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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Perceptions and practices of watching English-dubbed anime and perceived speaking skill improvement among diploma TESL students in Malaysia

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Abstract – In modern education, English has become a key global language for communication, making proficiency especially important for many non-native speakers. This study investigates the perceptions and practices of Diploma in Teaching English as a Second Language (DTESL) students at Kolej Poly-Tech MARA (KPTM) Kota Bharu in watching English-dubbed anime and how these relate to their perceived improvement in speaking skill. A cross-sectional quantitative correlational design was applied, involving a Likert-scale questionnaire administered to 376 DTESL students at KPTM Kota Bharu. The data were analysed using SPSS Version 27 through descriptive statistics, Spearman's rho correlation and simple linear regression analyses to examine associations between students' perceptions, practices and perceived speaking skill improvement. The results indicate that students generally held positive perceptions toward English-dubbed anime in relation to their perceived speaking-related learning experiences. They also indicate that both positive perceptions and active practices such as repetition, imitation and repeated viewing were significantly associated with perceived speaking skill improvement. These findings suggest that English-dubbed anime may be associated with learners' perceived speaking development within informal audiovisual contexts. The study offers pedagogical insights for TESL educators and curriculum developers on how informal multimedia resources may relate to students' perceived speaking-related learning experiences. However, the findings are limited to learners' self-reported perceptions collected within a single institutional context. Future research is encouraged to incorporate longitudinal designs and objective speaking assessments to further explore speaking development across different learner populations.

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1. Introduction

Speaking proficiency remains a core component of communicative competence in English as a Second Language (ESL) and is widely recognised as essential for effective communication in academic, professional and social contexts. Globally, ESL learners continue to experience difficulties in developing fluent and confident oral communication, particularly due to anxiety related to making errors and lack of confidence in oral participation which may contribute to reluctance to engage effectively in spoken interaction (Bagalay et al., 2021). These challenges have drawn increasing attention in international ESL research, particularly in relation to how learners can access meaningful spoken input beyond formal classroom instruction. In the Malaysian higher education context, these issues are especially relevant for Diploma in Teaching English as a Second Language (DTESL) students who are required to demonstrate confident oral communication during classroom interaction, microteaching sessions and teaching-related activities. For pre-service teachers, speaking competence represents a crucial professional skill that supports effective lesson delivery, classroom management and meaningful interaction with students. However, opportunities for extended spoken interaction outside formal classroom tasks may be limited, often resulting in greater exposure to receptive input instead of sustained and meaningful spoken production. Consequently, informal learning materials that provide ongoing spoken input and encourage repetitive engagement in spoken activity may be associated with DTESL students' perceived speaking development, particularly when such materials are accessible, motivating and align with learners' interests (Ahmad & Yamat, 2020). This study examines two key dimensions related to students' interaction with English-dubbed anime: students' perceptions of its usefulness as a language-learning resource and students' practices while watching English-dubbed anime including imitation and focused attention to spoken language. Each construct is examined separately in relation to perceived speaking skill improvement.

In response to these challenges, ESL pedagogy has increasingly incorporated multimedia resources like audiovisual materials in enhancing language learning and learner engagement, as multimedia environments have been shown to support language learning processes in higher education contexts (Azmuddin & Mohd Radzuan, 2020). Audiovisual materials provide learners with contextualised exposure to spoken language through visual cues such as facial expressions and body language alongside auditory input. Empirical evidence from recent studies has shown that using multimedia-based instruction can support learners' vocabulary learning and retention (Teng, 2022) and can also support speaking-oriented learning activities through multimedia-based learning (Santuri et al., 2022). Within this broader trend, English-

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dubbed Japanese animation (anime) has gained popularity among young learners as both an entertainment medium and an informal learning resource. English-dubbed anime provides contextualised audiovisual input in narrative-driven contexts and may encourage sustained engagement with spoken input; studies on video-based exposure in tertiary contexts also report speaking-related benefits associated with watching videos (Zayraey & Katawazai, 2025) while audiovisual input research highlights the multimodal nature of video and its relevance for L2 learning (Montero Perez, 2022). Beyond formal instructional settings, informal digital language learning environments that incorporate entertainment-based audiovisual material have demonstrated potential in encouraging learners to engage with English voluntarily outside the classroom. Learners who interact with narrative-based audiovisual content may be more inclined to engage with English beyond the classroom (Reinders & Benson, 2017). Although Corpuz (2020) examined English-subtitled rather than English-dubbed anime, the findings still suggest that anime-based audiovisual exposure may be associated with vocabulary learning and syntactic complexity.

