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The Impact of English Week Program on Students' Interactive Speaking Performance at an Islamic Boarding School: An EFL Teacher's Perspective

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Abstract: Speaking is one of the most crucial skills in English language learning; and interactive speaking is challenging for students, especially those in boarding schools with limited exposure. Although previous studies have examined students' perceptions, there has been little research conducted on teachers' perspectives. This study aims to explore an EFL teacher's perspective on the implementation and impact of the English Week program on students' interactive speaking performance and to identify the challenges they faced during the program. The researcher employed a qualitative case study approach, utilizing a snowball sampling technique, followed by non-participant observation and semi-structured interviews with an EFL teacher at an Islamic boarding school in Tasikmalaya. The results showed that the program successfully stimulated students' interactive speaking skills by combining formal and informal activities. The teacher employed scaffolding strategies and served as a facilitator and motivator. As a result of this research, students demonstrated increased confidence and improved interaction skills. However, there were other challenges, including a limited vocabulary, fluctuating motivation, and inadequate facilities. Based on this research, the English Week program has a positive impact on students' interactive speaking skills through creative and varied learning strategies, structured management, and a supportive learning environment. Understanding the teacher's perspective confirms the importance of institutional support and continuous program development. Future research is suggested to dig out the students' perceptions on this related topic with a large sample to obtain a broad insight.

Keywords: *EFL teacher's perspective; English week program; interactive speaking; Islamic boarding schools.*

INTRODUCTION

Mastering speaking skills is not easy for Indonesian learners. They use English as a foreign language in their daily communication; but most of them are not exposed to in-depth English language learning (Abubakar et al., 2017). However, speaking ability is assumed to be a measure

of success for EFL learners in learning English as a foreign language. Students experience difficulties in speaking English for various reasons, including problems in interactive speaking or performance using English. According to Ferian et al. (2022), students are often reluctant to speak because they are shy and not used to express themselves in front of others, especially when asked for personal information or opinions in oral discussions. Additionally, a lack of practice in English results in students' limited fluency in oral interaction. The EFL believes that speaking is very difficult because they are immersed in a non-English environment, which affects their ability to speak the language (Abubakar et al., 2017). Regarding the situation, Rahmatullah et al. (2019) explain that learning English for EFL takes a long time, as well as practicing speaking skills through daily activities.

Due to this problem, the researcher found a phenomenon that runs an English Week program in Islamic boarding schools located in the Tasikmalaya district, West Java. According to Ulya (2023), the English Week program can be seen as one of the ways to practice English to improve students' speaking skills and abilities by motivating them to learn. Furthermore, students should practice speaking English more by applying it in daily life through activities such as the English Day Program (EDP) or the English Week Program (EWP). According to Hasanah and Syafri (2015), the English Week Program (EWP) is based on two approaches to language teaching, namely Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which emphasizes students to use the language rather than knowing the language, and Community Language Learning (CLL) which is mainly aimed at reducing students' anxiety to communicate in a foreign language where the teacher's role is as an advisor or companion to students. As explained by Vygotsky (1978a) in (Ardiningtyas et al., 2023), social interaction and the cultural environment are key factors in learning and cognitive development. Social interaction is the interconnectedness of the intelligence process because speaking and communication skills develop through interaction with others.

A previous study by Ferian et al. (2022) aimed to determine students' perceptions of the implementation of the English Week program. The study included 34 participants. A qualitative approach and questionnaire were used. The researcher concluded that most students had a positive perception of the program and felt that it would help motivate them to learn and improve their English skills. However, some students did not have a positive perception of the program, especially regarding unclear rules. As this study focuses on the students' perspective, it does not explain the role of the teachers in implementing the program. To realize this, schools become the basic foundation so that students as learners can master international languages and their mother tongue (Muzakki, M. & Basya, 2022). Meanwhile, Aulia et al. (2021) explored the implementation of a daily conversation program to improve speaking ability. They show that the program can improve their speaking. Nevertheless, no research has thoroughly examined EFL teachers' perceptions of implementing and the impact of this program, particularly in the context of an Islamic boarding school. Mainly, they only discussed students' perceptions and did not explore the views of teachers, who play an important role in implementation. Therefore, the researcher is interested in conducting a study to investigate how an EFL teachers perceive the implementation, impact, and challenges of the program on stimulating students to improve their interactive speaking performance.

