A Case Study of the Implementation of the English Teaching in ABBS Surakarta

Damar Jati Pamungkas[1,*], Mauly Halwat Hikmat[1]

[1] Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta (UMS), Surakarta, Indonesia

[*] Corresponding author: a320210004@student.ums.ac.id

Abstract

Purpose: This study evaluates the effectiveness of an English Teaching Program in an immersive learning environment on students' language proficiency in an Indonesian context, focusing on both conversational skills and academic language proficiency.

Methodology: A qualitative research design was employed, using semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. The study involved 40 students from two programs the Cambridge Class and the ICT Class. Data triangulation ensured reliability, and the analysis followed an interactive approach to identify key themes.

Results: The findings indicate significant improvements in students' conversational proficiency in speaking, writing, listening, and reading. However, challenges were identified in academic language proficiency, especially in technical subjects such as mathematics and physics. While students excelled in Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS), many struggled with Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). Interactive teaching methods, including group projects and presentations, were well-received, promoting engagement and active language use. The study also highlighted the need for better teacher training to address the challenges of teaching complex academic content in English.

Applications/Originality/Value: This study provides insights into the challenges of immersive English teaching programs in Indonesia. It emphasizes the gap between conversational and academic English proficiency, offering recommendations for curriculum improvements and teacher development. The originality of the study lies in its dual focus on student and teacher perspectives, providing a comprehensive understanding of the program's impact and areas for future enhancement.

Introduction

The increasing global connectivity has made fluency in English a necessary skill for success in both academic and professional spheres. English continues to be the primary language for international communication (Rao, 2019). Consequently, possessing a strong command of the language is increasingly seen as an essential skill, especially considering that English remains the dominant medium for global communication. To meet this demand, many educational institutions have recognized the value of immersion programs as effective tools for language acquisition. By engaging students in environments where English is used in everyday interactions, these programs facilitate more expedient and comprehensive language learning. Recent studies (Fauzan, 2016; Rao, 2019) suggest that such environments enable students to use English in a practical context, thereby enhancing both their proficiency and confidence.

Immersive language programs are distinct in their integration of English into both academic and social settings, creating a comprehensive learning environment that encourages natural language use. Despite the growing popularity of these programs, research on their effectiveness, particularly in Indonesia, remains sparse (Porter & Sofia Castillo, 2023). While a number of institutions have implemented such programs, there is limited investigation into the challenges they face, especially when English is not the native language. According to Leong & Ahmadi (2017), both students and teachers often struggle to adapt to an environment where English is the dominant mode of communication. This study seeks to address this gap by evaluating the effectiveness of these programs in enhancing students' English language abilities.

One of the primary challenges in immersive English programs is ensuring that teachers can consistently deliver content in English while ensuring student comprehension (Renandya et al., 2018). Highlight this as a significant issue, particularly when students have varying levels of proficiency. This necessitates that teachers adjust their teaching strategies to accommodate these differences. Additionally, the level of interaction between teachers and students plays a critical role in the success of these programs. (A, 2019) note that insufficient preparation and support for teachers can compromise this interactive component, which is essential for effective language acquisition. Research by Cirocki & Farrell (2019) further emphasizes that well-trained teachers significantly enhance the outcomes of language programs. Therefore, professional development and adequate resources are crucial for overcoming these challenges.

Furthermore, students' perceptions of the program are integral to its success. (Genç Şengül & Büyükkarcı, 2023) argue that learners' attitudes towards English and their confidence in using it in real-life situations strongly influence their language development. Research by Zhang (2023) supports this view, showing that students who believe the learning environment is supportive and are encouraged to practice English experience faster language development. Understanding how students perceive the success of immersive programs is essential for refining curricula and instructional methods. This study will analyze student feedback to identify strengths and areas for improvement in these programs.

Immersion programs are grounded in a variety of contemporary second language acquisition (SLA) theories, many of which emphasize the importance of meaningful contact with the target language and comprehensible input (Schwartz, 2022). A foundational theory that continues to shape the design of immersion programs is Stephen Krashen's Input Hypothesis (2019). According to Krashen, the most effective way for language learners to acquire a new language is by being exposed to input that is just above their current level of proficiency, referred to as "i+1." This means learners should encounter language that challenges them without overwhelming them. In immersion programs, students are regularly exposed to this type of input since they are surrounded by the target language in everyday interactions, making language acquisition a more natural and efficient process. Additionally, Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (2019) underscores the role of emotional factors such as anxiety, motivation, and self-confidence in language acquisition. Students are more likely to succeed in language learning when they are in a low-anxiety environment, a condition that is commonly promoted in immersion settings.