Although research on multimedia and audiovisual learning has reported generally positive outcomes, much of the existing empirical literature has focused mainly on receptive language gains such as vocabulary acquisition, listening comprehension and recognition of linguistic forms with comparatively less attention given to productive speaking development (Pu & Chang, 2023). For example, Pu and Chang (2023) reported significant speaking gains when audiovisual input was embedded in structured instructional activities that included guided speaking tasks and feedback, suggesting that structured integration of audiovisual input may be important for observable speaking gains. Similarly, Pattemore et al. (2024) found that while learners frequently perceived improvement from audiovisual input, these perceptions varied by proficiency level and viewing conditions, highlighting that perceived learning from audiovisual input may differ across learners' profiles and contexts. Learning contexts vary considerably across studies with many investigations focusing on the structured instructional uses of audiovisual input like blended or classroom-integrated designs rather than learners' independent engagement in informal settings (Pattemore et al., 2024; Pu & Chang, 2023). This distinction is essential as multimedia-supported interaction may be associated with perceived speaking development through different pathways including sustained exposure, increased learner autonomy, affective comfort and repeated rehearsal in low-pressure environments. Emerging evidence suggests that affective factors like L2 communication anxiety and willingness to communicate are relevant to perceived speaking-related development and may not be fully captured through short-term performance-based assessments (Lee & Chiu, 2023). Lee and Chiu (2023) demonstrated that L2 communication anxiety is closely linked to learners' willingness to communicate, indicating affective factors are relevant when considering perceived speaking-related development. As a result, findings derived from structured instructional contexts may not fully generalise to entertainment-driven and voluntary viewing environments where learners independently regulate their practices and speaking-related learning experiences.

ESL learning experiences can vary across contexts, highlighting the importance of considering contextual factors when interpreting self-reported learning experiences (Kamal & Alias, 2025). More recent studies on audiovisual input have emphasised that effectiveness depends not only on exposure but also on how learners engage with the material and how they perceive its usefulness as a language-learning resource. Montero Perez (2022) reviewed research on audiovisual input and on-screen text and discussed its effectiveness for L2 learning including vocabulary, grammar and listening as well as learners' use and perceptions of audiovisual input. Learner-controlled practices such as repetition, focused attention to spoken forms, imitation and rehearsal have been discussed as important aspects of learners' engagement with audiovisual input and their processing of language, particularly in self-regulated viewing contexts (Montero Perez, 2022). From a cognitive perspective, such practices align with the Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning which emphasises the role of active processing of integrated auditory and visual input in language learning. The idea that learners' practices when interacting with audiovisual materials may be associated with perceived speaking-related learning can be explained through Mayer's Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning (Mayer, 2020). The CTML suggests that learners may process audiovisual information more meaningfully when auditory and visual input are actively integrated into coherent mental representation. In English-dubbed anime, for example, spoken language appears simultaneously with visual elements like the expressions of the characters involved in dialogue and the actions and situational clues provided, thus supporting learners to create meaning using both channels. Students' practices while watching the English-dubbed anime like repeated watching, imitating what they see and hear as well as focused attention to spoken language, allow learners to actively select, organise and integrate the linguistic input as opposed to simply recognising the superficial form of it. This cognitive interpretation aligns with the study's focus on the association between students' viewing practices and perceived speaking skill improvement.

However, learners' perceptions of the usefulness and relevance of English-dubbed anime may be related to how actively they adopt these practices which are examined as independent correlates of perceived speaking skill improvement in terms of fluency, pronunciation awareness, vocabulary use and confidence. Such active processing may be linked to learners having a higher degree of awareness of how spoken expressions and recurrent lexical patterns are used in communicative contexts. Therefore, within the context of informal audiovisual learning environments, CTML provides a plausible explanatory framework for how learner-controlled practices rather than simple exposure are meaningfully associated with learners' perceived speaking skill improvement in such contexts. In addition to the Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, the study is also informed by Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978) which highlights the role of social interaction and contextualised language use in learning. Within the context of English-dubbed anime, learners are exposed to conversational routines and spoken expressions through audiovisual content. Practices such as imitation,

repeated viewing and focused attention to dialogue may support learners' interaction with spoken English in informal learning environments.

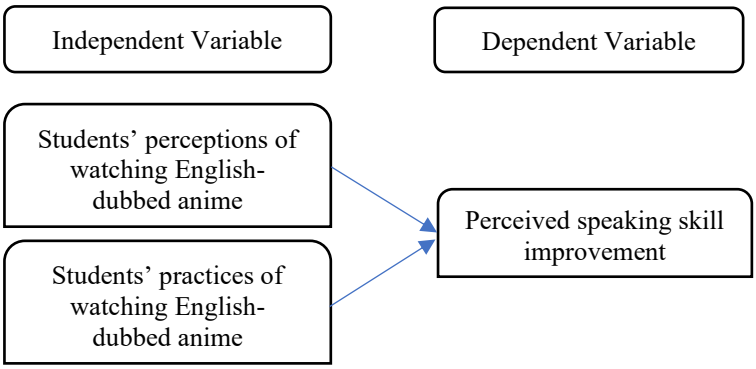
Research on multimedia-supported learning similarly demonstrates that learners' engagement with audiovisual enriched activities can be associated with oracy-related development including speaking-oriented skill and related dispositions (Nasab & Rahimi, 2023). These behaviours reflect learners' active interaction with audiovisually enriched learning activities which have been associated with improved learning of multiword and phrase-level language through multimodal input (Huang et al., 2022). These findings suggest that although learners may have equal access to the same audiovisual materials, differences in students' practices may lead to systematic variation in learning experiences and perceived speaking-related development. This variability reported across studies highlights why correlational designs are particularly suitable for examining informal learning contexts as they allow naturally occurring differences in learners' perceptions and practices to be analysed without imposing uniform instructional conditions. Despite these developments, several gaps remain in the existing literature. While many studies have documented the positive outcomes associated with audiovisual and video-based instruction, relatively few have employed quantitative correlational designs to examine the relationship between students' practices and their perceived speaking development. Most of the existing research has concentrated on instructional video or task-based video materials with limited attention given to informal audiovisual media like English-dubbed anime, particularly within the Malaysian higher education ESL contexts. As such, there remains a need to investigate how students' practices while watching English-dubbed anime relate to perceived improvement in speaking skill.