This study focuses on exploring an EFL teacher's perspective of the implementation and how they perceive the program's impact to stimulate students' interactive speaking performance and discover what challenges a teacher faces during the program. This is necessary to provide insight into the implementation of stimulating students. By understanding an EFL teacher's perspective, it is hoped that solutions can be found to enhance the program's quality by stimulating students to speak English more interactively by looking at their learning outcomes and speaking practices in their daily activities, and hoped that the English Week program can be used as a recommendation for future improvements to improve English speaking.

METHODS

This study was conducted using a qualitative approach, which explained that the researcher tried to understand the phenomenon from the participants' point of view (Creswell et al., 2018). Additionally, the researcher uses the case study method, which is commonly used in education. According to Stake (1995), Yin (2009), case studies are a type of inquiry found across many fields, especially in evaluation, where the researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a case, such as a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals. Moreover, in determining the sample, the researcher utilized a snowball sampling because snowball sampling is a sampling technique used when the population under study is difficult to identify or access. This technique is often used in research on marginalized or hidden groups (Creswell, 2014). The participants of this study consist of an EFL teacher at an Islamic Boarding School in Tasikmalaya.

To collect the data, the researcher used observation and interviews. An observation helped the researcher in to process of gathering open-ended, firsthand information by watching people and environments at a research site (Creswell, 2012). The researcher used non-participant observation, in which the researcher observes the subject without directly participating in their activities (Creswell, 2012). During the observation, the researcher used field notes and a checklist method to enhance the information from the opening until the closing stages of the teaching activity. To obtain more in-depth information, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews. Interviews are an interactive communication process. According to Creswell (2012) interviews provide more opportunities for researchers to obtain detailed information that cannot be collected through observation. In conducting the semi-structured interview, the researcher interviewed an EFL teacher, consisting of eight questions to answer the two research questions, which were adapted and modified (Vygotsky, 1978b in Ardiningtyas et al., 2023).

The interview result was then analyzed through thematic analysis, consisting of transcribing, reducing, categorizing, and interpretig (Creswell et al., 2018). Additionally, the researcher adapted the steps of observation and data analysis suggested by Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (2012) including transcribing, categorizing, and interpreting the data qualitatively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study presents data obtained from the researcher's questions. The first question was related to the implementation of the English Week Program by the EFL Teacher. Secondly, it relates to an EFL teacher's perspective of the impact of the English Week Program on students' interactive speaking performance. Thirdly, the question is related to challenges faced by EFL Teachers in implementing the English Week Program in an Islamic Boarding School. In this case, the researcher conducted observations at Nurul Wafa Islamic boarding school in Tasikmalaya on May 14th and 17th, 2025, and the interview was conducted on May 21st, 2025. The discussion will be elaborated in the following organization.

The Implementation of the English Week Program by the EFL Teacher

To answer the research question number one, the researcher used observation. To simplify the data and confirm several indicators, the researcher used an observation checklist and field notes to record information collected during observations. The findings indicated that the teacher has noted that the EFL teacher conducts both formal activities, such as routine classes, and informal activities through the English Club program, which is based on the English Week program.

The researcher began collecting data for the first observation on Wednesday, May 14th, 2025. The entire observation process took about an hour and a half. Formal activities are carried out in a more structured manner, namely through an active speaking learning approach. In this activity, the teacher explained basic material and used varied teaching methods. This is done so that students do not get bored while learning. The Teacher tries to make English learning more interesting. Nevertheless, the focus remains on conveying the material to students. The teacher

used the interactive activity, "Throw Ball Game", to support learning. The teacher uses relevant and varied teaching methods, as explained by the EFL teacher in Excerpt 1.