Another critical theory that informs immersion programs is Gass et al. (2020), which stresses the significance of interaction in language acquisition. Long argues that learners acquire language more effectively through meaningful interaction, especially when it involves negotiating meaning. In immersive contexts, students are frequently engaged in collaborative projects that require them to communicate and solve problems in the target language. As students adjust their language use based on feedback from peers and teachers, they improve both their fluency and accuracy. Recent research by Hemnani (2023) supports this view, demonstrating that authentic communication settings contribute significantly to language learning by providing learners with diverse opportunities to interact and negotiate meaning.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, particularly his concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), is also a vital framework in understanding how immersion programs operate. (Lantolf et al., 2020) build on Vygotsky's ideas, showing that language learners make the most significant progress when they receive scaffolded support from more proficient speakers whether teachers or peers. In immersion programs, this support is readily available as students interact with native or near-native speakers, allowing them to transition from what they can do independently to what they can accomplish with assistance. The dynamic, socially interactive nature of immersion programs helps learners acquire language more rapidly by facilitating social interaction and collaboration in the target language.

The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach also plays a central role in immersion programs, emphasizing the use of language in real-life contexts rather than focusing solely on grammar rules (Newton et al., n.d.) argue that CLT is particularly well-suited to immersion programs because it prioritizes communicative competence the ability to use language effectively in various social and academic settings. Task-based learning, an extension of CLT, has become increasingly popular in immersion programs. According to (Nunan, 2004), task-based learning involves activities that mirror real-world situations, such as role-playing or debates. These activities allow students to develop both fluency and accuracy by practicing language use in scenarios they are likely to encounter in daily life or future careers.

A critical issue highlighted by Cummins (2015) is the distinction between Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). While immersion programs often result in rapid development of BICS language used for everyday communication students may struggle with CALP, the academic language necessary for success in subjects like mathematics and science. Cummins emphasizes the importance of ensuring that immersion programs balance the development of both conversational fluency (BICS) and academic language proficiency (CALP). This balance is vital for students' overall academic success and their ability to function effectively in both social and academic contexts. In immersive environments, this theory suggests that educators must provide scaffolding to help students bridge the gap between social and academic language skills.

In conclusion, this study aims to evaluate the implementation of English immersion programs in Indonesian educational institutions over the past four years. It will explore the strategies teachers employ to promote language learning, the challenges they encounter, and students' views on the impact of the program on their language skills and confidence (Mohzana, 2023). Additionally, it will examine the difficulties faced by teachers. The results of this research are expected to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of effective language teaching practices and offer recommendations for enhancing the design and implementation of immersive English programs.This is something that is anticipated to happen. the research questions are formulated as follows: (1) What teaching strategies are utilized in the English English Teachingat ABBS to enhance students' language learning experiences? (2) What challenges do teachers face in teaching lessons using English in each subject? (3) How do students perceive the effectiveness of the English English Teachingin improving their language skills and confidence in using English.

Method

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology to investigate the implementation and outcomes of an English teaching program. Creswell (2020) emphasizes that qualitative research is ideal for understanding complex processes and experiences in natural settings. This approach provides deep insights into how language programs function in real-world contexts and allows for a nuanced exploration of the participants' perspectives and experiences, which are crucial for evaluating the effectiveness of an immersion program. By adopting a naturalistic approach, the research captures the real-time interactions between students and teachers, providing a comprehensive understanding of the program's impact on language acquisition.

The study design follows the interactive model proposed by Miles et al. (2018). This model involves continuous data collection, reduction, and presentation throughout the research process. Data are gathered from multiple sources, including interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. This data is then systematically reduced and organized to identify emerging patterns. The use of tables and charts helps to present the data in a more accessible format, simplifying complex information for analysis and interpretation. Miles et al. (2018) suggest that this iterative process ensures that data analysis remains dynamic and reflective, allowing researchers to refine their interpretations as more data becomes available.