The use of perceived speaking skill improvement as the outcome variable is appropriate given the informal and self-directed nature of the learning context examined in this study. In informal multimedia learning settings such as watching English-dubbed anime, speaking development often occurs gradually and may not be immediately evident through short-term or cross-sectional performance-based assessments. Learners' perceptions of changes in fluency, pronunciation awareness, confidence and willingness to communicate therefore provide meaningful indicators of early speaking development, particularly in explanatory and correlational research that examines naturally occurring learning behaviours where objective speaking assessment is often impractical and resource-intensive in large-scale survey designs. Research on informal and out of class language learning has recognised learners' self-perceptions as valuable sources of evidence for understanding language development beyond formal instructional settings (Reinders & Benson, 2017). Through focusing on perceived improvement, this study captures learners' self-reported evaluations of their speaking-related development rather than objective speaking performance measured through formal assessments.

Accordingly, this study focuses on three key constructs: (1) students' perceptions of using English-dubbed anime as a language-learning resource, (2) students' practices while watching English-dubbed anime (e.g., repetition, imitation, selective attention) and (3) perceived speaking skill improvement. The purpose of the present study is to examine the relationship between DTESL students' perceptions and practices of watching English-dubbed anime and their perceived speaking skill improvement at Kolej Poly-Tech MARA (KPTM) Kota Bharu using a quantitative correlational design. Specifically, this study aims to examine whether significant associations exist between students' perceptions and practices and their perceived speaking skill improvement. Through positioning perceptions and practices as complementary learner-related constructs, this study extends existing audiovisual input research by highlighting process-level dimensions of informal language learning rather than focusing solely on exposure frequency. This focus provides pedagogical insights for TESL educators and curriculum developers on how informal multimedia-based resources may relate to perceived speaking development.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework of Students' Perceptions and Practices of Watching English-Dubbed Anime and Perceived Speaking Skill Improvement



The diagram shown in Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework that underlies this study. This model illustrates the proposed associations between the independent variables, students' perceptions and practices of watching English-dubbed anime and the dependent variable, perceived speaking skill improvement. Students' practices refer to learners' repeated viewing, imitation and focused attention to spoken language features while watching English-dubbed anime which are examined in relation to perceived speaking skill improvement. In this study, perceived speaking skill

improvement is conceptualised as learners' perceived development in pronunciation awareness, vocabulary use and fluency together with confidence which is included as an affective dimension closely related to spoken communication and willingness to communicate in ESL contexts.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a cross-sectional quantitative correlational survey design to examine the non-causal relationship between DTESL students' perceptions and practices of watching English-dubbed anime and their perceived speaking skill improvement. A quantitative approach was selected to enable systematic measurement of the study variables and the application of statistical techniques to evaluate the relationships between students' perceptions, practices and speaking outcomes. The use of a survey-based methodology allows for the systematic examination of variable relationships across a relatively larger sample, thereby enhancing the consistency of measurement and supporting interpretation within the sampled population. A correlational design was adopted because this study intended to investigate naturally occurring learning behaviours related to English-dubbed anime while avoiding manipulation of participants' experiences or controlling their level of exposure to the material. In this study, students' perceptions and students' practices are examined as separate correlates of perceived speaking skill improvement. Such a design is suited for investigating informal learning contexts in which learners independently engage with audiovisual materials, allowing the study to capture learners' actual learning behaviours as opposed to those that have been shaped by an experimentally designed treatment.

The design is cross-sectional in nature whereby the data were collected at one point in time in examining patterns of association between the study variables. This approach is appropriate for exploratory research that aims to identify whether a meaningful relationship exists without introducing an intervention. As it is consistent with correlational research principles, the study does not attempt to establish causal effects and it focuses on whether variations in students' reported anime-watching perceptions and practices are associated with variations in their perceived speaking skill improvement. To strengthen the analytical depth of the correlational design, this study incorporated both correlational and regression-based analyses. While correlation analysis was used in examining the strength and direction of associations between variables, two simple linear regression analyses were employed separately to assess the statistical association between students' perceptions and perceived speaking skill improvement and between students' practices and perceived speaking skill improvement. The inclusion of regression analysis enables a more detailed examination of the data by estimating the extent to which perceptions and practices are statistically associated with perceived speaking skill improvement, thereby extending the analysis beyond basic associative comparisons. Since the study relies on self-reported questionnaire data which were collected within a single instrument, procedural steps were applied to support response quality and reduce common method concerns. These included clear item wording, anonymous participation and the separation of construct sections to reduce patterned responses. However, because the study relied on a single self-report questionnaire, common method variance cannot be fully ruled out.

