

# The Effective Level of Intensive English Program on English Speaking Proficiency in First Year University Students

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## Abstract

*This study examined the level of effectiveness of intensive English program on the speaking skill of students at the Islamic University of Syekh Ali Hasan Ahmad Ad-Dary (UIN SYAHADA) Padangsidempuan during the 2023/2024 academic year. It specifically targeted first-semester English major students, with the primary aim of this research is to investigate how effectively the program fostered their English-speaking abilities. The researcher used descriptive research involved collecting data from 43 students through a validated and reliable questionnaire designed based on Slavin's indicators which include the quality of learning, appropriate instruction level, motivation, and time management. The results revealed that while the program excelled in several important areas, including the quality of learning materials and the effectiveness of teaching methods, there was notable room for improvement in other aspects. Specifically, the program needed to better ensure students' physical and emotional readiness for learning and more effectively manage the allocation of time for various learning tasks. The findings from this research offered valuable insights for policymakers and educators, guiding them in making informed decisions to enhance the overall effectiveness of the language program. By addressing these identified challenges, the program could be better tailored to support students in overcoming obstacles and achieving greater proficiency in their English-speaking skills, ultimately contributing to their academic success and personal development.*

**Keywords:** *Intensive English Program; Speaking Skill; Program Effectiveness; Student Motivation; Time Management*

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## 1. Introduction

English is not only widely spoken but also used extensively in education, research, science, and technology. Those who wish to engage with technological and scientific advancements must be proficient in English. Consequently, students are expected to be adept in English speaking to contribute to the global scientific and technological landscape. Yoniswan (2020) emphasizes that teaching students to speak English is vital as it enhances their cognitive abilities, including thinking, reading, writing, and listening. Speaking involves organizing, expressing, and clarifying thoughts, feelings, and ideas, thus exercising cognitive faculties.

According to Iskandar & Sunendar(2008), speaking ability is the skill to produce a continuous flow of articulate sounds to convey intentions, needs, and desires to others. Effective communication requires overcoming psychological barriers like shyness, low self-

esteem, tension, and hesitation. Budiharso, (2004) asserts that fluency in English enables individuals to express their opinions verbally. Regular practice with peers, English teachers, or fluent speakers is necessary to improve speaking skills, expand vocabulary, enhance language use, and perfect listening comprehension. However, speaking is recognized as one of the most challenging skills for students to master. Pratolo et al.(2019) identify several obstacles, such as limited exposure to English, infrequent use in daily life, shyness, and lack of motivation. Many students struggle to communicate coherently with foreigners due to difficulties in articulating their thoughts in English, leading to ineffective communication. Understanding and practicing expressions and aspects of speaking are crucial for achieving effective communication with native speakers.

Renandya et al. (2018) highlight the use of the English Proficiency Index (EPI) by English First, which ranks countries based on English proficiency. The 2017 EPI data ranks Indonesia 39th out of 80 countries, placing it in the 'low proficiency' category with an average score of 52.15. Yoniswan's (2020) study in Sumatra reveals that students' English speaking skills are low, with an average score of 55.88, far below the school's passing mark. Only 3 out of 34 students passed the English speaking test. Challenges include engaging students in learning, fostering courage to express opinions, and encouraging creative responses beyond mere imitation. Proficiency in English speaking is crucial not only in schools but also in universities, as it is often a requirement for employment in certain companies. Language skills can open opportunities to work in international firms. However, students face numerous challenges in speaking English across educational levels.

Pratolo et al. (2019) note issues such as vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, fluency, and the influence of the mother tongue. Psychological factors, conversational topics, and speaking practice are interconnected challenges. Wahyuningsih & Afandi,(2020) identify issues such as inadequate vocabulary, grammatical errors, incorrect pronunciation, limited engagement in spoken English outside the classroom, low confidence, and insufficient curriculum development in English speaking. A supportive environment is vital for improving students' speaking skills. The findings of this study can guide policymakers and stakeholders in developing effective teaching methods for better fluency.

