

## Language Environment Programs and Students' Speaking Performance: A Study at One Islamic Boarding School

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### Abstract

This study aimed to see the effect of language environment programs which has been common in Islamic boarding school in Jambi, on students speaking performance. Through an ex post facto research design, the researchers would like to find out whether there is a significant difference between the students' speaking performance of those who involve in language environment programs and that of those who do not involve in the programs. Thirty-second graders of As' ad Senior High Islamic Boarding School were selected purposively as the samples of the study. The results of the independent-sample t-test showed that there was a significant difference in the results of speaking performance for the students who were involved in language environment programs ( $M= 15.4$ ,  $SD = 1.08891$ ), and for those who did not involve in language environment programs ( $M= 9.3$ ,  $SD= 1.04881$ ;  $p=0.000$ ). Besides, the students involved in the programs are considered better in terms of fluency than the students who do not involve in the programs.

**Keywords:** *Language Environment, Programs, Speaking Performance*

### 1. Introduction

Among listening, speaking, reading and writing, speaking is one of the most important English skills that have to be mastered by students in learning English. It is the key to success in learning English. According to Richards (2008) the mastery of speaking skill in English is a priority for many second language or foreign-language learners. Speaking is one of the aspects in language skills works as a means of communication in delivering something to someone else. Therefore, it determines whether the students are success in learning English or not (Amalia & Apriani, 2016). If the students do not succeed in speaking, this is means they also do not succeed in learning English.

In fact, in order to be able to speak in English, a student should activate certain language elements. Speaking components must be

properly understood in order for students' ability on the speaking skill to be accurately measured. Even more fundamental to an effective speech is one's knowledge, self-confidence and delivery method (Masbiran & Fauzi, 2017). Besides, Syakur (1999) stated Speak ability is a complex skill, as it involves at least four components to speak English. In order to communicate effectively, students need to know how to structure their words based on their role. Second, students must be able to express themselves clearly in order to do so. Students are unable to communicate their thoughts in both written and spoken form if they lack enough vocabulary. Pronunciation is also important for them to be able to speak clearly. Rather, it is concerned with phonology, the study of how sounds change and pattern in different languages. Fourth, many language students strive to become fluent speakers. Fluency and accuracy in speech are two other ways to describe it. Ultimately, students must be able to communicate successfully and appropriately in

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both a social and academic context with the language they learn. As a result, language learners are tasked with spending more time practicing speaking and using their language verbally in order to develop their own ideas.

Therefore, to be success in making the students to speak, a teacher must provide activities where students apply the language elements they have learned. According to Harmer (1998, p. 4) there are two general rules for giving instructions: they must be kept as simple as possible, and they must be logical. It is also important for teachers to check that the students have understood what they are being asked to do. Marriam, Azziem & Dogar (2011) stated the effective instructors teach students by using speaking strategies, they are using minimal responses, recognizing scripts, and using language to talk about language which they can use to help themselves expand their knowledge of the language and their confidence in using it. These instructors' help students learn to speak so that the students can use speaking to learn. TESS - India Education (2016) recommended some activities which able to be used by English teachers to develop students' confidence when speaking English and make speaking English easier for them. First, using teachers' own knowledge of students to choose a topic that they will find interesting. Second, giving students the language they need to talk about that topic. Last, monitoring and giving some feedbacks.

Providing language environment programs where the students get chance and space to practice more speaking would be good idea to apply. Wang (2009) argues that language environment setting is great practical importance for educators of various kinds. It is very important for teacher to create a real communicative environment and offer students enough effective linguistic environmental to exposure to the foreign language and speak in foreign language. Shodiq (2013) examined that

there are some trainings in language environment programs to increase students' speaking skill. The programs are outside learning activities in the class through giving students some vocabularies, conversation, and public speaking as factors to support to help students in informal learning. Moreover, the environmental influences on our language development are enormous. He added that our language skills will be success well when we make it a language in everyday life. Most of us can not develop language, because we do not try to practice what we have, plus an environment that does not support us to speak. Wood (2016) stated that cognitive psychologists already knew that "the degree of complexity in children's language was directly related to that of their parents," but had not yet determined whether this was due to a genetic advantage or because of the child's environment. There are very limited studies that examined the implementation of language environment program although the program has been available for many years in most Islamic Boarding Schools.