2.2 Participants and Sampling

The participants consisted of 376 DTESL students from KPTM Kota Bharu, drawn from the overall DTESL population of 541 students, representing a response rate of approximately 69.5%. These participants were selected due to their involvement with the English language learning process and their role as future English teachers, making them a suitable group for examining perceived speaking skill improvement in an ESL learning environment. As the questionnaire focused on students' perceptions and practices of watching English-dubbed anime, only responses from students who had experience watching English-dubbed anime were included in the analysis.

This study employed purposive convenience sampling because the participants were specifically selected from the DTESL programme at KPTM Kota Bharu due to their relevance to the study's focus on perceived speaking skill improvement in an ESL teacher education context. Participation was voluntary and students from different semesters of the programme were included to support broader representation within the sample. The sample consisted of 270 female students (71.8%) and 106 male students (28.2%). Although probability sampling was not employed, the relatively large sample size enhances the stability of statistical estimates and supports more reliable correlational and regression analysis within the sampled population.

All ethical requirements for data collection were met and all participants were informed of the voluntary nature of their participation, the anonymity of their responses and their right to withdraw from the study at any time without negative consequences. Permission was obtained from the relevant department and informed consent was obtained electronically prior to participation. Although purposive convenience sampling was appropriate for this study context, it may still introduce sampling bias and limit representativeness as participation depends on accessibility and willingness to respond. This concern is relevant in student convenience samples where sampling bias may reduce external validity if certain learner characteristics are over-represented such as highly motivated students or those who engage more frequently with the topic. In addressing this limitation, the study focuses its interpretation on the sampled DTESL population and reports the demographic profile to allow readers to evaluate transferability.

2.3 Research Instrument

Data were collected using a 27-item questionnaire that included the demographic information. As shown in Table 1, the instrument was divided into four sections: A (Demographic Information) which included four items on age, faculty, year and gender. Section B (Students' Perceptions) contained eight items measuring students' perceptions of watching English-dubbed anime, Section C (Students' Practices) contained seven items measuring students' practices of watching English-dubbed anime and Section D (Perceived Speaking Skill Improvement) comprised eight items assessing students' self-perceived improvements in speaking skill. The operational definitions of the study constructs and their sources of adaptation are summarised in Table 2.

Table 1

Structure of the Questionnaire

Section	Description	Items
A	Demographic information	4
B	Students' perceptions of watching English-dubbed anime	8
C	Students' practices of watching English-dubbed anime	7
D	Perceived speaking skill improvement	8

Table 2

Operational Definitions of Study Constructs and Sources of Adaptation

Construct	Operational Definition	No. of Items	Sources of Adaptation
Students' perceptions of watching English-dubbed anime	Learners' views regarding the usefulness, relevance and motivational value of English-dubbed anime as a language-learning resource.	8	Ahmad & Yamat (2020); Pattemore et al. (2024)
Students' practices while watching English-dubbed anime	Learners' self-reported practices when interacting with English-dubbed anime, including repetition, imitation, focused attention and active use of spoken expressions.	7	Montero Perez (2022); Nasab & Rahimi (2023)
Perceived speaking skill improvement	Learners' self-evaluated improvement in speaking-related aspects such as fluency, pronunciation awareness, vocabulary use and confidence in spoken communication.	8	Pu & Chang (2023); Lee & Chiu (2023)

Table 3

Representative Questionnaire Items

Construct	Sample Item
Students' Perceptions	Watching English-dubbed anime helps to improve my speaking skill in English.
Students' Perceptions	English-dubbed anime motivates me to speak English more confidently.
Students' Perceptions	Watching English-dubbed anime increases my interest in learning to speak English.
Students' Practices	I repeat English expressions while watching English-dubbed anime.
Students' Practices	I imitate the pronunciation of characters while watching English-dubbed anime.
Students' Practices	I pay attention to pronunciation and spoken expressions while watching English-dubbed anime.
Perceived Speaking Skill Improvement	Watching English-dubbed anime improves my pronunciation awareness.
Perceived Speaking Skill Improvement	Watching English-dubbed anime improves my confidence in speaking English.
Perceived Speaking Skill Improvement	Watching English-dubbed anime helps improve my fluency in speaking English.