Educational institutions, including schools and universities, play a pivotal role in preparing students to compete, engage, and adapt creatively to advancements in various life aspects. Implementing language programs is a potential solution to improve English learning, as mandated by Indonesian law No. 20 of 2003 article 50 verse 3, which requires governments to run educational programs of international standards at every level. These programs aim to enhance students' English proficiency, preparing them to apply science and technology globally. Several studies, such as those by Ali et al.(2019); Chang et al. (2017); Nadia & Aditama (2018); Salimi & Farsi (2015) indicate potential improvements in students' language skills, motivation, confidence, and learning outcomes following language programs. Conversely, some researchers, like Hsu (2014) and Pond (2021) argue that the effectiveness of language programs varies among students from different regions or fields of study.

Effectiveness, as defined by Rahayu (2021), measures the extent to which goals are met within a specified time. The higher the number of targets achieved, the higher the effectiveness. Effectiveness is determined by the achievement of objectives within the set timeframe. The varied opinions and research findings suggest a need for further investigation into the effectiveness of language programs on students' speaking skills. Previous research has focused on academic performance, motivation, confidence, and effective teaching strategies, but not specifically on speaking proficiency. Therefore, this study aims to know the level of effectiveness of the Intensive English Program on students' speaking skills at the Islamic University of Syekh Ali Hasan Ahmad Ad-Dary Padangsidempuan for the academic year

2023/2024. The study will consider factors such as teachers, students, materials, and the teaching program to determine the program's impact on speaking proficiency.

## 2. Method

This study employed a descriptive research design to evaluate the effectiveness of an intensive English program on the speaking proficiency of first-year university students. The primary method for data collection was a structured questionnaire designed to capture students' perceptions of their speaking skills before and after participating in the program. The researcher took participants of the research from all students in English major who followed the program in first semester the reason for taking this class was because they were more familiar with English materials and also had better English skill rather than the other majors. The number of English students were 43 in total, 36 females and 7 males.

The data collection instrument was a comprehensive questionnaire developed to measure various aspects of speaking proficiency and the perceived impact of the intensive English program. The questionnaires were used to find out effectiveness level of the language program towards students' speaking skill. In making the questionnaire the researcher took the indicators from Slavin (2000) to know the effectiveness of the program, there are four indicators in the effectiveness of learning in the program they are:

1. Quality of learning. The presenting of information to learners in a way that makes it simpler for them to understand the learning material is how the quality of learning is defined. When students are 85% complete in their learning, the quality of teaching is effective. The quality of learning can be seen through the process of learning or student achievement through student completeness standards that are defined in the program.
2. The appropriate level of Instruction. That is to say, the level whereby the teacher assures that students are prepared to learn new things. The teacher need to ensure the readiness of each student to learn..
3. Motivation. It indicates how hard an educator has worked to inspire students to complete assignments and master the material have given to them. The more encouragement given, the more engaged the students are.
4. Time. The amount of time students have had to learn the material. When students can finish their assignments according to the prescribed schedule, the study is successful.

In scoring students responses on questionnaire, the researcher will use Likert scale model according to Allen & Seaman (2007) indicates five categories, those are as follows:

Table 1. Likert Scale

Option	Score
Strongly Disagree	1
Disagree	2
Neutral	3
Agree	4
Strongly Agree	5

Before the implementation of the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted with a small group of students to ensure the clarity and reliability of the questions. Based on the feedback received, minor revisions were made to improve the questionnaire's effectiveness. In order to know whether the questionnaires were valid and reliable, the validity and reliability of instrument analyzed as follow:

### Validity of the questionnaire

The validation is implemented to see whether the questionnaire is valid or not. The procedures of validity test are: first, making the questionnaire related to the theory of effectiveness of language program towards' speaking skill. Second, the questionnaire validated by the expert in program and curriculum field, the questionnaire validated by Seronica Yulia Sari, S.Pd, M.TESOL.