T: *Now, we will play a game to help you remember these parts. It's called the Throw Ball Game. When you catch the ball, you say one word and mention what part of speech it is, then throw it to your friend. Ready?*

(Excerpt 1, observation result, May 14th, 2025)

Then, the teacher gave clear and consistent instructions using English to ensure students become accustomed to using English in the classroom. If there are unclear sentences or instructions due to the students' limited vocabulary, the teacher translates them into Indonesian. This depends on the difficulty level of the instruction, sentence, or explanation. This approach reinforces the language exposure needed to develop speaking proficiency and helps students understand the role of language in the classroom. The Teacher argues that clear and consistent instructions allow students to easily follow activities and minimize confusion, even among those with limited English proficiency. This practice was evident during formal and informal learning sessions observed during the study. Observations showed that students were enthusiastic, confident, and comfortable during classroom interactions. This learning method allows students to interact with their peers and learn together. Students engage in pair or group activities that require communication, idea-sharing, and helping one another complete the activity.

In this study, the EFL teacher implemented the principles of communicative language teaching (CLT) and community language learning (CLL) theories. This is evident in Hasanah and Syafri (2015) emphasizing communication, interaction, and reducing anxiety in language learning. As a facilitator, the teacher encourages two-way communication and does more than just deliver material. This aligns with Vygotsky's theory in Ardiningtyas et al. (2023), in which teachers are referred to as the "More Knowledgeable Other." The teacher provides scaffolding by offering support tailored to students' needs. Collaborative tasks and peer feedback reflect a motivating learning environment through social interaction. Rahayu, Rohayati, and Sugiarto (2025) also emphasized that incorporating peer feedback into various tasks significantly improves students' writing ability. This research shows that peer feedback helps students organized their ideas, improve the accuracy of their writing, and increase their engagement. These findings align with Brown (2007) and have been validated by a recent study (Praetorius, A.-K., & Charalambous, 2023), which suggests that effective language learning involves varied strategies, a supportive environment, and consistent monitoring of student progress (Except 2). This finding aligns with the study results of Aulia et al. (2021) and Muzakki and Basya (2022), which concluded that regular English language habituation programs, such as English Day or English Week, successfully build students' speaking confidence. This program builds on that success by incorporating the unique disciplines and religious values of modern Islamic boarding schools.

S: *Miss, can we give suggestions?*

T: *Yes, exactly. Give feedback to help your partner, if you see something wrong, mark it or write a short note. (Students exchange papers and begin checking each other's work. Some ask questions or discuss their corrections.)*

(Excerpt 2, observation result, May 14th, 2025)

The second observation was carried out on Saturday, May 17th, 2025. In contrast, this coincided with English Club activities. This activity is not a formal class but rather takes place in a relaxed and flexible atmosphere. Teachers provide space for students to freely explore their abilities and interests through activities such as debates, speeches, storytelling, role-playing, and discussions of light topics. The activity is designed to stimulate interaction among students and

provide authentic speaking experiences not tied to the curriculum. During previous meetings, the teacher provided an overview of the students' interests and tendencies. Through this activity, teachers can identify the skills that stand out among students. This is one of the strategies that helps teachers develop a more personalized learning approach relevant to students' characteristics. Before the lesson started, the teacher gave students three vocabulary words to build their vocabulary. The teacher begins the session by presenting material on the chosen topic. Then, the teacher gives an example for the students to imitate. The teacher instructs the students to practice the material in small groups and provide feedback to each other. This approach provides ample room for student autonomy and spontaneous interaction. "They begin to express their ideas without hesitation. They practice, and some even improvise during role-plays," said the teacher.

This approach aligns with Vygotsky's theory in that social interaction supports cognitive and language development. By shifting responsibility to the student, the teacher gradually reduces her level of support. This process is referred to as "fading" in scaffolding. The club's informal nature helped students lower their affective filter, enabling them to speak more confidently and develop communicative competence in real-life situations. This can improve their interactive performance when speaking.

An EFL Teacher's Perspective of the Impact of the English Week Program on Students' Interactive Speaking Performance

To deepen the understanding of the observed phenomenon, the researcher conducted interviews with the EFL teacher and used thematic analysis to identify key themes. The interview was conducted on Wednesday, May 21st, 2025, after the observation was completed. The researcher posed five questions, which were adopted from Vygotsky (1978) in Ardiningtyas et al. (2023). The findings revealed an EFL teacher's perspective regarding their experiences in implementing this program at an Islamic Boarding School in Tasikmalaya.