The questionnaire items were developed based on established research in the areas of multimedia-supported language learning and technology use in language instruction with an emphasis on aligning item content with theoretically defined constructs. The items were subsequently adapted and modified from existing instruments to fit the context of English-dubbed anime and perceived speaking skill improvement. The conceptual frameworks and measurement approaches used in these studies served as the basis for developing the questionnaire items. All questionnaire items were measured using

a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Items in the perceptions section examined learners' views about the usefulness of English-dubbed anime as a language-learning resource while items in the practices section examined learners' observable practices including repeated viewing, dialogue imitation and focused attention to spoken forms, resulting from their interaction with the audiovisual content. The representative questionnaire items for each construct are presented in Table 3.

A Likert-type scale is appropriate for measuring attitudes, practices and self-evaluative perceptions in educational research as it enables consistent reporting across respondents and supports statistical summarisation of agreement patterns. To strengthen construct clarity, the perceptions and practices items were written to reflect observable practices such as repetition, imitation and attention to spoken forms while the perceived speaking skill improvement items were written to reflect self-evaluated outcomes aligned with the study definition. Prior to the pilot administration, the questionnaire underwent an internal review process in ensuring that items matched the intended construct, reflected the study objectives and were appropriate for the DTESL context. This step supported content validity and reduced ambiguity in interpretation during the pilot and main data collection.

2.4 Pilot Study and Reliability

A pilot study involving 34 DTESL students was conducted to evaluate the clarity of the study instrument and the internal consistency of the data collected. The reliability of the three measured constructs was evaluated through Cronbach's Alpha as shown in Table 4. The results indicate that the perceptions construct was reliable (α = .751), the practices construct was reliable (α = .783), whereas the perceived speaking skill improvement construct demonstrated high internal consistency (α = .842). Overall, the questionnaire demonstrated good internal consistency (α = .812). Based on the results, minor adjustments were made to improve the clarity prior to full-scale data collection.

Table 4

Reliability Analysis of the Study Instrument (Pilot Study, n = 34)

Construct	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha (α)
Perceptions	8	.751
Practices	7	.783
Perceived speaking skill improvement	8	.842

The pilot study helped to identify unclear or ambiguous item wording and confirmed that the questionnaire items were easily understood by respondents, thereby strengthening the instrument's clarity and internal consistency prior to its administration to the main sample. Cronbach's alpha was selected as it is widely applied in evaluating internal consistency for multi-item questionnaire constructs in educational and social science research (Cronbach, 1951). In addition to examining overall alpha values, item wording was reviewed based on pilot feedback in ensuring that all items were easily understood and conceptually aligned with the intended construct, thereby supporting instrument clarity and interpretability. This pilot process helped confirm feasibility in terms of time required, comprehension, completion flow and measurement consistency prior to the main survey administration.

2.5 Data Collection and Analysis

The participants completed the final questionnaire independently using their own mobile devices via Google Forms. The questionnaire link was distributed through WhatsApp and data collection took place over a period of 10 to 15 days. Upon completion, the participants' responses were automatically submitted to the researcher and prepared for analysis. The WhatsApp application was chosen as it is accessible and commonly used by higher education students, thus providing an easy method for distributing links to access the survey and allowing participants to complete the survey on their mobile devices. Additionally, anonymity was preserved by collecting no identifiable participant data and no personally identifiable information in survey responses.

Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were calculated using SPSS Version 27 in order to analyse and summarise the collected data. The relationships between students' perceptions and practices of watching English-dubbed anime and their perceived speaking skill improvement were also examined with a correlation analysis, Spearman's rho. In addition, two simple linear regression analyses were conducted separately to determine the extent to which students' English-dubbed anime perceptions and practices were statistically associated with variance in perceived improvement in English speaking skill. A p-value of less than .05 was considered statistically significant. Spearman's rho was selected as it is appropriate when assumptions of normality are not met and when variables are derived from Likert-type responses, whereas regression analysis was conducted under the assumption that the composite scale scores could be treated as approximately interval-level measurement. Regression analysis was used to estimate the extent to which variation in anime-watching perceptions and practices is associated with perceived speaking skill improvement. Together, the combined use of correlational and regression analysis allows for a more comprehensive examination of the patterns and magnitude of associations between students' practices and perceived speaking skill improvement within this informal learning context. While correlation analysis establishes the strength and direction of bivariate relationships, the inclusion

of simple linear regression provides an estimate of how much variance in perceived speaking skill improvement is associated with each study construct. This layered analytical approach enables a more nuanced interpretation of how learners' perceptions and practices are associated with perceived speaking skill improvement rather than relying on a single form of statistical association.

3. Results

3.1 Participant Demographics

A total of 376 students took part in this study and they were all DTESL students studying at Kolej Poly-Tech MARA (KPTM), Kota Bharu. As presented in Table 5, the largest age group of respondents was 19 years old (64.4%) followed by 18 years old (26.9%) and 20 years old (8.8%). The age of all the participants was 18 or older as they were enrolled in the BE101 (DTESL) programme. Regarding academic standing, all the participants in this study were either in Year 1 (40.2%) or Year 2 (59.8%) of their studies. The sample also consisted of a higher proportion of female students (71.8%) compared to male students (28.2%). These demographic characteristics provide contextual information for interpreting the statistical findings and indicate that the sample reflects a relatively homogeneous cohort in terms of programme enrolment and academic level.