To ensure the reliability of the findings, the study employs data triangulation, a technique recommended by Patton (2019). Triangulation involves using multiple data sources such as interviews with teachers and students, classroom observations, and document analysis to cross-check and validate findings. This approach reduces potential bias and strengthens the accuracy of the interpretations. By relying on diverse sources of data, the study provides a more robust understanding of the program's effectiveness and addresses any potential discrepancies that may arise from relying on a single data source.

Data collection in this study incorporates semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, methods outlined by Sugiyono (2021). Semi-structured interviews allow participants to express their opinions and provide the researcher with the flexibility to explore specific areas in more depth. Classroom observations capture real-time interactions and teaching dynamics, offering insights into how the program operates on a day-to-day basis. Additionally, document analysis, including the review of lesson plans, curriculum documents, and progress reports, provides valuable context that supports and complements the findings from interviews and observations. This triangulated approach guarantees a comprehensive, multi-dimensional perspective on the program's implementation.

Lastly, Miles and Huberman (2018) highlight that the process of deriving and testing conclusions is iterative. During data collection and analysis, tentative conclusions are continuously tested and refined based on emerging evidence. This reflective process allows the researcher to identify developing themes and verify patterns through cross-checking with additional data sources. Applying this iterative approach will help ensure that the study produces a thorough understanding of the successes and challenges of the English Teaching Program, as well as provide useful insights for improving immersive language teaching.

Result and Discussion

The majority of pupils demonstrated substantial enhancements in their English language proficiency, especially in speaking, writing, listening, and reading. All 40 students concurred that learning English in class enhanced these skills and bolstered their performance in other disciplines. For instance, several students observed:

"*I am significantly more confident in speaking English now, due to the frequency of its use both in and outside the classroom*" Student A1, 30 September 2024, ABBS Senior High School

"*My English conversations have improved due to daily usage in various contexts*" Student B5, 30 September 2024, ABBS Senior High School

Classroom observations corroborated these remarks, as students were observed actively participating in group discussions and engaging in talks in English. This corresponds with Krashen's (2019) Input Hypothesis, which posits that language acquisition is most supported by sustained exposure to understandable input in immersive settings. The Affective Filter Hypothesis was corroborated, as students observed that the program's environment alleviated anxiety and facilitated the practice of their language abilities.

Obstacles in Academic Language Proficiency

Although the curriculum markedly enhanced students' conversational abilities, numerous participants reported challenges in academic disciplines, especially for the technical lexicon employed in fields such as mathematics and physics. A student remarked:

"I find the terminology in disciplines such as science and mathematics to be quite technical and challenging to comprehend" Student B10, 30 September 2024, ABBS Senior High School

This finding was validated during classroom sessions, where students occasionally exhibited hesitation or difficulty with subject-specific vocabulary. Progress reports indicated that pupils' performance in content-intensive areas was inferior to that in conversational contexts. These results correspond with Jim Cummins' (2019) differentiation between Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). Although pupils attained conversational fluency, they necessitated further assistance in acquiring academic language proficiency.

Effectiveness of Interactive Pedagogical Approaches

Students exhibited a favorable response to the interactive pedagogical techniques employed in the program. A pupil disclosed:

"The collaborative projects and presentations facilitated my practice in public speaking, which proved to be really beneficial" Student A15, 30 September 2024, ABBS Senior High School

Classroom observations corroborated this perspective, as educators frequently employed activities and group assignments that promoted problem-solving and teamwork, hence enhancing active involvement. These strategies correspond with the tenets of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which prioritize practical language application. Recent research by Richards and Schmidt (2020) and Nunan (2021) indicates that task-based learning within Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is particularly efficacious in immersive settings, facilitating students' development of both fluency and accuracy in pertinent circumstances.

Requirement for Educator Training and Assistance

Although students typically commended their teachers' assistance, several identified difficulties in elucidating intricate academic content. A student remarked:

"Occasionally, educators struggle to elucidate technical subjects in a manner that is comprehensible in English" Student B18, 30 September 2024, ABBS Senior High School

This observation was evident in classroom sessions, where educators occasionally found it challenging to elucidate complex language. Subsequent document analysis indicated a necessity for enhanced professional development aimed at assisting educators in delivering curriculum to students with diverse levels of English ability. This observation corresponds with the findings of Hidayati and Fauzan (2022), which emphasize the significance of ongoing teacher training in immersive programs. Such training enables educators to modify their educational approaches to more effectively address the academic and linguistic requirements of their students.