As'ad Islamic boarding school in Jambi has also considered the important of language exposure to the students. The school has already applied a language environment programs since 1995. There are some activities in language programs, such as morning vocabulary in which the students should memorize some vocabularies that are given by language managers every day after Subuh praying before they go to the formal school. Another activity is Sunday morning conversation. The students are trained to make some sentences in pair every Sunday morning and they rememorize previous vocabularies. Besides, speech training is to improve each of the students' confidence to be able to speak language well in public. Moreover, awards will be given to the students who speak well and good in practicing in their daily activities.

However, the students are still reluctant to speak in English. They feel so afraid of making mistake and feel shy to speak. They also are forced to speak English because they are afraid to get punishment. As a result, they do not care about elements of language that they have learned, especially on fluency of speaking. Thus, through this study, the writer would like to prove quantitatively whether or not the students' speaking performance is influenced by the language environment programs. The researchers would like to find out the significant effect of implementing the programs toward the students' speaking performance.

Speaking seems to be the most important skills of all the four skills are listening, speaking, reading and writing (Richard, 2008). People as the speakers need some reasons to improve their speaking ability such as to express ideas, to create relationships, and to exchange information. Speaking is also as specific spoken discourse that is primarily social and engaged in for social purposes and in social contexts. In speaking, people should interact with each other by using a language at the appropriate functions. Besides, there are some factors that help students to master the language. The factors influence their speaking skill such as some activities they learn in the classroom learning and outdoor activities or language environment.

Language environment is place which is provide some it own outdoor activities to increase students English speaking skill by using some methods, medias, strategies in training. According to Liu (2009) language learning environments and activities have been successfully implemented to aid English learning. Sapir (2009) properly speaking, environment can act directly only on an individual, and in those cases where we find that a purely environmental influence is responsible for a communal trait, this common

trait must be interpreted as a summation of distinct processes of environmental influences on individuals. Rayhana (2016) stated that the language environment needs to be in shape to hone the language skills naturally. Wahab (2008) stated that the creation of a language environment can habituate and able to be the active language skills that are the future projects of language. There are some reasons why is language environment as factor influence to increase students English speaking skill.

The first reason is that the children do not only acquire their first language but they also able to acquire the foreign language. Their interlocutors do not expect them to be perfect, and will often support their attempts to communicate by suggesting words and phrases. According to Wang (2009) the linguistic environment for language acquisition is very important. For those abroad or mix with speakers of another language, they are usually very motivated and they have a pressing desire to communicate and to get their meaning across. The students also able to receive a lot exposure and they hear the language in use and pick up expressions they need. And they have many opportunities to speak and experiment with the language. Moreover, Tuty (2013) stated effective environment or not will influence people skill to apply English language as their communication.

The second reason is students need interaction training for their foreign language. As students with mother tongue, they are often not too confident in making interaction with other people by using English language. In this global era, many people who come from different countries can be easier in making interaction and communication in language environment because people in social need interaction each other. According to Farooq (2015) when these principals are applied in a language learning environment, functional

activities and social interaction activities take place. Therefore, they will be trained how to interact by using English language in language environment. They need to know how to interact by using English language.

The third reason is because students still have stress and anxiety in speaking English. According to Richards and Rogers (1999, p. 91) an important condition for successful language learning is the absence of stress. Therefore, English teachers should manage strategies in outdoor activities to make students feel secure and they are free to direct their energies to the tasks of communication and learning rather than to building and maintaining their defensive positions in English learning.

