THE EFFECT OF AN INTENSIVE ENGLISH COURSE ON STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILL IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract:

English speaking skill is important for an English learner. Students as English learners also do variative activities to improve it. The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of an intensive English course on students' speaking skill development. Using a quantitative research design, the study examined the improvement in students' speaking performance before and after participation in a six-week intensive English program. A total of 51 undergraduate students were selected through purposive sampling and assessed using a standardized speaking proficiency test. Pre-test and post-test scores were analysed using descriptive statistics and paired sample t-tests to determine the significance of the observed differences. The findings revealed a statistically significant improvement in students' speaking skills after completing the intensive course, particularly in fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary use. The results suggest that intensive English instruction provides an effective approach for enhancing oral communication skills within a relatively short period. Based on these findings, the study recommends that language institutions and universities integrate intensive English programs as a complementary strategy to regular language instruction to promote more rapid speaking proficiency development.

Keywords: Intensive English course, speaking skill, language proficiency, Speaking skill, higher education

INTRODUCTION

English has become the dominant language of international communication, education, business, and technology. As a global lingua franca, proficiency in English particularly in speaking plays a vital role in enabling individuals to participate effectively in academic and professional contexts. Among the four language skills listening, speaking, reading, and writing speaking is often considered the most challenging to master, as it requires not only grammatical accuracy and vocabulary knowledge but also fluency, confidence, and the ability to interact spontaneously in real time (Peng, 2014; Jamila, 2013). Consequently, improving students' speaking proficiency has become one of the main objectives in English language teaching and learning (Siwathaworn, 2018) . One of the key determinants of pupils' success in English speaking ability was their own initiative. It is advised that students support themselves when they take the initiative to speak, and that teachers correct and offer suggestions to assist students grow as individuals (Liando & Lumettu, 2017).

In one of the reports stated that the goal of college English instruction is to develop students' overall English language proficiency. In this field, the study of spoken English obstacles is very popular(Ahmad, 2015). This report examines

the state of research on spoken language deficits both domestically and internationally, based on a survey of non-English primary college students. It depends on the theoretical underpinnings of Krashen's input hypotheses and Swain's output. The content, object, and technique of this study are determined by integrating qualitative and quantitative research with empirical research, starting with comprehensive data mining in colleges and institutions. This study suggests that non-English primary college students' spoken language hurdles comprise both language and non-linguistic barriers based on a mix of classroom observations, questionnaires, interviews, and other research methods (Mao, 2022).

In recent years, many educational institutions have implemented intensive English courses as a strategy to accelerate language acquisition within a shorter period (Wang & Lam, 2022). These programs typically involve increased instructional hours, focused language practice, and an immersive learning environment (Hsieh, Wu, & Marek, 2017). Such conditions are believed to provide learners with more opportunities to use English actively and develop communicative competence more rapidly than in regular language courses. However, while the benefits of intensive programs are widely acknowledged, empirical evidence quantifying their effectiveness in improving specific skills such as speaking remains limited, especially in certain local educational contexts.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the effect of an intensive English course on students' speaking skills using a quantitative approach. By measuring students' speaking performance before and after their participation in the program, this research seeks to determine whether intensive English instruction produces statistically significant improvement in learners' oral proficiency. The primary procedures for putting the concept into practice are outlined, along with the requirements that must be met. In one of the studies, first-year students at the Pedagogical University who are independently learning English as a foreign language participated in experimental training using the aforementioned model of mastering strategies based on instructions. The efficiency of the selected model of learning methods based on instructions in the process of autonomously learning professionally oriented English communication was validated by the analysis of the research findings (Dmitrenko, Petrova, Podzygun, & Nikolaeva, 2021). The findings of this study are expected to contribute valuable insights to English language educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers regarding the effectiveness of intensive English programs and their potential role in enhancing students' communicative competence.

Despite the growing emphasis on communicative competence in English language education, many students continue to face difficulties in developing effective speaking skills (Pinker, 2014; Iino & Murata, 2015; Jamshidnejad, 2020). Traditional English courses often provide limited speaking practice due to large class sizes, time constraints, and a focus on grammar and written exercises rather than oral communication (Khajavy, MacIntyre, & Barabadi, 2018). As a result, students may achieve adequate knowledge of English structures but struggle to use the language fluently and confidently in real-life situations. To address this

issue, intensive English programs have been introduced as an alternative approach that offers concentrated instruction and increased exposure to the language (Sakti, Jufri, & Gani, 2020). However, questions remain regarding the actual effectiveness of such programs in improving students' speaking performance. Empirical evidence, particularly from quantitative studies, is still insufficient in many educational contexts. This study, therefore, seeks to examine the extent to which participation in an intensive English course enhances students' speaking skills and whether measurable improvement occurs within a short instructional period.

