviews were guided by previously validated questions to ensure alignment with the research objectives and to enable systematic exploration of students' perceptions Kvale and Brinkmann in (Mashuri et al., n.d.). The interview instrument consisted of 17 open-ended questions developed based on Brown's in (Normawati et al., 2023) framework of speaking, covering perceptions of online media use, fluency, accuracy, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Classroom observations were conducted as supporting data to contextualize and strengthen the interview findings. Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña in (Nasrullah, 2025), which involves data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data reduction focused on selecting and organizing relevant data, data display involved arranging the reduced data into thematic categories, and conclusion drawing and verification were conducted through continuous comparison with the data. To ensure trustworthiness, this study applied credibility, dependability, and confirmability criteria (Lincoln & Guba) in (Ul et al., 2023), established through triangulation and member checking (Creswell) in (Dahal, 2025), detailed procedural documentation, audit trails, prolonged engagement, and persistent observation.



## C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### *Findings*

#### *Students' Motivation and Confidence in Speaking through TED Talk*

Most students expressed positive views toward the use of TED Talks as a learning medium that supports their motivation to practice speaking English, particularly among first-semester students who are still developing basic oral skills. Students reported that TED Talks expose them to real-life use of English in meaningful situations, helping them understand how ideas are communicated clearly rather than concentrating only on grammatical accuracy. This experience gradually changes their perception of speaking from a stressful classroom requirement into a purposeful communicative activity.

Evidence from the purposively selected participants shows a consistent pattern. Several students (P1, P3, P6, and P9) stated that TED Talks made them feel more motivated because the speakers discussed real issues and delivered ideas confidently. One participant (P3) explained that seeing speakers communicate successfully despite having different accents made speaking English feel less intimidating. Another participant (P6) mentioned that TED Talks helped her realize that making mistakes is part of learning.

From the researcher's perspective, these responses suggest that TED Talks serve as an affective catalyst in early speaking development. Exposure to authentic and successful communication reduces psychological barriers such as fear and self-doubt. When students see speaking modeled as meaningful communication rather than flawless language production, their intrinsic motivation increases.

In a broader learning context, increased motivation and confidence encourage active participation. Students who feel less anxious are more willing to practice speaking both in class and independently. Therefore, TED Talks function as a motivational medium that supports sustained engagement in speaking activities among first-semester learners.



### ***Pronunciation Awareness Developed through TED Talks***

Most students perceive pronunciation as an essential aspect of speaking English, and this perception is strongly shaped by their exposure to TED Talks, particularly among first-semester learners who are still developing foundational speaking skills. Students believe that clear pronunciation plays a crucial role in ensuring that spoken messages can be understood by listeners. Through repeated exposure to TED Talks, students begin to realize that successful communication depends more on intelligibility and clarity than on producing native-like pronunciation or flawless grammatical forms.

Participants' statements strongly support this perception. Several students (P2, P5, P7, P9, and P10) reported that TED Talks helped them notice important pronunciation features such as word stress, intonation patterns, rhythm, and speaking speed. One participant (P5) stated that listening to speakers with different accents made her feel more comfortable with her own pronunciation. Another participant (P7) mentioned that clear pronunciation helped her understand the message even when she did not know all the words being used.

From an analytical standpoint, exposure to diverse pronunciation models encourages students to develop realistic pronunciation goals. Rather than striving for accent elimination, students focus on being understood. This shift helps reduce pronunciation-related anxiety and builds confidence, as students learn that variation in accent is a natural part of global English communication.

In instructional practice, pronunciation awareness developed through TED Talks promotes active listening and self-directed learning. Students become more attentive to how words are pronounced and are motivated to imitate pronunciation patterns independently. As a result, pronunciation is no longer perceived as an intimidating aspect of speaking but as a skill that can be gradually improved through exposure and practice.

### ***Grammar Awareness in Students' Speaking Performance***

Most students view the grammar used by TED Talk speakers as a useful reference for understanding how sentence structures function in real spoken communication. Through exposure to authentic spoken input, first-semester students realize that grammar in speaking is



applied naturally to support meaning and coherence rather than to demonstrate formal correctness. This understanding helps students recognize grammar as a communicative resource instead of a rigid set of rules.

Evidence from participants reinforces this finding. Several students (P1, P4, P8, P10, and P12) noted that TED Talk speakers tend to use simple and familiar grammatical structures while still delivering clear and effective messages. One participant (P4) observed that speakers use different tenses purposefully, such as past tense for sharing experiences and present tense for explaining ideas. Another participant (P8) mentioned that this realization reduced her pressure to use complex grammar when speaking.