In short, the students do not only learn from the effect of direct instruction in the classroom activities, but from the environment in which the instruction of another methods, media, and strategies takes place. The effect of language environment relate to what we learn or acquire in language learning to be able to communicate with others who speak as non native language.

Islamic boarding school is a traditional form of Islamic Education based on Islamic learning and Islamic law. Islamic boarding school uses Islamic religion curriculum and public education curriculum. Most of Islamic knowledge taught in Islamic boarding school by using many programs in learning activities. According to Rayhana (2016) that management of language environment programs are in the program mufrodat, barnamij, muhadharah, and muhadatsah with goal setting of each program that has been adapted to the creation of language environment. Fatah (2011) stated that to run activities or strategies in the application of English in boarding school then the need for the establishment of language programs to support the implementation of English language habitation. Moreover, boarding

school provides facilities to meet student needs. There are existing facilities for students' talents and hobbies. Students in boarding school have the opportunity to explore a variety of interests, taking an area of interest, and show their talent. Islamic boarding school is also paying attention on students' English speaking skill. In language environment programs, there are language managers in Islamic Boarding School. They perform the role as a facilitator who helps students acquire language learning in informal settings. They are responsible for language programs for students as well as supervise and direct the course of disciplinary language guide specifically. All of students are not allowed to use the Indonesian language in their daily conversations, let alone the local language. Therefore, Islamic boarding school also provides many language environment programs to support students' activities in learning English language.

The first program is morning vocabulary or mufrodat. In morning vocabulary, each of language managers prepare some vocabularies for each morning. There are five vocabularies every morning. Language managers give five vocabularies to the students in group and the students should memorize some vocabularies that are given by language managers every day after Subuh praying before they go to the formal school. They should apply previously vocabularies in the dormitory which start from they go back from formal school.

The second program is Sunday morning conversation or muhadatsah. Language managers guide the students to make some sentences in pair every Sunday morning. Language managers give some examples before the students try to make at least five sentences. The students make sentences by developing each vocabulary that they have memorized in every morning.

The third program is speech training. This program is conducted on Sunday afternoon by teachers as language coordinators. The students are only trained the way how to be able to speak in public, such as about concept of speech, fluency, gestures, intonation, and timing in speech contest.

The fourth program is speech performance. Speech performance in Islamic boarding school is more known by name *Muhadhoroh*. This program is conducted only in the classroom on Saturday night. If in speech training they are only trained the way how to be able to speak in public, so in this program they are still trained to perform their speech in front of the podium.

The fifth program is Orator As'ad Idol competition. Orator As'ad Idol or speech contest is as the one of language program yearly. This program is conducted every Sunday night in the second semester of academic year. This program is only for the students who interest with English speech contest. They show their best performance after some training in other program that they have followed.

In brief, language environment programs are used to improve each of the students' confidence to be able to speak language well in public and able to interact by using English language. Moreover, awards also will be given to the students who speak well and good in practicing in their daily activities.

## 2. Method

This study was based on quantitative research method. This research design is an *ex post facto*. *Ex post facto* design is non-experimental design that is used to investigate causal relationships without the treatment. Therefore, this research used *ex post facto* because the writer would like to see the effectiveness of the language environment programs on students'

speaking achievement which exists since long time ago in As'ad Islamic Boarding School.

This study applied purposive sampling to select the sample of the study. There were two criteria in selecting the samples. The first consideration was the students who live in the dormitory and involve the language environment programs. The second consideration was the students who do not live and they also do not involve the language environment programs automatically. Therefore, according to some consideration, the researchers took 30 students as sample in this study. They consisted of 15 students who lived in the dormitory and they involved language environment programs assigned in experimental group. The rests 15 students were those who did not either live in dormitory or join language programs assigned in Control group.

In order to collect the data, the researchers used speaking performance test as the research instrument. The test was modified based on curriculum used in the boarding school. Then, the results of the test were measured by using Speaking test scoring rubric purposed by Brown (2004) that counted pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and fluency as the speaking aspects. The result of the inter-rater reliability was 0.865 which determined high reliability. It proved the consistency of the scores given by the two raters.