Student Assurance and Program Efficacy

Students concurred that the training was advantageous in enhancing their self-confidence and augmenting their English communication skills. They also underscored the necessity for more assistance in comprehending academic language. A student commented:

"The program effectively enhances my speaking and listening abilities; nevertheless, it may improve in facilitating comprehension of more challenging academic topics in English." Student A20, 30 September 2024, ABBS Senior High School

This response underscores the necessity of equilibrating the advancement of academic language with conversational fluency. The program has achieved success in certain areas; yet, the findings suggest potential for improvement, especially with teacher training and support for students' academic advancement.

This study's findings indicate that the English Teaching Program has effectively enhanced students' confidence and

conversational fluency. Notwithstanding its achievements, issues persist in addressing academic language competency and ensuring that educators have adequate training to assist students with diverse levels of language competence. A multitude of proposals has been proposed to enhance the program's efficacy for both students and educators. Improving these aspects could significantly elevate the quality of immersive language learning sessions.

Conclusion

This study examined the effects of an English Teaching Program in an immersive learning environment on students' language proficiency within the context of Indonesian education. The findings, derived from semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, indicated that the program was highly effective in enhancing students' conversational English skills across speaking, writing, listening, and reading. All 40 participants from the Cambridge and ICT Class Programs reported significant improvement in their language proficiency, which in turn boosted their confidence in using English both inside and outside the classroom.

However, challenges persisted regarding academic language proficiency, particularly in subjects requiring technical terminology, such as mathematics and physics. Many students expressed difficulties understanding and applying specialized vocabulary, which affected their academic performance. This finding aligns with (Cummins, 2015) distinction between Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), suggesting that while students became proficient in everyday English, they struggled with the more complex academic language required in technical subjects. These results underscore the importance of providing additional support to help students manage the academic language demands of their coursework.

The program's interactive, participatory teaching methods, including group projects, presentations, and collaborative activities, were positively received by students. These strategies encouraged active engagement and facilitated the practical application of their language skills in real-world contexts. Such methods align with Krashen's (2019) Input Hypothesis, which emphasizes the value of exposure to comprehensible input within an engaging and supportive environment. Nonetheless, the study also identified the need for ongoing teacher development. Some instructors faced challenges in adapting academic content to the varying language levels of their students, which impacted their ability to effectively communicate complex concepts.

In conclusion, while the English Teaching Program significantly improved students' conversational fluency and self-confidence in using English, there remains a critical need to address the gap in academic language proficiency. To bridge this divide, the curriculum should be enhanced with targeted strategies for teaching technical language, and teachers should receive continuous professional training to support students' diverse language needs. By focusing on these areas for improvement, the program can provide a more balanced approach to language acquisition, benefiting both students and educators and leading to more effective language learning outcomes.

Acknowledgments

References

A, A. M. (2019). The Use of Technology in English Language Teaching. *Frontiers in Education Technology*, 2(3), p168. https://doi.org/10.22158/FET.V2N3P168

Abduh, A. (2018). Lecturers' perceptions on factors influencing the implementation of bilingual instruction in Indonesian universities. *Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education*, 10(3), 206-216.

Bhagwani Hemnani, B. M. (2023). The Development of Oral Interaction: The Use of Functional Language to Achieve Communicative Efficiency in the EFL Classroom. https://riull.ull.es/xmlui/handle/915/32676

Cirocki, A., & Farrell, T. S. C. (2019). Professional development of secondary school EFL teachers: Voices from Indonesia. *System*, 85, 102111. https://doi.org/10.1016/J.SYSTEM.2019.102111

Cummins, J. (2015). BICS and CALP: Empirical and Theoretical Status of the Distinction. *Literacies and Language Education,* 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-02321-2_6-1

Cummins, J. (2021). Rethinking the Education of Multilingual Learners: A Critical Analysis of Theoretical Concepts (Vol. 19). *Multilingual Matters.*