Third, the questionnaire tried out to another class beyond the sample. Fourth, the try out result analyzed by using product moment formula in SPSS. Based on the calculation of Correlation Product Moment Formula,  $r$  observed was compared to  $r$  table by using significance level 0.05. The interpretation is that if the robserved is higher than rtable, the item is valid. In other hand, if the robserved is lower than rtable, the item is invalid. After doing the test by using Correlation Product Moment formula, the researcher found out that all the items of questionnaires were valid. For more detail could see appendix 6

### Reliability of the questionnaire

To measure reliability of questionnaire, Cronbach's Alpha formula was used. The calculation of the reliability score is classified based on the reliability categories suggested by Arikunto (2012) as described below:

- a) if  $0,80 \leq r_{11} < 1,00$ , very high
- b) if  $0,60 \leq r_{11} < 0,90$ , high
- c) if  $0,40 \leq r_{11} < 0,70$ , medium
- d) if  $0,20 \leq r_{11} < 0,40$ , low
- e) if  $0,00 \leq r_{11} < 0,20$ , very low

From the statistical analysis, it was found that the reliability of the program effectiveness level questionnaire was categorized as high reliability. It was seen from using Cronbach's Alpha formula and the researcher got the mean in number 0.951 which is indicated as very high reliability of questionnaires.

To specify the level of the effectiveness of the language program, such scale was used in the questionnaire based on the following criteria that comes from the mean of all the result of the participants' questionnaire, they are :

Table 2. Mean Range for Effectiveness Level

Mean Range	Criteria
3.68 - 5.00	High degree of effectiveness
2.34 - 3.67	Average degree of effectiveness
1.00 - 2.33	Low degree of effectiveness

The analysis of the questionnaire data using descriptive statistics, including means, medians, and standard deviations, to summarize the students' ratings. This analysis provided a clear picture of the overall trends and levels of perceived improvement in speaking proficiency. Results were presented using a combination of statistical summaries and illustrative quotes from the students' responses.

### 3. Findings and Discussion

The effective level of the program was taken from the questionnaire. The Questionnaire consisted of 20 statements which the validity and the reliability of the questionnaire had been checked. The score of the effective level of the program was formed in the interval form 1 to 5 for each item. The results of the questionnaire were written below:

Table 3. The Results of the Questionnaires

No	Statements	Mean
1	Language program presents a good quality in learning speaking	4.49
2	Language program helps the student to understands the materials of speaking	4.26
3	Language program makes the student feels easy to learn the materials about speaking	4.02
4	Language program gives the appropriate materials in speaking	4.19
5	The student is given a clear explanation by the lecturer about the speaking materials	4.00
6	Language program has proper instructions in teaching the students for speaking	4.02
7	Language program provides the suitable level in learning speaking	3.67
8	The student feels that the lecturer ensures the physical readiness of each students in learning materials about speaking	3.65
9	The student feels that the lecturer ensures the emotional readiness of each students in learning materials about speaking	3.63
10	In language program, the student feels that the lecturer concerns about the progress of the students in learning speaking	4.09
11	In language program, student feels that the lecturer gives the motivation to learn the materials about speaking	4.16
12	Language program provides the attractive activities to motivate the students in learning speaking	4.28
13	Student feels that the language program provides with good lecturer who has ability in teaching speaking	4.40
14	Student feels that the lecturer makes a clear and understandable presentation about the material in speaking	4.19
15	The lecturer will give the reward to the students if the students achieve a good score	3.77
16	The student feels that the lecturer always makes sure that the student does the speaking assignment and test completely.	3.88
17	The student feels that the lecturer has a good time management to run the class	4.07
18	The student feels that the lecturer gives suitable and effective time to the students in learning materials about speaking	3.88
19	The student feels that the Lecturer gives suitable and effective time to complete task about speaking	3.88
20	The student feels that the lecturer has sufficient time to clarify the doubt of the students in learning speaking	3.79

