An Analysis of the Challenges in Implementing English Speaking Area: A Case Study at SMK Ma'arif 5 Gombong.

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Abstract

This study investigates the challenges encountered in the implementation of the English Speaking Area (ESA) program at SMK Ma'arif 5 Gombong, a vocational high school in Central Java, Indonesia. The ESA program is designed to encourage students to communicate in English in daily school activities, thereby improving their speaking proficiency. However, various obstacles often hinder its success. This research adopts a qualitative case study design, involving interviews with English teachers and students, classroom observations, and document analysis. The results reveal three dominant challenges: (1) students' low motivation and confidence in speaking English, (2) inconsistency in teacher supervision and modeling, and (3) lack of institutional reinforcement and supporting facilities. The study suggests the need for stronger teacher involvement, clearer policy enforcement, and continuous motivation strategies to improve ESA effectiveness.

Keywords: English Speaking Area, speaking skill, implementation challenges, vocational high school, qualitative research

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is one of the essential skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, especially in vocational school settings where students are expected to interact in English in future professional contexts. However, many Indonesian students struggle to develop their speaking ability due to limited exposure and lack of consistent practice. In response to this challenge, some schools have introduced the English Speaking Area (ESA) program as an immersion strategy to provide authentic speaking opportunities throughout the school environment.

At SMK Ma'arif 5 Gombong, the ESA program has been formally introduced to foster an English-rich atmosphere by designating specific zones where students are required to communicate in English. While this initiative aims to enhance oral fluency and boost student confidence, its implementation has not always been smooth. Factors such as student resistance, lack of consistent enforcement, and weak institutional support often limit its success.

This study aims to explore and analyze the specific challenges faced in implementing the ESA program at SMK Ma'arif 5 Gombong. By identifying these barriers, the research hopes to provide practical insights for school administrators, English teachers, and policymakers to strengthen similar programs.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study approach to explore the challenges of ESA implementation at SMK Ma'arif 5 Gombong. Data were collected through:

- Semi-structured interviews with two English teachers and six students from different grade levels.

- Classroom and environment observations focusing on ESA areas, student interaction, and teacher involvement.

- Document analysis of ESA-related school policies, circulars, and program guidelines.

The data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's (1994) interactive model: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Triangulation was applied to ensure validity.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The data obtained through interviews, observations, and document analysis revealed three major categories of challenges:

1. Student-Related Challenges: Students expressed a lack of motivation and confidence in using English during daily interactions. Fear of making mistakes and being judged by peers hindered participation.

2. Teacher-Related Challenges: Inconsistent supervision and modeling by teachers weakened enforcement. Teachers also reported time constraints and unclear mechanisms for enforcing ESA.

3. Environmental and Institutional Challenges: The school environment lacked visual support such as signage and formal policy integration, which reduced institutional reinforcement for ESA.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the implementation of ESA at SMK Ma'arif 5 Gombong is hindered by low student motivation, inconsistent teacher involvement, and limited institutional support. Improving ESA requires collaborative efforts among all stakeholders. Recommendations include increasing teacher engagement, establishing a clear reward system, and integrating ESA formally into school policy.

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