From the researcher's perspective, these responses indicate the development of functional grammar awareness. Students gradually internalize grammatical patterns through repeated exposure rather than explicit rule learning. Grammar becomes something they "notice" and apply intuitively while speaking, which contributes to more natural and confident oral production.

In classroom contexts, this shift in perception helps reduce grammar-related anxiety. When students focus on expressing ideas clearly instead of avoiding mistakes, they become more willing to participate in speaking activities. Thus, TED Talks support a communicative approach to grammar learning that aligns with real-life spoken English use.

### ***Development of Speaking Fluency through TED Talks***

Most students view the speaking delivery of TED Talk speakers, particularly their use of pacing, pauses, and intonation, as a clear model of fluent spoken English. Students come to understand that fluency is not defined by speaking quickly without hesitation, but by speaking smoothly, logically, and meaningfully. This understanding helps students redefine fluency as a controllable and achievable skill.

Statements from multiple participants (P3, P6, P9, P11, and P12) support this perception. One participant (P9) stated that TED speakers pause naturally between ideas, which makes the speech easier to follow. Another participant (P6) explained that observing how speakers



manage pacing helped her control her own speech during speaking practice, even when she needed time to think.

Analytically, TED Talks help normalize hesitation and pauses in spoken English. By observing fluent speakers who pause strategically, students learn that pauses are part of effective communication rather than signs of failure. This understanding reduces pressure and encourages students to speak more confidently.

In learning practice, this perception promotes sustained speaking attempts. Students feel less afraid of speaking slowly or pausing, which increases their willingness to practice regularly. Over time, this leads to gradual improvement in speaking fluency through consistent exposure and use.

### ***Vocabulary Enrichment and Its Influence on Speaking***

Most students believe that TED Talks play a significant role in enriching vocabulary and supporting speaking development. Students observe that TED Talk speakers carefully select words that are relevant, clear, and appropriate to the topic rather than relying on complex or academic vocabulary. This observation helps students understand that effective communication depends on meaningful word choice.

Participants' responses provide strong evidence of vocabulary development. Several students (P2, P5, P7, P8, and P10) reported learning new vocabulary through TED Talks, particularly when supported by subtitles. One participant (P10) explained that hearing words used in real contexts made them easier to understand and remember, while another participant (P5) mentioned feeling more confident using new words in speaking practice.

From the researcher's perspective, vocabulary learning through TED Talks is contextualized and communicative. Students are exposed to words within meaningful discourse, which strengthens retention and encourages active use. Vocabulary learning becomes directly connected to speaking ability rather than isolated memorization.

In classroom practice, this approach encourages students to experiment with new vocabulary without fear of misuse. Students become more curious about word meanings and more

confident applying them in speech, contributing to richer and more expressive spoken language.

### ***TED Talks as Authentic Media in Supporting Speaking Skills***

Students perceive TED Talks as authentic learning media that expose them to real-life spoken English in meaningful and practical contexts. Unlike textbook-based materials, TED Talks present language as it is naturally used to communicate ideas, opinions, and experiences. This authenticity helps students develop a realistic understanding of spoken English beyond the classroom.

Participants (P1–P12) consistently emphasized that TED Talks helped them see how pronunciation, grammar, fluency, and vocabulary work together in real communication. Several students mentioned that observing diverse speakers made them realize that effective speaking does not require native-like proficiency, but clarity and confidence.

From an analytical perspective, authenticity plays a central role in the effectiveness of TED Talks. Authentic input bridges the gap between theoretical language knowledge and actual communicative use, allowing students to observe holistic speaking competence in action.

**Table 1. Indicator and Description**

No	Indicator / Aspect	Description Based on Students' Perception	Yes (✓)	No (-)	Notes
1	Authentic Language Exposure	Students perceive TED Talks as presenting real-life spoken English used naturally to express ideas and experiences.	✓		Consistent reports of natural, real-world English use.
2	Communicative View of Speaking	Students view speaking as a communicative activity rather than a rule-based classroom task.	✓		Speaking seen as meaning-focused communication.
3	Pronunciation Awareness	Students notice clear pronunciation and articulation used by TED Talk speakers.	✓		Attention to clarity, stress, and intelligibility.
4	Grammar in Context	Students observe grammar being used naturally to	✓		Preference for simple, accurate structures.

		support meaning and clarity in speech.		
5	Fluency Modeling	Students recognize fluent speech through effective pacing, pauses, and idea organization.	✓	Fluency defined by smooth flow, not speed.
6	Vocabulary in Meaningful Context	Students learn vocabulary through contextualized and topic-related word use.	✓	New words understood via examples and context.
7	Acceptance of Accent Variety	Students realize that different accents are acceptable as long as speech is clear.	✓	Diverse accents reduce pressure for perfection.
8	Reduced Speaking Anxiety	Students feel less anxious and more comfortable practicing speaking after watching TED Talks.	✓	Increased comfort and willingness to try.
9	Increased Motivation to Speak	Students feel more motivated to practice speaking English independently and in class.	✓	Greater participation and practice intent.
10	Observational Learning	Students learn speaking skills by observing and reflecting on TED Talk speakers' delivery styles	✓	Modeling pacing, pauses, and organization.