The main objective of this study is to determine the effect of an intensive English course on students' speaking skills. Specifically, the study aims to measure the difference in students' speaking performance before and after completing an intensive English course and assess whether the observed improvement is statistically significant. To achieve the stated objectives, the following hypotheses were formulated:

Null Hypothesis (H$_0$): There is no significant difference in students' speaking skills before and after participating in the intensive English course.

Alternative Hypothesis (H$_1$): There is a significant difference in students' speaking skills before and after participating in the intensive English course.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative research design using a pre-experimental one-group pre-test and post-test design. The purpose of this design was to measure the effect of an intensive English course on students' speaking skills by comparing their performance before and after the intervention. The quantitative approach was selected to provide measurable and objective data that could determine whether the intensive English course led to a statistically significant improvement in speaking proficiency. The respondents of this study were 51 undergraduate students enrolled in the Intensive English Program at one of Islamic State University in East Java, Indonesia. The participants were selected through purposive sampling, as they were all required to complete the intensive course as part of their English language curriculum. All participants had similar English proficiency levels based on a placement test administered prior to the course, ensuring comparability in their initial language abilities. The study was conducted at the Language Centred where the intensive English course took place over a 12-weeks period. The course involved daily sessions focusing on listening, speaking, reading, and writing, with an emphasis on communicative and interactive speaking activities such as role plays, discussions, and presentations. The main instrument used in this study was a Speaking Proficiency Test designed to assess the students' oral communication skills. The test consisted of two tasks that are monologue task; where students spoke on a given topic for two minutes and interview task where students were given some interview question based on some topic they are also engaged in a short conversation with the examiner.

The test was scored using an analytic scoring rubric adapted from the

TOEFL speaking band descriptors, covering five components: fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension. Each component was rated on a scale of 1 to 9. To ensure reliability, two raters independently evaluated the recordings of each student's performance, and the inter-rater reliability coefficient was calculated.

Pre-test: Before the start of the intensive English course, all participants took a speaking pre-test to determine their baseline speaking ability. After that, Intervention: The students participated in the six-week intensive English course, which provided daily exposure to English through communicative tasks and speaking-focused exercises. Then, post-test was conducted. After completing the course, the same speaking test was administered to measure improvement. The next step was scoring and data entry. The scores from both tests were recorded, averaged, and entered into a spreadsheet for statistical analysis.

The collected data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, and percentage) were used to summarize students' speaking performance in the pre-test and post-test. Inferential statistics were applied to determine whether the differences between pre-test and post-test scores were statistically significant. A paired sample t-test was conducted using SPSS software 16.00 at a 0.05 level of significance. If the computed *p*-value was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected, indicating a significant improvement in speaking skills after the intensive English course.

Ethical standards were strictly observed throughout the study. The researcher obtained permission from the institution and informed consent from all participants. The participants were assured that their responses and test scores would be kept confidential and used solely for academic research purposes. Participation in the study was voluntary, and students were allowed to withdraw at any time without penalty.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The statistical results from the students' speaking skills pre-test and post-test results are shown in this part. To find out if the intensive English course resulted in a substantial improvement, descriptive and inferential analyses were performed.

Meanwhile, the purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of an intensive English course on students' speaking skill at the university level. Data were collected from 51 undergraduate students enrolled in an Islamic State University in East Java. The participants were one group pre-test post-test design who participated in the 12-weeks intensive English-speaking course.

The students' speaking skills were measured using a standardized oral proficiency test administered before and after the intervention. The test evaluated five main aspects of speaking: fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of the students' speaking scores

before and after the intensive English course.

Table 1. Mean and Standard Deviation of Pre-test and Post-test Scores (N = 51)

Descriptive Statistic			Statistic	Std. Error
pre test	Mean		70.55	1.442
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	67.65	
		Upper Bound	73.45	
	5% Trimmed Mean		71.00	
	Median		70.00	
	Variance		106.093	
	Std. Deviation		10.300	
	Minimum		42	
	Maximum		86	
	Range		44	
	Interquartile Range		14	
	Skewness		-.551	.333
	Kurtosis		.042	.656
post test	Mean		78.90	.971
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	76.95	
		Upper Bound	80.85	
	5% Trimmed Mean		79.02	
	Median		78.00	
	Variance		48.110	
	Std. Deviation		6.936	
	Minimum		60	
	Maximum		92	
	Range		32	
	Interquartile Range		10	
	Skewness		-.233	.333
	Kurtosis		-.295	.656

As shown in Table 1, the mean score increased from 70.55 in the pre-test to 78.90 in the post- test. The improvement of 8.35 points indicates a considerable enhancement in students' speaking performance after completing the intensive English course. The standard deviation slightly decreased, suggesting that the students' performance became more consistent

To determine whether the observed improvement was statistically significant, a paired sample t-test was conducted.

