

Enhancing Students' Speaking Skills through English Area Program at Islamic Boarding Schools

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ABSTRACT

The need for English language proficiency is becoming increasingly important in global communication, and its significance is becoming increasingly evident in the world of education. This study will examine students' perspectives and the benefits of implementing the English Area Program in enhancing speaking skills among students in Islamic boarding schools. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed, using observation, questionnaires, and documentation as data collection methods. The participants were students actively involved in the English Area Program at the Wali Songo Al-Adnani boarding school. We employed data analysis techniques such as data reduction, data presentation, data condensation, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that the majority of students held a positive perspective of the program, as it created a supportive English-speaking environment that encouraged them to actively use the language. The program effectively improved students' confidence, fluency, vocabulary mastery, and pronunciation. Moreover, the collaborative and interactive learning atmosphere significantly contributed to the development of their speaking competence. In conclusion, the English Area Program is an effective strategy for English language learning in boarding school settings, as it provides consistent and authentic opportunities for language use. These findings are expected to serve as a reference for educational institutions in designing similar programs to support students' speaking skill development.

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1. INTRODUCTION

English-speaking ability is one of the important skills that students must have in this era of globalization (Pham et al., 2022), and it cannot be denied that in the current era of globalization, the ability to speak English has become a very valuable asset (Haidar & Fang, 2019; Hamid, 2021). Speaking skills are also one of the main skills in communication because they allow someone to convey ideas, opinions, and feelings verbally (Ferdiyanto & Kholili, 2022). This skill is important for building social interactions and understanding the interlocutor in various contexts. In the context of

education, speaking ability not only functions as a means of communication but also as a support in the learning process in various fields (Kusumastuti & Utami, 2022). English, especially speaking skills, is the most widely spoken language in the world (Lu et al., 2023). Islam and Birchok (2024) also emphasize the importance of enhancing speaking abilities as a fundamental skill. Speaking skills are considered crucial for international students since they are not only a means to access knowledge but also to communicate successfully with other learners from diverse backgrounds (Phan, 2021; Zeng et al., 2023; Choi, 2024; Al-Jamili et al., 2024). Speaking is also a primary language skill that must be mastered in learning English to introduce the use of language in real communication (Islam, 2023). However, many students still have difficulty in developing their speaking skills, which is often caused by lack of practice, unsupportive learning environments, and lack of motivation.

Speaking skills are a crucial aspect of English language learning that educators and students must possess (Sudarmo, 2021; Adem & Berkessa, 2022). In addition, speaking skills are very important for the success of a career and can also improve a person's quality of life (Rao, 2019), and the ability to speak can be measured by the success of learning the language (Islam & Musdalifah, 2022). Therefore, educators and students must have good speaking skills. Educators and students who have good speaking skills can express things related to the teaching and learning process, be it ideas, thoughts, questions, or suggestions (Suban, 2021).

In Indonesian education, Islamic boarding schools are crucial, especially when it comes to character and talent development. Islamic boarding schools must enhance general skills, including English language fluency, in addition to religious instruction, claims Diana et al. (2021). In Islamic boarding schools, a lot of kids struggle with English communication. According to research Rahadian et al. (2022), the primary causes of pupils' poor speaking abilities are a lack of speaking practice and a supportive atmosphere.

The correct approach is necessary for effective learning in order to enhance students' speaking abilities. Project-based learning and communicative approaches can boost students' interest in speaking English, claims Maulana & Suparmadi (2024). An atmosphere where English is spoken frequently can help pupils become more comfortable speaking the language. Regular exposure to English tends to improve pupils' speaking abilities, according to research by Desmiyanti (2022).

An effort to establish an English-speaking environment in Islamic boarding schools is represented by the English Area program. Supriyadi (2023) claims that the goal of this program is to create an engaging environment where students can actively practice speaking English. Furthermore, he discovered that the English Area curriculum greatly enhanced the speaking abilities of the students. According to this study, speaking abilities improved more quickly for students who participated in the English Area program than for those who only received traditional classroom English education. This study found that students can improve their speaking accuracy and fluency in an immersive setting where English is regularly used in daily interactions. To enhance students' speaking abilities, Islamic boarding schools must adopt the English Area

program. [Fidriani et al. \(2021\)](#) claim that this curriculum also develops students' character to be more receptive to the outside world while emphasizing language proficiency.