Fauzan, U. (2016). Enhancing Speaking Ability of EFL Students through Debate and Peer Assessment. *EFL Journal*, 1(1), 49. https://doi.org/10.21462/EFLJ.V1I1.8

Gass, S. M., Behney, J., & Plonsky, L. (2020). Second Language Acquisition : An Introductory Course. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315181752

Genç Şengül, B., & Büyükkarcı, K. (2023). A Correlation Study on EFL Students' Self-Efficacy and Attitudes Towards English and Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety. *Innovational Research in ELT*, 4(1), 32–46. https://doi.org/10.29329/IRELT.2023.558.3

Ibrahim, J. (2001). The implementation of EMI (English medium instruction) in Indonesian universities: Its opportunities, its threats, its problems, and its possible solutions. K@ ta, 3(2), 121-138.

Lantolf, J. P., Poehner, M. E., & Thorne, S. L. (2020). Sociocultural Theory and L2 Development. *Theories in Second Language Acquisition,* 223–247. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429503986-10

Leong, L.-M., & Ahmadi, S. M. (2017). An Analysis of Factors Influencing Learners' English Speaking Skill. *International Journal of Research in English Education, 2*(1), 34–41. https://doi.org/10.18869/ACADPUB.IJREE.2.1.34

Mohzana, M. (2023). Strategies for Developing Speaking Skills by Utilizing Language Learning Podcasts. International Journal of Language and Ubiquitous Learning, 1(4), 233–245. https://doi.org/10.70177/IJLUL.V1I4.680

Muslem, A., Zulfikar, T., Ibrahim, I. H., Syamaun, A., Saiful, , & Usman, B. (2019). The Impact Of Immersive Strategy With English Video Clips On Efl Students'speaking Performance: An Empirical Study At Senior High School. *Teaching English with Technology,* 19(4), 90-103.

Newton, J. M., Newton, J., Yates, E., Shearn, S., & Nowitzki, W. (n.d.). Intercultural communicative language teaching: implications for effective teaching and learning Report to the Ministry of Education Intercultural Communicative Language Teaching: Implications for Effective Teaching and Learning A Literature Review and an Evidence-based Framework for Effective Teaching. https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.1.3118.1526

Nunan, D. (2004). Task-Based Language Teaching. Task-Based Language Teaching. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511667336

Porter, S., & Sofia Castillo, M. (2023). The Effectiveness of Immersive Language Learning: An Investigation into English Language Acquisition in Immersion Environments versus Traditional Classroom Settings. *Research Studies in English Language Teaching and Learning*, 1(3), 155–165. https://doi.org/10.62583/RSELTL.V1I3.17

Rachmajanti, S., Zen, E. L., & Apriana, A. (2017). Mapping the framework of immersion program at the Laboratory Primary School of Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia. *The New English Teacher* ISSN 2985-0959 (Online), 11(2), 19-19.

Rao, P. S. (2019). The Role of English As A Global Language. *Research journal of English*, 4(1), 65-79.

Renandya, W. A., Hamied, F. A., & Joko, N. (2018). English Language Proficiency in Indonesia : Issues and Prospects. *The Journal of AsiaTEFL*, 15(3), 618–629. https://doi.org/10.18823/ASIATEFL.2018.15.3.618

Rosborough, A., & Wimmer, J. (2023). Vygotskian sociocultural theory for second language learners: Addressing in/commensurabilities with popular schoolbased curricula. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Applied Literature: Dynamics and Advances*, 11(2), 183-204.

Schwartz, A. M. (2022). Language Immersion. Language Immersion. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780367198459-REPRW17-1

Solikhah, I., & Budiharso, T. (2020). Exploring cultural inclusion in the curriculum and practices for teaching bahasa indonesia to speakers of other languages. *Journal of Social Studies Education Research*, 11(3), 177-197.

Waluyo, B., & Wangdi, T. (2024). Task-Based Language Teaching in Academic English Higher Education: A Case of Low-Proficiency Learners in Thailand. *3L: Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies*, 30(3).

Zhang, J. (2023). The Impact of the Learning Environment on English Language Learning. *Journal of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 23, 69–72. https://doi.org/10.54097/EHSS.V23I.12737