

Empowering Students' Speaking Proficiency through a Two-Day English Camp: A Community Service Program in Rural Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of the English Camp program on enhancing English-speaking proficiency at SMA Negeri 11 Luwu, Indonesia. Conducted over two days, the program focused on interactive learning through communicative tasks such as group discussions, role-playing, and language games. A total of 44 students participated, and their speaking abilities were assessed using pretest and posttest evaluations. The results showed significant improvement in fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, and confidence. Group 1 and Group 5 exhibited the highest increases in scores, with fluency and confidence showing the greatest gains. The study found that the program was especially effective for lower-proficiency learners, while higher-level learners showed minimal progress due to the ceiling effect. Qualitative data from teacher and student interviews indicated that the camp created a positive and engaging learning environment that encouraged students to use English naturally and confidently. The findings support the efficacy of short-term, immersive programs in improving EFL learners' speaking skills and highlight the importance of experiential and collaborative learning in language acquisition.

Keywords: Communicative Tasks; EFL Learners; English Camp; Fluency; Speaking Proficiency.

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1. Introduction

Mastering English speaking skills is a vital competency for students to navigate global challenges in the 21st century (Richards, 2021). Speaking ability is widely recognized as a key component of communicative competence in both educational and professional contexts (Porter & Castillo, 2023). However, at SMA Negeri 11 Luwu, many students still face difficulties in speaking English fluently and confidently, which reflects common challenges among Indonesian EFL learners such as linguistic anxiety and lack of exposure to authentic speaking situations (Elisathusilawani, 2023; Widodo, 2021). These difficulties stem from limited opportunities for practice and a lack of immersive English-speaking environments, while traditional classroom approaches often emphasize theory rather than communication (Ilmudinuloh et al., 2022). Consequently, students have low motivation to use English outside the classroom and few opportunities to develop real-life speaking competence (Wu, 2023).

To address these limitations, this study examines the implementation of an English Camp program developed as part of a community service initiative. The program was designed to provide a fun, interactive, and immersive learning environment that encourages students to actively use English in real-life communication. As a non-formal learning strategy, English Camp integrates experiential learning, peer interaction, and contextual

communication, allowing students to experience meaningful and enjoyable language learning (Abulhassan & Hamid, 2021; Yusup & Munawaroh, 2023). Previous studies have shown that this approach not only improves linguistic competence but also fosters essential 21st-century skills such as collaboration, creativity, and problem-solving (At Thahira et al., 2023; Ready & Indrayani, 2021). When implemented as part of community service, English Camp can also strengthen the school's English literacy culture and support broader educational development (Bachore, 2022; Kapoyannis, 2021).

Existing evidence confirms that innovative learning initiatives can effectively enhance students' speaking abilities. For instance, Iksan, Husnaini, and Masruddin (2022) reported that weekly English programs based on fun learning increased speaking confidence among Islamic boarding school students. Likewise, Thayyib et al. (2023) found that English training integrated into tourism contexts could empower rural communities by aligning language learning with local needs. While these studies have demonstrated positive outcomes across diverse contexts, there remains a noticeable gap in understanding how English Camps function when implemented as a structured community service activity in rural high school settings.

Despite these encouraging findings, research on English Camps as a community service-based intervention for rural senior high school students in Indonesia remains limited. Most studies have focused on pesantren or general community training, leaving little understanding of how such programs can address the speaking challenges faced by rural high school learners. In response to this need, the English Education Study Program of UIN Palopo, in collaboration with SMA Negeri 11 Luwu, organized a two-day English Camp as a structured intervention to enhance students' speaking proficiency, motivation, and English literacy culture within the school. This study adopts a one-group pretest-posttest design using a five-aspect speaking rubric to evaluate progress descriptively and interpret the outcomes through the lens of experiential learning and willingness to communicate theories.

Aligned with these aims, the study focuses on describing the implementation process of the English Camp, evaluating improvements in students' speaking performance and motivation after the program, and identifying how the initiative contributes to fostering an English-speaking culture within the school environment.

2. Method

This study employed a descriptive mixed-method approach using a one-group pretest-posttest design to examine how the English Camp program, implemented as part of a community service initiative, contributed to improving students' speaking proficiency at SMA Negeri 11 Luwu, a rural public senior high school in South Sulawesi. The English Camp was conducted over two consecutive days, designed to provide intensive exposure within a manageable timeframe for rural students while aligning with the school's academic schedule. A total of 44 students participated in the program. To encourage peer interaction and collaborative learning, participants were divided into five heterogeneous groups based on their class level and initial speaking proficiency.

Data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, documentation, and questionnaires that explored students' motivation and perceptions of the program's effectiveness. In addition, all participants completed a pretest and posttest to measure changes in speaking performance. The speaking test required each student to deliver a short individual speech on familiar topics such as self-introduction or daily routines. Performances were assessed using a five-criteria speaking rubric consisting of fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, accuracy or grammar, and confidence or

comprehensibility. Each criterion was rated on a five-point scale (1-5) with a maximum total score of 25 points per student. The rubric was adapted from established EFL speaking assessment guidelines and reviewed by two expert raters to ensure content validity and inter-rater reliability.

Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic and content analysis to identify emerging patterns related to students' engagement, motivation, and perceived improvement. Quantitative data from the pretest and posttest were analyzed using descriptive statistics, focusing on mean score increases and percentage changes. To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, methodological triangulation, peer debriefing, and consistency checks were applied throughout the analysis.

This methodological framework provided a comprehensive understanding of how the two-day English Camp, grounded in experiential and collaborative learning principles, supported the improvement of students' speaking skills, strengthened their motivation, and fostered an English literacy culture within the rural high school context.

3. Result

The English Camp program at SMA Negeri 11 Luwu was implemented as a part of a community service initiative aimed at enhancing students' English-speaking proficiency. The two-day program combined indoor and outdoor learning activities designed to promote experiential and collaborative learning. It introduced an interactive model that emphasized direct speaking practice, vocabulary enrichment, and grammar accuracy through role-plays, group discussions, and language games.

Figure 1 shows the opening session of the English Camp, attended by teachers, facilitators, and 44 participating students. The event began with an official opening ceremony and a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signing between the university and the school.



Figure 1. Opening session of the English Camp at SMA Negeri 11 Luwu.

The educational sessions covered three major topics: *Self-Introduction and My Family*, *Daily Routines*, and *Asking and Giving Directions*. Each session was led by trained facilitators who encouraged active communication in English. The first day concluded with a talent show that allowed students to perform short English presentations and creative performances to build their confidence.



Figure 2. Talent show session, where students presented performances to strengthen confidence and fluency in English speaking.

The second day began with morning exercise to refresh participants, followed by a “Post to Post” activity in which students completed English tasks at several learning stations. This format required teamwork and spontaneous speaking practice in real-life contexts, helping students apply vocabulary and expressions they had learned.



Figure 3. Outdoor learning activities during the English Camp, where students practiced English through interactive games and collaborative tasks.

The camp concluded with a closing ceremony and award presentation for the best participants, recognizing effort, progress, and enthusiasm.



Figure 4. Closing session and award presentation to outstanding English Camp participants.

3.1 Quantitative Results

Based on standardized pretest and posttest assessments (0–25 scale), the overall mean score increased from 14.5 to 19.34, representing a 33.3 percent improvement. This result demonstrates that the short-term, immersive program effectively improved participants' speaking proficiency.

Table 1. Students' Speaking Scores Before and After the English Camp (Standardized 0–25 Scale)

Group	Average Pretest	Average Posttest	Mean Increase	Percentage Gain (%)
Group 1	6.9	11.1	4.2	60.1
Group 2	13.8	18.8	5.0	36.1
Group 3	8.2	11.2	3.0	36.0
Group 4	11.4	11.6	0.2	<1
Group 5	8.5	13.5	5.0	58.8

Groups 1 and 5 achieved the highest improvement rates, indicating that the camp's interactive and communicative methods were particularly effective for lower-proficiency students. Similar findings were observed by Lo, Wen, and Lin (2021) in a Taiwanese EFL context, where students with lower English proficiency benefited more from interactive and performative learning activities, showing marked improvements in fluency and confidence. Group 4, which started with higher pretest scores, showed limited progress, suggesting the need for differentiated materials for advanced learners. This observation aligns with McKoy and Merry (2022), who emphasized that advanced learners require differentiated and flexible tasks to maintain motivation and sustain language development.

Further analysis of five aspects of speaking, namely fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and confidence, showed consistent improvement. As presented in Table 2, confidence achieved the greatest increase (2.7 points), followed by vocabulary (2.4 points) and fluency (2.1 points).

Table 2. Average Improvement per Aspect of Speaking Skills

Aspect	Average Gain (Points)	Remarks
Fluency	2.1	More spontaneous speech with fewer pauses
Pronunciation	1.8	Clearer articulation and improved intonation
Vocabulary	2.4	Wider range of lexical choices in daily expressions
Grammar	1.5	Moderate improvement: errors in complex structures persist
Confidence	2.7	Strongest growth; reduced anxiety and greater participation

The data indicate that the program most effectively enhanced communicative competence and learner confidence. Grammar accuracy improved modestly, showing that students still needed more structured practice.

32 Qualitative Insights

Observational notes and interviews supported the quantitative results. Teachers and facilitators observed that students became more confident and engaged in English communication. Participants stated that learning through games and collaborative activities made English easier and more enjoyable. The overall atmosphere was supportive and motivating, aligning with the principles of experiential learning and willingness to communicate in second-language acquisition.