Including interactive activities is one of the English Area Program's primary tactics. Debates, role-plays, and group discussions that encourage talks in the actual world are a few examples of these activities. These exercises make learning more engaging, encouraging students to communicate their ideas and opinions in English. In addition to enhancing language proficiency, the dynamic character of these exchanges fosters critical thinking and teamwork—two qualities that are crucial in the linked world of today ([Setiawan, 2020](#)). This program's evaluation techniques also emphasize speaking abilities. Traditional tests, which prioritize reading and writing, often give way to oral presentations and conversation assessments. In addition to reflecting the program's objectives, this assessment modification provides students with specific goals to strive for. Students can pinpoint areas for growth and monitor their development over time with regular feedback on their speaking abilities ([Baecher et al., 2012](#)).

Additionally, the program helps pupils develop a growth attitude. Emphasizing that language acquisition is a gradual process encourages students to encounter difficulties and pursue progress. This shift in perspective encourages resilience, enabling pupils to overcome any obstacles they may encounter when learning to speak English. They are more motivated to keep improving their talents when they celebrate little victories along the road ([Pham, 2021](#)). The assistance of teachers who are proficient in English is crucial to the program's success. According to a study by [Rahmawati & Mege \(2023\)](#), teacher training is necessary to guarantee that they are using the best strategy to assist students. To gauge the program's effectiveness, pupils' speaking abilities must be evaluated on a regular basis. [Jagarlamudi et al. \(2024\)](#) asserts that accurate measurement can aid in the development of more effective learning systems.

The intent of this study is to assess how well the English Area program works to help students at Islamic boarding schools become more proficient speakers. It is intended that through analysis and data collection, verifiable information on the program's effect on students' speaking abilities and the elements that contribute to its success will be discovered ([NH et al., 2023](#)). This survey will also investigate how pupils feel about the English Area curriculum. Getting input from people who are directly involved will help us better understand the advantages and difficulties of putting this approach into practice in an Islamic boarding school setting ([Nugroho et al., 2023](#)).

The English Area Program significantly enhances pupils' speaking abilities in Islamic boarding schools ([Juhaeni et al., 2021](#)). Students are given the resources they need to speak successfully in English through interactive exercises, cultural immersion, encouraging instruction, and technological integration. The program equips children to succeed academically and to live in a world that is becoming more interconnected as they start their language learning journey. The English Area curriculum is intended to help Islamic boarding school students become more proficient speakers and prepare them for a world that is becoming more interconnected by the day. This initiative has the potential to serve as a model for the growth of English language instruction in other

educational establishments if it receives the proper backing. Most previous studies have only been conducted in several schools or Islamic boarding schools with similar characteristics, such as Islamic boarding schools that focus on religious and general education in a balanced manner. However, there is little research that discusses how the English Area program can be implemented in Islamic boarding schools with very different characteristics, such as Islamic boarding schools that focus more on religious education and less time for English subjects. This study focuses on the Wali Songo Al-Adnani Islamic Boarding School Foundation, located in Probolinggo, which is needed to explore how this program can be adapted to suit the special needs of Islamic boarding schools that have diverse educational patterns.

2. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative research method. This research method emphasizes analysis on the subject, process, and meaning of a study, based on supporting theories (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). One approach in the qualitative research method is descriptive, which will be used in this study to determine if the English Area Program can improve students' speaking skills in Islamic boarding schools. Descriptive research is research that describes a phenomenon in detail with accurate data (Kim et al., 2017). Thereby, it can be concluded that qualitative research contains a description of a phenomenon. This research was conducted at the Wali Songo Al-Adnani Islamic Boarding School Foundation, especially with several students who participated in the English Area program. The subject of this research was the Islamic boarding school. This research aims to enhance students' speaking abilities by implementing the English Area program at the Islamic boarding school. The students involved in data collection were students who participated in the English Area Program at the Islamic boarding school—as many as eight participants. The following presents a process model for achieving speaking skills in Figure 1.