## 3. Result and Discussion

The results of the students' speaking performance test were categorized based in several criteria. Table 1 presents the criteria.

Table 1. Scoring Criteria

Range of Score	Criteria
16-20	Excellent
11-15	Good
6-10	Weak
5	Poor

The results of the test showed that the maximum score reached by the students in experimental group was 17,5 points and the minimum score was 13,50 point. The mean score of students' speaking performance test was 15,4. In experiment group, students who got the highest score was categorized Excellent. While the students who got the lowest score was categorized Good. In addition, based on the descriptive calculation there was 67% students who got good category, and 33% students who got excellent category. Therefore, it can be concluded that the highest score in experiment group was in Excellent category and the lowest score in experiment group was in Good category.

However, based on the result of descriptive statistic in control group showed that the maximum score was 11,00 points and the minimum score was 6,50 points. The mean score of students' speaking performance test is 9,3. In control group, students who got the highest score was in good category, and the students who got the lowest score was categorized weak. In addition, based on calculation there was 7% students who got good category, and 93% students who got weak category. Therefore, it can be concluded that the highest score in control group was in Good category and the lowest score in control group was in Weak category.

In brief, each of students in the two groups had high score. They obtained the same high score category, but there was difference score between students in experimental group and in control group. The high score category in experiment group was higher than the high score category in control group. The highest score in experiment group was an Excellent category and the highest score in control group was in Good Category. That was because students in experiment group were those who lived in the dormitory and involved in the

language environment programs. While students in control group were the students who did not live in the dormitory and did not involve in the language environment program. In addition, language environment programs influence students' English-speaking achievement.

The results of Independent sample t-test also support the descriptive statistic results. The result showed that there was significant difference on the speaking performance of the students involved in language environment programs ( $M=15.4$ ) and those who did not ( $M=9.3$ ), ( $p = 0,000 < 0,005$ ). Table 2 presents the result. In fact, the language environment program was provided to the students who lived in the dormitory. Therefore, they quite able to speak English. Meanwhile, the students who did not live in the dormitory and did not involve the language environment, they feel so difficult to speak English, because they seldom practiced English language. From all of English language aspect, such as vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and aspect, the students in experiment group had good fluency. According to Nunan (2003), the degree to which speakers use the language rapidly and confidently, with few pauses or forced pauses, false starts, and word searches, was referred to as fluency. Saville (2006) also stated that, in production, fluency was achieved through the use of automated rule-based systems and memory-based chunks that act as exemplars or templates and are "retrieved and used as wholes.". It can be inferred that by joining language environment program where the use of English was maximized, the students were able to perform better. Being actively involved in the program developed their confident to speak in English. This is in line with what Carter & Nunan (2001) mentioned about the benefit of English club as a supportive environment for students to practice speaking. Carter & Nunan stated

that one of the benefits was in calculating students' self-confidence. Besides, English club helps students overcome language anxiety and the monotony of regular classroom activities by allowing them to practice speaking English joyously. The English club fosters a familiar social setting that aids in the development of self-confidence and colleague acquaintance (Elnadeef & Abdala, 2019).

#### 4. Conclusion

The results of the study revealed that language environment programs influence the students' speaking performance. The greatest influences brought by the programs were the students' speaking fluency. Therefore, it was recommended to continue to have the programs in the Islamic Boarding School. However due to the limitation of this study, the researches would like to suggest some consideration for the future study. Firstly, since the study did not focus on describing the programs itself, it is recommended to conduct a deep analysis about how the programs are run for example the researcher might analyze what activities the teachers provided that make the students show good performance. Then, the other aspects of speaking might also be explored since this study showed more influence on fluency. Finally, it would be better to conduct a study to greater setting that involves more Islamic Boarding School in Indonesia that has implemented Language Environment programs.

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