Table 5

Demographic Profile of Participants (N = 376)

Factor	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	18 years	101	26.9
	19 years	242	64.4
	20 years	33	8.8
Faculty	BE101 (DTESL)	376	100.0
Year of Study	Year 1	151	40.2
	Year 2	225	59.8
Gender	Female	270	71.8
	Male	106	28.2

3.2 Descriptive Statistics of Study Constructs

Descriptive statistics were used to summarise students' perceptions and practices of watching English-dubbed anime and their perceived speaking skill improvement. Table 6 presents the mean scores, standard deviations and observed score ranges for each construct.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics of Study Constructs (N = 376)

Construct	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Students' perceptions of watching English-dubbed anime	3.56	0.44	1.60	4.40
Students' practices of watching English-dubbed anime	3.50	0.47	1.60	4.60
Perceived speaking skill improvement	3.56	0.44	1.60	4.40

Note. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

The mean values for all three constructs were above the midpoint of the five-point Likert scale, indicating generally positive perceptions and students' practices related to English-dubbed anime together with favourable perceived speaking skill improvement among the respondents. The relatively moderate standard deviations suggest a reasonable spread of responses, indicating sufficient variability to examine associations among the three constructs and reducing the likelihood that the results were substantially influenced by ceiling effects.

3.3 Normality Assessment

Normality was examined using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The results showed that the distributions of students' perceptions, students' practices and perceived speaking skill improvement were not normally distributed ($p < .001$). Therefore, Spearman's rho was used to analyse the relationships among the study variables. Despite the non-normal distributions, separate simple linear regression analyses were conducted on the composite scale scores as model-based estimates of association between students' perceptions and perceived speaking skill improvement as well as between students' practices and perceived speaking skill improvement. These analyses were interpreted as associative rather than

causal. These analytical procedures supported the use of regression analysis as an additional descriptive model for examining the relationships among the study variables.

3.4 Relationships Between Students' Perceptions, Practices and Perceived Speaking Skill Improvement

This section reports the strength and direction of the statistical association between students' perceptions and practices of watching English-dubbed anime and their perceived speaking skill improvement. Consistent with the cross-sectional correlational design, the results are interpreted as associative patterns reflecting naturally occurring variation in learners' perceptions and practices rather than evidence of causal effects. Spearman's rho correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between students' perceptions and perceived speaking skill improvement ($\rho = .41$, $p < .001$) and between students' practices and perceived speaking skill improvement ($\rho = .40$, $p < .001$). This finding indicates that higher levels of positive perceptions and greater involvement in students' practices such as repeated viewing, focused attention to spoken forms and imitation were associated with higher levels of perceived speaking skill improvement among the respondents.

To further explore the strength of the relationships between students' perceptions, students' practices and perceived speaking skill improvement, two separate simple linear regression analyses were carried out. The findings indicated that students' perceptions ($B = 0.47$, $\beta = .41$, $t = 8.77$, $p < .001$) and students' practices ($B = 0.42$, $\beta = .40$, $t = 8.38$, $p < .001$) were both significantly associated with perceived speaking skill improvement as shown in Table 8. The respective models explained approximately 17% of the variance for students' perceptions ($R^2 = .17$) and 16% for students' practices ($R^2 = .16$), reflecting a moderate level of statistical association. These results suggest that students' perceptions and practices are meaningfully associated with perceived speaking skill improvement, while other learner-related and contextual factors may also be associated with this outcome. The proportion of variance explained indicates that students' perceptions and practices represent partial associations with perceived speaking development, highlighting the multifactorial nature of language learning in informal environments.

Table 7

Representative Questionnaire Items and Descriptive Statistics (N = 376)

Construct	Sample Item	Mean	SD
Students' Perceptions	Watching English-dubbed anime helps improve my speaking skill in English.	3.44	0.91
Students' Perceptions	English-dubbed anime motivates me to speak English more confidently.	3.36	0.88
Students' Perceptions	Watching English-dubbed anime increases my interest in learning to speak English.	3.52	0.86
Students' Practices	I repeat English expressions while watching English-dubbed anime.	3.50	0.87
Students' Practices	I imitate the pronunciation of characters while watching English-dubbed anime.	3.47	0.85
Students' Practices	I pay attention to pronunciation and spoken expressions while watching English-dubbed anime.	3.54	0.84
Perceived Speaking Skill Improvement	Watching English-dubbed anime improves my pronunciation awareness.	3.51	0.83
Perceived Speaking Skill Improvement	Watching English-dubbed anime improves my confidence in speaking English.	3.55	0.82
Perceived Speaking Skill Improvement	Watching English-dubbed anime helps improve my fluency in speaking English.	3.53	0.84

Note. Representative questionnaire items and descriptive statistics are presented for illustrative purposes.