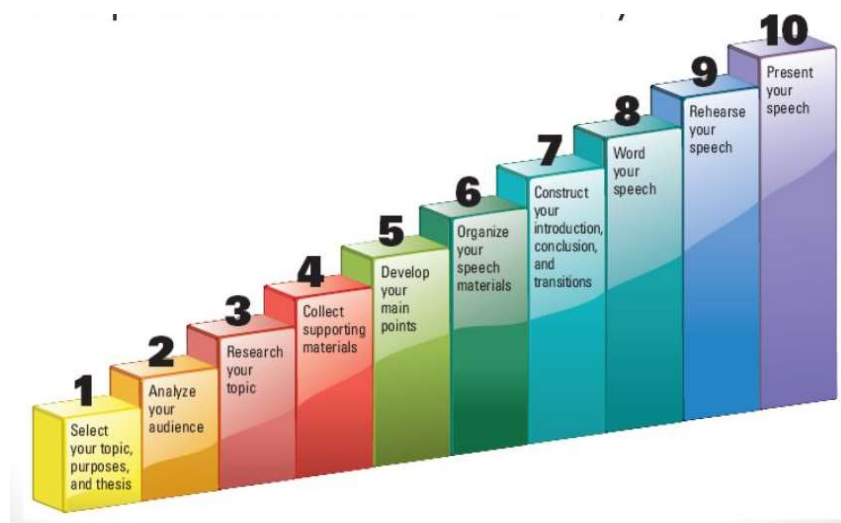


Figure 1. Model for Achieving Speaking Skills

The data collection techniques used were listening, taking notes, and recording the main topics. The researcher also conducted observations, which were continued with questionnaires to deepen the data needed. The questionnaire was conducted by involving students and informants directly. Additionally, the researcher employed data analysis techniques such as data reduction, data presentation, data condensation, and conclusion drawing. The data reduction section is carried out by grouping and deleting data that is not in accordance with the research. The data presentation section is carried out to present data in one matrix after grouping in the previous stage. The conclusion section aims to ensure that the produced data is precise, accurate, and objective.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Based on the results from observations and questionnaires, it is clear that the English Area program greatly helps improve students' speaking skills. An environment that promotes using English encourages students to feel more motivated, confident, and brave when speaking in public. We conducted observations over several days at the Wali Songo Al-Adnani Islamic boarding school, home to the English Area Program. These observations showed that students regularly use English in their daily conversations, especially in areas set up for speaking English.

Routine activities include casual chats between students, practicing speaking in front of friends, and using English for daily tasks like giving reports and greeting teachers. While some students still appear less confident and sometimes mix in Indonesian, overall, they seem eager and motivated to speak English. The Islamic boarding school environment supports this program through supervision from the instructor. Based on the results of this brief observation, it can be concluded that the English Area Program helps create a learning atmosphere that supports the improvement of students' speaking skills practically and naturally. The following are the results of the questionnaire that researchers have collected in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondents to the English Area Program at Islamic Boarding Schools

| No | Aspects Studied | Respondents |
|----|---|---|
| 1. | The Influence of the English Area Program in Encouraging the Use of English | 7 out of 8 respondents (87.5%) use English more often in daily communication after participating in the program. Only 1 respondent (12.5%) has not actively used English. |
| 2. | Frequency of English Use Outside the Classroom | 50% of respondents use English every day, 37.5% several times a week, and 12.5% rarely use it. The program supports the use of English despite challenges. |
| 3. | Confidence Level When Speaking English | 75% of respondents felt more confident speaking English after participating in the program, while 12.5% were still less confident. |

| No | Aspects Studied | Respondents |
|-----|---|---|
| 4. | Satisfaction with the Material Delivered | 37.5% of respondents were very satisfied, 37.5% were satisfied. Only 12.5% were less satisfied because of difficulty in understanding the material. |
| 5. | Effectiveness of Learning Methods in Speaking Ability | 50% of respondents considered the learning method very effective, while the other 50% felt the method was effective in improving English speaking skills. |
| 6. | Readiness to Speak with Native Speakers for Skill Development | 75% of respondents were ready to speak with native speakers, 25% felt unprepared and needed additional support. |
| 7. | Impact of the Program on Improving Speaking Ability | All respondents agreed that the program was effective in improving English speaking skills, as well as increasing frequency of use and confidence. |
| 8. | The Impact of the Program on the Ability to Communicate with Foreigners | 62.5% of respondents agreed that this program had a positive influence, 37.5% felt that this program helped develop their English language skills. |
| 9. | Improved Speaking Skills Since Joining the Program | 87.5% of respondents stated that their speaking skills had improved significantly. |
| 10. | General Assessment of the Quality of the English Area Program | All respondents gave positive reviews with the hope that the program will continue to grow and reach more individuals. |

The data obtained from Google Forms showed that the English Area program has a significant positive impact on improving respondents' English skills, both inside and outside the classroom. Most respondents (87.5%) reported that they used English more often in everyday communication after participating in the program, reflecting a positive change in language habits. Although there was one respondent (12.5%) who still rarely used it, the majority of participants began to develop used to communicating in English, albeit with varying frequencies. This evidence shows that the program has succeeded in creating an environment that supports the active use of English, increasing motivation and language skills, and forming positive habits.