These findings collectively suggest that the English Camp successfully improved students' speaking skills, confidence, and motivation through interactive and collaborative learning experiences. The next section discusses these results in relation to previous studies and relevant theoretical perspectives.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study show that the English Camp program significantly improved students' English-speaking proficiency, as reflected in the posttest results across almost all groups. The most notable gains were recorded in Groups 1 and 5, which achieved increases of 60.1 percent and 58.8 percent respectively. In contrast, Group 4 showed only a slight change due to the ceiling effect, where participants had already reached a relatively high level of proficiency before the intervention. These results suggest that the two-day English Camp effectively enhanced students' fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and confidence, although grammatical accuracy still requires more attention in future programs. The improvement in fluency can be attributed to the communicative nature of the camp activities, which provided opportunities for meaning-focused interaction and real-time language use. This finding is consistent with the views of Nation (2021), Skehan (2020), and Tavakoli and Hunter (2018), who highlight that communicative tasks and task-based learning environments play a crucial role in promoting fluency development among EFL learners.

In addition to improvements in fluency and other linguistic aspects, the overall progress observed among participants aligns with previous research on experiential and collaborative learning. Qizi (2023) emphasized that mastery of speaking skills is essential for preparing students to meet global communication demands, while Leyaley (2023) highlighted that oral proficiency plays a key role in expanding educational and career opportunities. The present findings also support Desmiyanti (2022), who reported that interactive and contextual learning strategies increase students' enthusiasm and self-confidence in speaking. Collectively, these studies confirm the importance of experiential and collaborative learning,

which were the main instructional foundations of the English Camp implemented at SMA Negeri 11 Luwu.

Qualitative data from interviews further support the quantitative outcomes. Teachers mentioned that the English Camp created a positive, engaging, and creative learning atmosphere that encouraged students to use English more naturally. One English teacher noted that the program successfully motivated students to learn English through enjoyable and innovative activities, while also suggesting that future camps should be conducted with more extensive preparation to maximize their benefits. This perception indicates that the program was not only effective in improving speaking performance but also in building a supportive learning culture within the school.

Students' reflections also reinforce these findings. They expressed that the English Camp was enjoyable and helped them practice English more freely without the pressure commonly found in classroom settings. Several participants stated that activities such as games, discussions, and performances improved their confidence, cooperation, and expressiveness. These responses show that the English Camp enhanced both cognitive aspects, such as fluency and vocabulary, and affective aspects, such as confidence, motivation, and teamwork. This outcome aligns with the concept of willingness to communicate (WTC) in second language acquisition, which emphasizes that positive emotions and self-confidence are key factors that increase students' readiness to use the target language.

The results of this study are consistent with other English Camp implementations in Asian EFL contexts. Previous research found that short-term intensive programs can lead to meaningful gains in fluency and confidence through experiential and collaborative approaches. Similarly, the English Camp at SMA Negeri 11 Luwu provided a safe and supportive environment that encouraged active participation and reduced students' fear of making mistakes. This setting was particularly valuable for rural learners, who often have limited opportunities to engage in authentic English communication.

Beyond immediate learning outcomes, the English Camp contributed to strengthening the English literacy culture within the school community. By integrating extracurricular English activities, the program expanded students' opportunities for authentic communication beyond the classroom. This initiative aligns with the view of Husnaini et al. (2024), who argue that community-based educational activities represent a long-term investment in developing human resources and improving social progress. Through consistent exposure to English and community involvement, the program fostered a more sustainable language learning environment while strengthening the partnership between the university and the school.

In conclusion, the discussion confirms that the English Camp program effectively combined academic and affective development. It improved measurable speaking skills such as fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary, while also fostering motivation, confidence, and collaboration among students. The collaboration between the English Education Study Program of UIN Palopo and SMA Negeri 11 Luwu illustrates how structured and context-based community service programs can promote sustainable improvements in English literacy culture, particularly in rural educational settings.

5. Conclusion

The implementation of the English Camp program at SMA Negeri 11 Luwu as part of a community service initiative proved effective in improving students' English-speaking proficiency. The program successfully increased participants' fluency, pronunciation,

vocabulary, and confidence, as indicated by the significant rise in posttest scores. Students also demonstrated stronger motivation and a more positive attitude toward learning English after participating in the camp. The interactive and experiential learning activities, such as group discussions, games, and performances, created an enjoyable and supportive environment that encouraged students to use English more naturally in real-life situations.

The qualitative feedback from teachers and students further confirmed the program's success in fostering a collaborative and motivating learning atmosphere. The combination of academic improvement and affective development reflects the effectiveness of short-term, intensive programs when grounded in experiential learning and supported by active facilitation. Moreover, the initiative contributed to the growth of an English literacy culture within the school, strengthening the partnership between the English Education Study Program of UIN Palopo and the local educational community.

To ensure sustainability, future English Camp activities should be integrated into the school's annual programs and involve continuous mentoring from university partners. It is also recommended that the program be extended in duration and adapted with differentiated materials for learners at varying proficiency levels. Such improvements will enable the English Camp model to serve as a replicable and scalable framework for enhancing speaking proficiency and motivation among rural high school students, while simultaneously promoting the long-term goal of developing English literacy and communicative competence in Indonesian schools.

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