Another phenomenon that occurs when the researcher interviews the EFL teacher is that the EFL teacher believes the English Week program positively influences students' confidence, motivation, and interaction skills. Students become more active and courageous, especially during informal activities such as the English Club. This is caused by the English Week program incorporated various teaching techniques and activities to ensure its smooth operation. The implementation and impact of the program are evident in Excerpt 3.

T: *"The English Week program plays a crucial role in enhancing students' interactive speaking performance skills. With the existence of English Week, students are encouraged and motivated to improve their speaking skills, especially in the Islamic boarding school environment, where speaking is highly valued. This program stimulates and helps students improve their abilities. The English Week program includes formal classroom learning, informal learning through the English Club, and several other activities. These include giving three new vocabulary words every morning and night, creating storybooks with titles or themes determined by staff, and performing an activity every two weeks or once a month. Supporting activities like these can stimulate students. Another way is through rewards and punishments. Students will be happy when they receive an award after achieving a goal. Students will also be motivated by the fear of punishment, which, along with rewards, is expected to maintain students' enthusiasm for learning English."*

(Excerpt 3, EFL teacher interview result, May 21st, 2025)

This finding is similar to the results of study conducted by Na'ma's (2024), which concluded that bilingual programs incorporate various teaching techniques, such as free conversation, speaking in English, vocabulary songs, and group work. This supports Fitzpatrick (2019) assertion in that interactive speaking includes fluency, turn-taking, and discussion management.

Furthermore, EFL teachers use differentiated teaching strategies based on students' ability levels. Beginners are assigned simple tasks, such as describing objects, while advanced students undertake more challenging activities, such as debates and speeches. As explained by the EFL teacher in Excerpt 4.

T: *"The English Week Program is very accommodating to students of various ability levels because students have different levels of ability. Some are still at the beginner, intermediate, and even advanced levels. For beginners, the existing program is adjusted, for example, for public speaking with the "Describing Things" program, starting with vocabulary and progressing to sentences and paragraphs. The program is delivered without the use of books or text. For intermediate students, we sometimes teach storytelling and English speech. Public speaking and rhetorical skills will greatly help students' ability to interact, especially in English. For advanced students, we usually provide a debate program that combines speaking, critical thinking, and grammar to continue spurring students to improve their abilities."*

(Except 4, EFL teacher interview result, May 21st, 2025)

Interaction occurs between the teacher and students, or vice versa, during classroom activities. One way to encourage interaction is through these activities. Critical thinking training indicates that critical thinking skills are becoming a central goal in higher education communication. These skills can lead students to become communicative, collaborative, creative, innovative, critical, analytical, and able to solve real-world problems effectively (Rahmawati, Rachmawati, & Faridah, 2023). This approach aligns with Vygotsky's theory, as adapted and discussed by (Al., 2022) dealing with the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) concept on optimizing the learning process by supporting students according to their level. The teacher also provides temporary support, or scaffolding, in the form of examples, evaluations, and motivation. The teacher emphasized the importance of rewards and punishments to motivate students. Although extrinsic, this strategy effectively maintains students' enthusiasm and discipline. These findings support Zhang (2022) statement in that the teacher's perspective greatly influences the success of language learning programs, particularly when selecting the appropriate approach. In contrast to Ferian et al. (2022), the research, which focused only on students' perceptions, provides a more complete view by including the teacher's perspective.

Challenges Faced by EFL Teachers in Implementing the English Week Program in an Islamic Boarding School

In analyzing the difficulties of an EFL teacher in implementing the program, the researcher used an interview technique with an EFL teacher. The interview was conducted on Wednesday, May 21st, 2025. The last research question focused on the challenges faced by teachers during implementation, which were more specific, so the number of questions used was fewer but in-depth. The researcher posed three questions. The data related to the interview are described in the next sections.