Table 2. Paired Sample t-Test Results

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences							
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	pretest - post test	-8.353	10.496	1.470	-11.305	-5.401	-5.683	50	.000

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	pre test	70.55	51	10.300	1.442
	post test	78.90	51	6.936	.971

Table. 3 Paired Samples Correlation
Paired Samples Correlations

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	*pretest & post test*	*51*	*.308*	*.028*

The results of the paired sample t-test in table 2 show that the p-value (0.000) is less than the significance level (0.05). Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) is accepted. This indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the students' pre-test and post-test scores. Hence, the intensive English course had a positive and significant effect on the students' speaking skills.

The findings of this study demonstrate that the intensive English course significantly improved students' speaking skills. The increase in the post-test mean score indicates that students became more fluent, accurate, and confident in using English orally after participating in the program. These results align with previous research (e.g., Brown, 2016; Li & Lin, 2018) which found that intensive English instruction fosters rapid language development through increased exposure and practice.

The findings also suggest that participation in an intensive English course significantly enhances students' speaking skills in higher education settings. The notable improvement in fluency and comprehension indicates that the intensive exposure and frequent speaking practice provided during the course were effective in building students' communicative competence. These results align with previous studies (e.g., Brown, 2019; Al-Saadi, 2021), which found that intensive language programs lead to greater speaking fluency compared to traditional semester-long courses.

The improvement in accuracy and pronunciation can be attributed to the continuous feedback and correction sessions integrated into the course. Students reported feeling more confident when speaking English after the program, which supports the idea that increased practice opportunities reduce speaking anxiety

(Zhang, 2020).

Furthermore, the improvement across all speaking components suggests that intensive programs effectively integrate various aspects of oral proficiency, including vocabulary expansion, grammatical accuracy, and pronunciation practice. The significant gain in comprehension also indicates that the students developed better listening and interactive abilities, which are essential for effective communication. The results further confirm that frequency and intensity of exposure are critical factors in language acquisition. Daily contact with the language and consistent practice help learners internalize linguistic patterns and build communicative competence in a shorter time compared to traditional classroom settings. In summary, the findings provide empirical support for the use of intensive English courses as a pedagogically effective approach for enhancing students' speaking performance. Educators are encouraged to adopt similar intensive learning models to maximize oral language development within limited timeframes.

Overall, the results demonstrate that an intensive English course is an effective approach to accelerate the development of speaking skills in higher education. It emphasizes the importance of immersive, communicative learning environments and highlights the value of designing curriculum structures that prioritize frequent and meaningful speaking opportunities.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine the effect of an intensive English course on students' speaking skills using a quantitative approach. Based on the analysis of pre-test and post-test results, it was found that the students' speaking performance improved significantly after participating in the six-week intensive English program. The mean post-test score was substantially higher than the mean pre-test score, and the paired sample t-test confirmed that the improvement was statistically significant at the 0.05 level. The findings indicate that intensive English instruction is highly effective in enhancing students' oral proficiency within a relatively short period. The improvement was evident across all speaking components fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension demonstrating that consistent practice and increased language exposure contribute to better communication skills.

In summary, the study concludes that the intensive English course provided students with more opportunities to practice speaking, receive feedback, and use the language in authentic contexts. Consequently, it proved to be a beneficial approach to improving students' speaking ability and communicative competence.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed. For Educators; Teachers are encouraged to adopt intensive or semi-intensive instructional models that provide students with frequent opportunities for speaking practice (Dörnyei & Muir, 2019). Incorporating communicative activities such as debates, role plays, and discussions can further enhance learners' confidence and fluency. For language program designers, it is

suggested that curriculum developers should consider integrating intensive English courses or modules within regular academic programs. These courses should emphasize speaking as a core component and include systematic assessment to track progress. For Institutions, schools and universities should support intensive English programs by providing adequate time allocation, resources, and trained instructors who specialize in communicative language teaching. For future researchers, it is suggested that future studies could employ a quasi-experimental or experimental design with control groups to strengthen causal conclusions. Additionally, qualitative methods such as interviews or observations may be used to explore students' attitudes, motivation, and challenges during the intensive course.

Although this study provides valuable insights, certain limitations must be acknowledged. The research involved a relatively small sample size and was conducted in a single institution, which may limit the generalizability of the results. Furthermore, the study focused solely on short-term improvement; long-term retention of speaking skills was not examined. Future research could address these limitations by including larger, more diverse samples and conducting follow-up assessments after several months. The study clearly demonstrates that an intensive English course can lead to significant and measurable improvements in students' speaking skills, supporting the integration of such programs into English language education to accelerate communicative competence.

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