In addition, the program also succeeded in increasing respondents' confidence in speaking English. As many as 75% of respondents felt more confident after participating in the program, although there was one respondent who still lacked confidence and another who had not used English in everyday life. The program has proven effective in instilling positive habits that encourage courage to speak.

In terms of material, the majority of respondents were satisfied. Three respondents (37.5%) were very satisfied, and three others (37.5%) were satisfied because the material presented was clear, easy to understand, and applicable. Only one respondent felt less satisfied, possibly due to difficulty in understanding the material. Overall, the program material supports the learning process well, helping to improve skills and confidence in using English. In terms of learning methods, 75% of respondents

considered the methods applied very effective because they were easy to understand and could be directly applied in practice. Two other respondents also felt that the method was effective in improving their speaking skills. This evidence shows that the learning methods used are in accordance with the needs of respondents and are able to encourage the development of English-speaking skills for everyday communication purposes.

Most respondents (75%) also stated that they were ready to speak with native speakers to develop their English skills, although another 25% felt unprepared and needed further support. The program has proven effective in equipping respondents to interact with non-native speakers so that they feel more prepared to communicate on various occasions.

Overall, the English Area program has a positive effect on improving respondents' English-speaking ability, frequency of use, and self-confidence. The program also helps them to communicate with native speakers and improve their English skills, both in daily interactions and when meeting foreigners. Thus, it can be concluded that the program is very effective in improving respondents' English-speaking skills.

Discussion

The study's findings demonstrated that the English Area program significantly enhanced the English-speaking abilities of students attending Islamic boarding schools. The frequency of using English, self-confidence, and preparedness to communicate with non-native speakers all increased for most respondents. This result is consistent with earlier research that highlights the value of establishing a foreign language environment as a successful tactic for language proficiency development ([Darmi & Albion, 2017](#)).

The fact that 87.5% of respondents reported using English more frequently suggests that the program's language-rich environment has been successful in helping participants develop new English usage habits. And also be able to communicate in English in everyday activities and professional settings ([Islam, 2024](#)). The results of [Hanzawa \(2024\)](#), who claimed that regular exposure to a foreign language in natural settings speeds up the development of communicative ability, lend credence to this.

In addition, the increase in speaking confidence experienced by 75% of respondents shows that this program provides materials or practices and creates a safe space to practice speaking. As in the research of [Islam \(2023\)](#), students are not afraid to speak English even though their vocabulary is still minimal. A supportive environment like this is crucial in language learning, as explained by [Mercer \(2018\)](#), who emphasized that self-confidence is an important psychological factor in developing speaking skills.

The high level of satisfaction (75% were satisfied or very satisfied) with the learning techniques and materials suggests that the program's approach is meeting the needs of the participants. Learner-centered learning is aided by communicative techniques and applicable resources. A communicative method focused on actual practice and real-world situations is highly successful in enhancing speaking abilities, claims [Masuram and Sripada \(2020\)](#).

The finding that 75% of respondents felt ready to speak with native speakers indicates an increase in practical and psychological readiness to use English in a wider

context. This shows that the program not only provides linguistic preparation but also forms mental and cultural readiness, as stated by Lim and Griffith (2016); Portugal (2021) about the importance of intercultural communicative competence in foreign language learning.

Overall, these findings confirm that the English Area program is an effective approach in improving the speaking skills of students in Islamic boarding schools. This program not only focuses on linguistic aspects but also pays attention to the affective and social dimensions in language learning, in line with the sociocultural theory view by Vygotsky, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction in language development (Newman, 2018).

4. CONCLUSION

The research results obtained allow us to conclude that the English Area Program in Islamic boarding schools provides a significant contribution to improving students' English-speaking skills. First, in terms of student perception, the majority of participants felt that this program was effective in helping them be more confident and accustomed to using English in their daily lives in the Islamic boarding school environment. A supportive environment and consistent use of English in daily communication make students more naturally trained in speaking it. Second, in terms of program benefits, English Area provides various advantages, such as increased fluency, vocabulary expansion, improved pronunciation, and increased student confidence in public speaking. Activities such as discussions, free conversations, presentations, and interactions between friends provide students with real opportunities to practice English in social and academic contexts. Although there are still some challenges, such as shyness or lack of courage at the beginning, overall this program has succeeded in creating an immersive and communicative learning environment, which greatly supports the development of students' speaking skills. Thus, the English Area Program has proven to be an effective strategy that can be applied in the context of Islamic boarding school education to improve students' English-speaking skills.

For the future, it is suggested that this program be equipped with intensive guidance and more varied activities so that the results are more optimal and evenly distributed across all students.

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