Table 8

Simple Linear Regression Results Examining Associations with Perceived Speaking Skill Improvement (N = 376)

Explanatory Variable	B	β	t	p	R^2
Students' perceptions	0.47	.41	8.77	< .001	.17
Students' practices	0.42	.40	8.38	< .001	.16

Note. B = unstandardised coefficient; β = standardised coefficient; R^2 = coefficient of determination.

Overall, the findings from both correlational and regression analysis provide converging statistical evidence that students' perceptions and practices of watching English-dubbed anime are associated with ESL students' perceived speaking skill improvement. These results suggest that both affective (perceptions) and behavioural (practices) dimensions related to audiovisual media are associated with perceived speaking development in ESL contexts. However,

due to the cross-sectional design and self-reported nature of the data, the findings should be interpreted as associative rather than causal.

The combined descriptive and inferential findings show that students' perceptions and practices represent two related but distinct forms of learner interaction rather than a single unified behaviour. When the mean scores for perceptions (M = 3.56, SD = 0.44) and practices (M = 3.50, SD = 0.47) are examined together with the correlation coefficients (ρ = .41 and .40) and regression values (β = .41 and .40), the results indicate that perceived speaking skill improvement varies according to how learners perceive and actively interact with English-dubbed anime through activities such as repeated viewing, imitation and focused attention to spoken forms. Furthermore, the variance explained by perceptions (R^2 = .17) and practices (R^2 = .16) suggests a meaningful yet partial contribution which is consistent with the complex nature of language learning where multiple factors shape speaking development. These findings imply that students' perceptions and practices may be associated with perceived speaking skill improvement rather than functioning as sole explanatory factors. From this perspective, students' practices may be associated with perceived speaking-related outcomes while students' perceptions may relate to learners' willingness to continue engaging with English-dubbed anime.

4. Discussion

Building on the significant associations reported in the Results section, the present findings indicate that the DTESL students who held positive perceptions of its usefulness and engaged more actively and intentionally with English-dubbed anime through specific practices tended to report higher levels of perceived improvement in their speaking skill. The finding aligns with previous research showing that learners' perceptions of learning from audiovisual input and practices vary by proficiency and viewing conditions (Pattemore et al., 2024). This pattern suggests that interaction with English-dubbed anime may function as a complementary rather than exclusive source of perceived speaking support through both learners' perceptions and practices. The finding is consistent with prior studies showing that speaking development in instructional contexts is influenced by multiple interacting factors including learners' perceptions, students' practices and how audiovisual input is integrated with speaking tasks and feedback (Nget et al., 2020; Pu & Chang, 2023). These findings provide empirical evidence that learners' perceptions and practices are meaningfully associated with perceived speaking development through informal and multimedia-based language exposure.

The correlations can be interpreted through the Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning (Mayer, 2020) which proposes that learning is enhanced when information is presented through both auditory and visual stimuli. In this study context, English-dubbed anime integrates spoken language with visual cues such as facial expression, gesture and situational context which may support learners' processing and comprehension of spoken English. From this perspective, repeated exposure to synchronised audiovisual input may be associated with learners' perceived awareness and retention of spoken language features through multimodal processing. Repeated engagement with such audiovisual input may be associated with learners' mental representations of the phonological patterns, intonation and lexical usage which in turn may be linked to higher levels of perceived fluency and confidence in speaking. This interpretation is supported by studies demonstrating that multimodal input can support learning by helping learners map language forms to meaning during multimodal phrase learning (Huang et al., 2022). At the same time, the observed association should be interpreted with caution. Given the correlational nature of the design, it is possible that students who are more motivated or more confident in spoken communication may also be more likely to report positive perceptions, engage more actively in anime-watching practices and perceive higher levels of speaking-related improvement. In this sense, anime-watching perceptions and practices may reflect broader self-regulated learning tendencies rather than functioning as a direct causal factor in speaking development. Accordingly, the correlational design is appropriate for capturing naturally occurring patterns of learners' practices and perceived development within informal learning contexts where experimental control is neither feasible nor ecologically valid.

The moderate association observed in learners' perceived speaking development may be attributed to the multiple factors associated with the development of speaking proficiency and the nature of informal language learning environments. Speaking proficiency may be associated with several interacting factors including instructional input and the availability of opportunities for spontaneous spoken interaction, both of which may influence learners' ability to develop their proficiency in speaking. In addition, learners' affective experiences, levels of motivation and individual characteristics are also likely to affect learners' ability to acquire spoken language skill. Within this context, a moderate association is theoretically expected and reflects an ecologically valid pattern rather than a methodological shortcoming. The findings therefore suggest that English-dubbed anime may function as one of several informal audiovisual resources associated with learners' perceived speaking development. Furthermore, the findings also suggest that speaking development is associated not merely with exposure to audiovisual materials but with how learners actively engage with them. Practices like replaying a scene or line multiple times, imitating what was said and consciously attending to spoken expressions, all may be associated with processing and perceived internalisation of phonological and pragmatic features of spoken English. The use of these practices reflects self-regulation behaviours associated with oracy-related development and willingness to communicate in multimedia-enhanced instructional contexts (Nasab & Rahimi, 2023).