As it was shown in the Table 4.3 there were three items of the questionnaire categorized as “Agree” they were items number 7, 8 and 9 because they score were under 3.68 but the rest of them such as 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20 were categorized as “Strongly Disagree”. Key strengths of the program included the quality of learning materials and teaching methods, as indicated by high mean scores of 4.49 for the overall quality of learning speaking, 4.26 for helping students understand the materials, and 4.40 for the lecturers' teaching abilities. Additionally, the program was found to motivate students effectively, with a mean score of 4.28 for providing attractive activities and 4.16 for giving motivation to learn speaking materials.

From the data provided in the questionnaire, it can be seen that the English Program was generally perceived positively by the students. The questionnaire consisted of 20 statements, each rated on a scale from 1 to 5, and the validity and reliability of the questionnaire were confirmed to ensure accurate results. The findings indicate that students rated the overall quality of the English Program highly. The statement "English Program presents a good quality in learning speaking" received a mean score of 4.49, reflecting strong agreement among students that the program offers high-quality learning experiences. Similarly, the statement "English Program helps the student to understand the materials of speaking" scored 4.26, indicating that the program effectively aids in the comprehension of speaking materials. Students also felt that the English Program made learning easier, with the statement "English Program makes the student feel easy to learn the materials about speaking" receiving a mean score of 4.02. The program's ability to provide appropriate materials and clear explanations was also positively noted, with mean scores of 4.19 and 4.00, respectively.

The program's instructional methods were well-received, with the statement "English Program has proper instructions in teaching the students for speaking" scoring 4.02. The suitability of the program's level for learning speaking was rated 3.67, which, although positive, suggests some room for improvement. Ensuring students' readiness for learning, both physically and emotionally, was an area identified for improvement. The statements "The student feels that the lecturer ensures the physical readiness of each student in learning materials about speaking" and "The student feels that the lecturer ensures the emotional readiness of each student in learning materials about speaking" scored 3.65 and 3.63, respectively. These scores indicate a moderate level of agreement, highlighting a need for more focus in these areas.

Students felt that the program's lecturers were attentive to their progress and provided motivation effectively, with scores of 4.09 and 4.16, respectively. The program's activities were found to be attractive and motivating, with a high mean score of 4.28, reinforcing the program's strength in engaging students. The lecturers' teaching abilities were highly rated, with the statement "Student feels that the English Program provides good lecturers who have ability in teaching speaking" receiving a mean score of 4.40. This reflects strong student confidence in the lecturers' capabilities. In terms of feedback and classroom management, students felt that lecturers managed time well (mean score of 4.07) and ensured that students completed assignments and tests (mean score of 3.88). However, the effectiveness of time allocated for clarifying doubts and completing tasks received slightly lower scores of 3.79 and 3.88, respectively, suggesting an area for potential enhancement.

Overall, the findings from the questionnaire indicate that the English Program was highly effective in several critical areas, including the quality of learning materials, teaching methods, and student motivation. However, aspects such as ensuring students' readiness and optimizing time management require further attention to enhance the program's overall effectiveness. Based on these results, it can be concluded that students believed the English Program had a high level of effectiveness in improving their speaking skills, despite the identified areas for improvement.

The effectiveness of English Programs in enhancing students' speaking skills can be evaluated through various indicators and methodologies, as highlighted by multiple studies. This research revealed high levels of effectiveness in a specific English Program, measured through four indicators: learning quality, level of instruction, motivation, and time. These indicators collectively demonstrate the program's significant positive impact on students' speaking skills. Imani (2013) study supported these findings, showing significant positive changes in academic performance across three groups of respondents after undergoing ELPPFS training. This suggested when English Programs effectively designed and implemented well, that can lead to substantial academic improvement Chang et al. (2017) research further

corroborates these outcomes by highlighting the positive perception of English writing and communication workshops among students. The workshops were deemed helpful for engaging with foreign professors' EMI courses. This reinforces the notion that well-structured English Programs can significantly enhance students' academic experiences and capabilities.