### **Discussion**

This study explored how first-semester students perceive the use of TED Talks in developing their English speaking skills. The findings indicate that students generally perceive TED Talks as authentic and meaningful learning media that present English in real communicative contexts. By observing speakers delivering ideas naturally rather than focusing solely on linguistic accuracy, students develop a more realistic understanding of spoken English. This authenticity helps bridge the gap between classroom-based learning and real-life language use, allowing students to see speaking as a purposeful communicative activity rather than a test-oriented task.

In terms of affective factors, the findings suggest that TED Talks play an important role in increasing students' motivation and confidence to speak English. Exposure to speakers from diverse backgrounds and with different accents helps reduce students' anxiety and fear of



making mistakes. Students begin to understand that effective communication does not require perfect pronunciation or grammar, which lowers psychological barriers to speaking. From a pedagogical perspective, this supports the idea that reducing affective filters is essential in encouraging beginner learners to participate actively in speaking activities.

Regarding linguistic aspects, students perceive TED Talks as effective models for improving pronunciation, grammar awareness, fluency, and vocabulary. Repeated exposure to authentic speech helps students notice pronunciation features such as intonation, stress, and pacing that contribute to clarity. Grammar is perceived as functional and meaning-oriented rather than rigid, while fluency is understood as smooth and controlled delivery of ideas. Vocabulary learning also becomes more meaningful because words are encountered in context, supported by subtitles that enhance comprehension and retention.

Overall, the discussion indicates that students perceive TED Talks as a supportive and effective medium for speaking development that addresses both affective and linguistic needs. TED Talks not only enhance students' confidence and motivation but also help them develop awareness of key speaking components in authentic contexts. In direct response to the research question, students perceive TED Talks as a valuable tool that encourages active speaking practice and gradual improvement, particularly for first-semester learners. These perceptions suggest that integrating TED Talks into speaking instruction can provide meaningful learning experiences that support early-stage language development.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

This study explored first-semester students' perceptions of the use of TED Talks in developing English speaking skills, and the findings indicate that students generally perceive TED Talks positively as an effective and meaningful learning medium. Students view TED Talks as authentic resources that expose them to real-life spoken English and help shift their perception of speaking from a grammar-focused classroom task into a communicative activity centered on clarity and message delivery. These findings imply that English instructors can utilize TED Talks to create a more communicative learning environment, particularly in early speaking



courses, where students often experience anxiety and low confidence when using English orally.

The findings also show that students perceive TED Talks as beneficial in enhancing motivation and confidence to speak English. Exposure to diverse speakers and speaking styles helps students reduce fear of making mistakes and increases their willingness to participate in speaking activities. This suggests that integrating TED Talks into classroom practice can support affective aspects of learning by encouraging students to speak more freely and confidently. From a pedagogical perspective, teachers may use TED Talks as discussion starters, modeling tools, or reflective speaking tasks to foster active student engagement and sustained speaking practice.

In addition, students perceive TED Talks as effective models for developing pronunciation, grammar awareness, fluency, and vocabulary in an integrated manner. Students become more aware of pronunciation features such as stress and intonation, view grammar as a tool for meaning rather than rigid accuracy, redefine fluency as smooth and controlled speech, and enrich vocabulary through contextualized exposure. These findings imply that curricula should incorporate authentic multimedia resources like TED Talks to complement textbook materials, allowing students to observe how different components of speaking skills function together in real communication.

Finally, the findings indicate that TED Talks support learner autonomy by encouraging students to practice speaking beyond the classroom. Students perceive TED Talks as accessible resources that can be used independently to improve listening, vocabulary, and speaking confidence. This suggests that educators should encourage students to engage with TED Talks as part of self-directed learning activities, guiding them to use features such as subtitles, repetition, and imitation. Overall, integrating TED Talks into speaking instruction has important implications for teaching practice, curriculum design, and learner development, as it promotes authentic exposure, sustained motivation, and gradual improvement in English speaking skills.



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