Consistent with previous research, learners' practice experience over time has been associated with improvements in multiple dimensions of L2 pronunciation and fluency-related performance in classroom-linked contexts (Saito et al., 2019). Consistent with Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978), English-dubbed anime may function as a mediated audiovisual resource through which learners are exposed to socially situated spoken language, conversational routines

and interactional patterns. Through interaction with narrative-driven dialogue, conversational routines, pragmatic norms and interactional patterns, learners are exposed to socially situated language use that is often limited in traditional classroom contexts. Such interaction may provide opportunities for learners to notice and reuse linguistic forms encountered in English-dubbed anime and report applying them in authentic communicative situations, thereby potentially connecting new language forms to meaningful contextual experiences. Additionally, the lack of formal evaluation may allow students to be more experimental in how they use spoken language which may be associated with greater confidence and motivation to communicate. Recent studies have also found that multimedia-based instruction can be associated with enhanced vocabulary learning and retention (Alhazmi, 2024) which may be indirectly associated with learners' spoken language resources during oral communication. The associations identified represent perceived relationships based on learners' self-reported interaction and self-evaluated outcomes within a cross-sectional research design. From this perspective, perceived improvement serves as a relevant and contextually appropriate outcome measure for examining informal multimedia-based language learning where development is gradual and closely linked to learners' subjective experiences of audiovisual learning and confidence.

In summary, these findings indicate that English-dubbed anime is associated with self-perceived speaking development, primarily in relation to how the learner perceives and interacts with the material and not solely due to passive viewing. While positive attitudes toward the audiovisual materials may encourage continued viewing, the present findings indicate that both perceptions and practices are positively associated with perceived improvement in speaking skill. These findings demonstrate the importance of distinguishing between exposure and practice as two distinct forms of learner interaction, indicating that the educational benefit is derived from learners' interaction with informal media resources rather than from the type of media used.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study suggests that English-dubbed anime may be associated with DTESL students' perceived speaking skill improvement within informal audiovisual learning contexts. In addition to demonstrating that students are engaged in many types of learning activities when they watch English-dubbed anime, the results of the study also indicate that there is a significant association between students' participation in those learning activities and their perceived speaking skill improvement. In particular, repeated exposure to contextualised spoken language together with active processes such as imitation and focused attention to spoken expressions may be associated with students' perceptions of improved fluency, pronunciation awareness and speaking confidence. Due to its nature as a contextually rich and potentially low-pressure source of audiovisual input, English-dubbed anime may be considered an informal audiovisual resource that provides additional exposure to spoken English beyond formal instructional settings.

The primary contribution of this study to the existing literature lies in its emphasis on learners' perceptions and practices rather than passive exposure frequency in informal multimedia-based language learning contexts. By examining how DTESL students interact with English-dubbed anime through repeated viewing, imitation and selective attention to spoken language, the study illustrates how these practices may be associated with the perceived development of productive speaking skill. Focusing on learners' interaction with spoken English beyond the classroom provides a more detailed understanding of how audiovisual materials may create meaningful opportunities for speaking development through authentic spoken input. Despite these contributions, several limitations should be acknowledged. The study relied on learners' self-reported perceptions of speaking improvement which may not fully reflect actual speaking performance. The use of purposive convenience sampling within a single institutional context also limits the generalisability of the findings to broader ESL populations. The correlational and cross-sectional design of the study also restricts the ability to draw causal conclusions regarding the effects of anime-watching practices on learners' speaking development. Nevertheless, such designs are valuable for identifying meaningful patterns of associations that can inform future experimental or longitudinal investigations.

Overall, this study provides empirical evidence of a significant association between learners' perceptions, viewing practices and perceived speaking skill improvement among Diploma TESL students within a Malaysian private higher education context. However, the findings should be interpreted cautiously because the study relied on self-reported data collected from one institutional setting. Future studies could also explore how students' practices while watching English-dubbed anime can be systematically scaffolded within TESL programmes, adopt mixed-methods approaches or compare the effectiveness of different forms of audiovisual media across varying levels of ESL proficiency using controlled designs and collaborative research involving institutions with similar educational backgrounds. Such research would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how multimedia resources can be integrated into ESL instruction in relation to learners' perceived speaking development.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

CRediT Authorship Contribution Statement

Muhammad Ammar Azman: Conceptualisation; Methodology; Investigation; Data curation; Formal analysis; Writing – original draft

Abu Bakar Ibrahim: Conceptualisation; Validation; Supervision; Writing – review & editing

Availability of Data and Materials

Data supporting this study's findings are available on request from the corresponding author.

Generative Artificial Intelligence Declarations

The authors used ChatGPT and QuillBot solely to assist with language editing, grammar checking, and improving readability. The AI tools did not contribute to the study design, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of findings, or the generation of scientific content. All outputs generated by AI were carefully reviewed, verified, and edited by the authors, who take full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and originality of the manuscript.

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