Although the English Week program has produced positive results, the teacher still faces significant challenges. One of the main challenges is student motivation, which fluctuates due to a lack of vocabulary and difficulty understanding English instructions. The following excerpt the EFL teacher's perspective on students' fluctuating motivation due to a lack of vocabulary and difficulty understanding English instructions.

T*: "Students who lack sufficient vocabulary become bored because they don't understand the teacher's instructions" (Excerpt 5, EFL teacher interview result, May 21st, 2025).*

This finding corroborates Creswell and Poth (2018) who assert that cognitive and affective factors influence student engagement in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. The

teachers addressed this issue by aligning their teaching strategies and maintaining consistency in instruction delivery.

In another challenge, limited human resources are also an important issue. Due to the limited number of teachers, they often include advanced students as mentors. However, these mentors often lack pedagogical skills, which makes them less effective in guiding other students. This discrepancy illustrates the gap between the program plan and its implementation. Therefore, it is crucial to provide structured training for mentors so they can properly carry out their duties. This finding explains the expression in Excerpt 6.

T: *"Sometimes they are confused about which method is right. This is because the character of each student is different" (Excerpt 6, EFL teacher interview result, May 21st, 2025).*

Lastly, the teacher mentioned that there are still limited facilities, particularly in terms of electronic devices, to support learning. This obstacle limits the variety of teaching methods that can be used. The teachers emphasized the need for institutional assistance to provide adequate facilities and infrastructure. This issue reflects the general situation of Islamic boarding schools in areas lacking access to technology. In addition, it helps the teacher and institutions identify the completeness of facilities necessary for smooth learning, as expressed in Excerpt 7.

T: *"The obstacles that have been identified include the lack of adequate facilities, such as electronic equipment for teaching" (Excerpt 7, EFL teacher interview result, May 21st, 2025).*

CONCLUSION

The study aimed to explore EFL teachers' perspectives on implementing and assessing the impact of the English Week program on students' interactive speaking skills, as well as identify the challenges they faced. The researcher used a qualitative case study approach with a snowball sampling technique involving one EFL teacher. This technique is useful when the population is limited. The researcher primarily used non-participant observation and semi-structured interviews to collect data. First, the researcher transcribed, coded, and summarized the data collected through observation. Second, the researcher transcribed the semi-structured interview data and summarized the important points. Based on the research questions outlined previously, the results obtained from the findings and discussion, the researcher draw the following conclusion:

The first conclusion deals with the implementation of the English Week program, which combines formal and informal learning activities. Formal learning takes place in routine classes where students learn English basics, while informal learning occurs through activities such as the English Club (debates, storytelling, speeches, etc.), as well as other activities such as building vocabulary and weekly story writing. In this program, the teacher acts as a facilitator who increases interaction between students by applying varied learning strategies and supporting activities that encourage communication. This approach aligns with the principles of communicative language teaching (CLT) and Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory, particularly the concepts of scaffolding and the zone of proximal development (ZPD).

The second conclusion is that the EFL teacher believes the English Week program significantly enhances students' interactive speaking performance. The program boosts students' confidence, motivation, and ability to engage in two-way interaction. Assignments tailored to students' ability levels are successful in meeting varied learning needs. Additionally, appreciation in the form of rewards and consequences for breaking the rules, as well as the establishment of a supportive learning environment, strengthens students' active participation in using English in academic and social contexts. The effectiveness of this program is evident in daily activities, and student evaluations can use rubrics based on existing indicators.

The third conclusion is that, in addition to exploring the implementation and impact of the English Week program, challenges were certainly faced during its implementation, including

limited vocabulary, a lack of human resources, and inadequate learning facilities, such as teaching aids and technological devices. The teacher has tried to overcome these problems and obstacles by using creative strategies and structured methods. However, the findings showed that the sustainability of the English Week program depends not only on pedagogical practices but also on institutional support, specialized student mentoring, and sufficient resources.

This study advances the field of language studies, particularly in a boarding school setting, by summarizing the key findings. Understanding the EFL teacher's perspective on the English Week program offers valuable insights into effectively enhancing students' interactive speaking skills through an integrated, culturally sensitive, and teacher-led approach. It is recommended for forthcoming study to investigate students' perception on a large amount sample.

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