In contrast, Rahayu, (2021) study on the Learn Social online platform revealed that while three out of four indicators (appropriate level of instruction, incentive, and time) were effective, the instruction indicator was not. This underscored the importance of a comprehensive approach in English Program design, where all components must be effectively addressed to achieve optimal results. Aldaihani et al. (2015) and Ali et al. (2019) also highlighted the significance of motivational and engagement factors. Hussein's study indicated that students had positive attitudes towards using Bb for language learning, finding it helpful in improving skills and student-instructor communication. Similarly, Ali found that English clubs reduced language anxiety and enhanced student engagement, contributing to improved speaking skills and increased self-confidence.

Those ideas supported by Farhani et al. (2020), the students reportedly experienced leadership skills, became more self-assured, and were free in terms of the learning environments and time, similarly found opportunities to choose activities, participated in decisions, and became free. They also added that some students' skills and attachments to their teachers and friends are relieved by taking an English course. With more freedom for posing and responding to inquiries, students can also practice speaking English with peers. Students need to practice speaking every day in order to become masters at it, and the English course is one of the best places to do so.

These studies collectively emphasize that the effectiveness of English Programs is multifaceted, relying on high-quality instruction, appropriate motivation, adequate time allocation, and comprehensive engagement strategies. The high effectiveness of the English Program detailed in the document is underscored by four key indicators: learning quality, level of instruction, motivation, and time. Analyzing these factors reveals critical insights into what makes English Programs successful in enhancing students' speaking skills. Learning quality, with a mean of 4.19, indicates that students perceive the instructional content and methods as highly effective. This aligns with Arini & Wahyudin (2022) findings, where the questioning technique improved all indicators of speaking skills, including pronunciation, vocabulary, participation, fluency, and comprehension. This suggests that high-quality learning environments, which incorporate interactive and corrective feedback mechanisms, are crucial for developing speaking proficiency.

The level of instruction, averaging at 3.81, reflects the importance of providing appropriate and challenging content that meets students' learning needs. However, (Rahayu, 2021) study found that instruction was the least effective indicator in the Learn Social platform, highlighting the necessity for ongoing assessment and adjustment of instructional strategies to ensure they meet student needs effectively. Motivation, with a mean of 4.16, is another critical factor. Both Aldaihani et al. (2015) and Ali et al. (2019) emphasized the role of motivation and engagement in language learning. Aldaihani's study demonstrated that students were motivated to complete assignments and enjoyed the course more with Bb, while Ali noted that English clubs reduced anxiety and increased self-confidence, enhancing speaking skills. These findings suggested that motivational strategies, such as creating enjoyable and low-stress learning environments, are vital for student success. The time indicator, with a mean of 3.90 showed the importance of sufficient time allocation for language learning. This aligns with Salimi & Farsi (2015) study, where the duration and frequency of English writing and communication workshops were positively received by students, leading to improved academic outcomes. Adequate time investment allows for repeated practice and reinforcement, which are essential for mastering speaking skills.

Overall, the analysis of these indicators revealed that the success of English Programs in improving speaking skills hinges on high-quality instruction, appropriate and challenging content, effective motivational strategies, and sufficient time allocation. Programs that address these factors comprehensively are more likely to achieve significant positive outcomes in students' language proficiency

On the other hand, the result of speaking test also found that there was no significant improvement of speaking skill after following the program but the result of the questionnaire showed that the English Program had high level of effectiveness. It showed that even the students had positive attitude toward the English Program but some of them still got low score in speaking test. This result of this research supported by theory of Fakeye (2010). She found that students' personal variables, including attitude are not correlated with academic achievement in English as a second language. A study by Nagar & Shonfeld (2018) highlighted that while attitudes towards multiculturalism and collaborative program were important, they did not directly translate into improved language proficiency without the support of structured and effective teaching methodologies. Lightbown and Spada (2013) stated that even the students had motivation to learn and had positive opinion about the program, the student still got unsuccessful language learning outcomes, learner autonomy, and learning engagement, even though motivation can be considered a better predictor of language learning outcomes. This underscored the importance of not relying solely on student opinion but also focusing on the quality and structure of language instruction. This indicated that a positive attitude alone might not necessarily lead to significant improvements in language skills.

In conclusion, the effectiveness of English Programs in enhancing students' speaking skills was found to be influenced by various factors, as highlighted in multiple studies. Key indicators such as learning quality, level of instruction, motivation, and time allocation consistently emerged as critical components in determining the success of these programs. The reviewed studies demonstrated that well-designed English Programs could significantly improve students' speaking skills by providing high-quality instruction that was both challenging and appropriate, fostering motivation through engaging learning environments, and ensuring adequate time for practice and reinforcement. However, challenges such as discrepancies between perceived effectiveness and actual speaking skill improvement underscored the need for a balanced approach that combined positive attitudes with structured, effective teaching methodologies. By addressing these factors comprehensively, English Programs were able to better fulfill their potential in enhancing students' language proficiency and overall learning outcomes.

#### **4. Conclusion and suggestion**

Based on the findings presented, the effectiveness of the Intensive English Program on improving first-year university students' English speaking proficiency can be summarized as follows. The study utilized a descriptive research approach, collecting qualitative data through a questionnaire aimed at evaluating students' perceptions of the program's effectiveness. The results indicated that the program was generally well-received, with high scores in areas such as learning quality, the appropriateness of materials, and lecturer effectiveness. Specifically, students reported that the program helped them understand speaking materials better, made learning easier, and provided high-quality instruction. Key strengths highlighted by the questionnaire included the lecturers' teaching abilities, the quality of learning materials, and the motivational activities incorporated into the program. The average scores for these areas were consistently high, demonstrating that students felt supported and engaged in their learning process.

Furthermore, the study also identified areas for improvement. While students had positive attitudes towards the program, there was a noted discrepancy between these attitudes and the actual improvement in speaking skills, as measured by test scores. This suggests that while the program was effective in fostering a supportive and motivating learning environment, additional focus is needed on the instructional methods to ensure they translate into measurable proficiency gains. In conclusion, the Intensive English Program was found to be effective in several key areas, notably in creating a positive and engaging learning environment and providing high-quality instruction. Nonetheless, to fully realize its potential in enhancing students' speaking proficiency, the program should focus on refining its instructional strategies to bridge the gap between perceived effectiveness and actual language skill improvement.

From the findings of this study, several implications can be drawn for the future development and improvement of intensive English programs. Firstly, the high scores in student satisfaction regarding teaching quality, learning materials, and lecturer effectiveness suggest that these elements are crucial for student engagement and motivation. Therefore, it is essential for program developers to continue investing in high-quality instructional materials and professional development for lecturers to maintain and enhance these positive aspects. The emphasis on creating a supportive and motivating learning environment should be sustained, as it significantly contributes to students' positive attitudes towards the program.

However, the observed gap between students' positive perceptions and their actual improvement in speaking proficiency highlights a need for a more targeted instructional approach. This suggests that while students feel supported and motivated, the teaching methods might not be fully effective in improving specific language skills. Consequently, program designers should consider integrating more practical, speaking-focused activities and assessments that directly align with the desired proficiency outcomes. Additionally, regular feedback mechanisms should be established to monitor and address individual student progress more effectively. By focusing on these areas, educational institutions can enhance the overall effectiveness of their language programs and better support their students in achieving their language learning goals.

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