

English Day Program and Its Impact on Students' Speaking Proficiency: A Socio-linguistic Exploration

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Abstract

This study explores the sociolinguistic dimensions of the English Day program and its impact on students' speaking proficiency at SMA Global Madani. By examining how language practices like English Day influence students' confidence, fluency, and language identity, this research highlights the importance of authentic communication environments in language learning. The study employed qualitative methods, including observations and interviews with 15 purposively selected students. The findings indicate that while the English Day program significantly improved students' speaking proficiency, it also presented sociolinguistic challenges such as anxiety and self-consciousness. Nonetheless, consistent exposure to English and supportive social environments helped foster students' confidence and communicative skills. This study emphasizes the importance of contextual and sociolinguistic factors in shaping effective language acquisition practices.

Keywords: English day, Language identity; Sociolinguistic dimensions, Speaking proficiency,

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1. Introduction

In the realm of English language education, the mastery of speaking proficiency remains a core indicator of communicative competence and practical language use. Hidayah et

al. (2023) note that speaking is often regarded as the most difficult of the four language skills, as it requires spontaneous language production, rapid cognitive processing, and sensitivity to various social and cultural contexts. Based on the EF English Proficiency Index (2024), Indonesia's English proficiency, particularly in speaking, remains low, with the country ranking 80th out of 113 nations. Therefore, this study highlights a persistent gap between language instruction and students' communicative performance.

Despite the central importance of speaking skills in second language acquisition, traditional classroom instruction often prioritizes written grammar and vocabulary exercises. This emphasis can lead to a disconnect between learners' theoretical knowledge and their ability to use the language effectively in real-life communication (Dewan & Sharma, 2025). In response to this pedagogical shortcoming, recent language education research has increasingly emphasized the integration of sociolinguistic perspectives into language teaching. Sociolinguistics, as a discipline, investigates the intricate relationship between language and society, emphasizing how language functions as both a communicative tool and a marker of identity, status, and group membership (Jean, 2023). The concept of sociolinguistic competence, as introduced by Rahman et al. (2022), refers to the ability to use language appropriately in different social contexts, considering factors such as the interlocutors' social roles, cultural norms, setting, and communicative purpose. For language learners, particularly in multilingual settings such as Indonesia, developing this competence is essential for effective communication beyond the classroom (Ali et al., 2023).

In this context, pedagogical interventions such as the English Day program serve as innovative and practical responses to bridge the gap between theoretical learning and functional language use. English Day is designed to immerse students in an English-speaking environment, typically for a full school day, where they are encouraged, if not required, to communicate exclusively in English with teachers and peers. This immersive experience simulates real-life language use and creates opportunities for students to experiment with spoken English in a low-stakes, peer-supported setting.

Beyond language exposure, the English Day program introduces students to the sociolinguistic dimensions of communication, such as formal versus informal speech, cross-gender interaction, turn-taking norms, and expressions of politeness, all of which are culturally embedded and often underemphasized in traditional curricula. In such an environment, students not only develop fluency but also begin to internalize the social meanings of linguistic choices, thereby enhancing their awareness of language as a socially situated practice.

The implementation of English Day at SMA Global Madani thus represents more than a supplementary speaking exercise; it is a purposeful strategy aimed at cultivating both linguistic and sociolinguistic competence. In addition to promoting verbal fluency, the program fosters language identity development, encourages cross-cultural awareness, and enables students to engage in communicative practices that mirror authentic, real-world scenarios. Given the growing recognition of sociolinguistic competence as integral to communicative success, it is essential to critically examine how programs like English Day contribute to students' overall language development.

While previous studies on English Day programs have primarily focused on enhancing students' speaking fluency and confidence (Aryaputri & Kaniadewi, 2023; Sinaga, 2018), they have seldom explored the sociolinguistic implications of such programs, particularly in relation to learners' language identity and language-related anxiety. This represents a significant gap in current research, especially in multilingual contexts like Indonesia, where language use is intricately linked to social positioning and cultural identity.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the impact of the English Day program on students' speaking proficiency, with particular attention to its sociolinguistic implications. By examining students' experiences, perceptions, and communicative behavior within this immersive setting, the research aims to contribute to the broader discourse on effective language pedagogy in EFL (English as a Foreign Language). This study not only measures improvements in speaking proficiency but also analyzes how English Day shapes students' language identity and experiences of social anxiety in the multicultural context of Indonesian education

2. Literature Review

2.1. Sociolinguistic Competence

According to Hymes (1972), the concept of sociolinguistic competence emerges from the broader framework of communicative competence. Hymes emphasized that effective communication extends beyond mere grammatical accuracy, requiring sensitivity to the appropriateness of language use in varying social contexts. Denopol et al. (2025) who identified sociolinguistic competence as a fundamental component of communicative competence. They defined it as the ability to produce and interpret utterances appropriately in relation to the speaker's social role, the status of interlocutors, cultural norms, and contextual variables. In educational contexts, sociolinguistic competence is particularly relevant, as it reflects learners' capacity to adapt their language use based on situational demands and cultural expectations, skills that are essential for meaningful and effective communication in a second or foreign language (Li & Pei, 2024).

2.2. Language Identity and Multilingual Contexts

Language identity is a central theme in sociolinguistic studies, particularly in multilingual societies. Carazzai (2016) argues that language is not only a neutral means of communication but a powerful tool that constructs and reflects learners' identities. When individuals acquire languages, they are also negotiating their place in social hierarchies, cultural norms, and membership in communities. In multicultural settings such as Indonesia, learners generally find themselves in a hybrid linguistic context of local dialects, the national language (Bahasa Indonesia), and foreign English. Moving about in this space creates hybrid identities, in which learners repeatedly position themselves based on societal expectations and language ideologies.

Norton & Toohey (2011) identity negotiation theory goes a step further by indicating that language acquisition is inextricably tied to the learner's social investment and agency. Spelling English in English Day can be associated with upward mobility, global citizenship, or social standing. But it also has the power to generate

alienation or resistance, especially when students feel that Englishing is distancing them from their local culture or peer group. English Day then becomes a site where students negotiate in tangible ways who they are and who they wish to be in relation to the language they use. It is essential to understand this dynamic while analyzing the extent to which learners' sociocultural experience relates to institutional language policies.

2.3. English Day as a Language Learning Strategy

English Day programs are an interactive school-based program designed to promote active and functional use of English by the students. English Day programs are usually aimed at providing an atmosphere of English language use in the school setting. The students are encouraged or, in some cases, required to use English exclusively on certain days or for certain hours, both for schooling and for social interaction. Haryanto et al. (2019) contend that such structured exposure promotes language acquisition by enhancing learners' motivation and spontaneous use of language. The program fills the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, thus aiding the internalization of linguistic structures through regular, real-world practice. Moreover, English Day fosters a more interactive language learning environment by moving the emphasis away from memorization by rote to interactive communication, which can enhance learners' confidence and independence in employing the target language.

Placing this study within a wider scientific context, comparison with comparable schemes in other nations is necessary. For instance, the research conducted by Sinaga (2018), in Bogor, the English Day Program successfully improved students' speaking proficiency and engagement in class speaking. These similarities emphasize the regional applicability of English Day measures in non-dominant English contexts and call for joint consideration of the necessity for sensitive, culturally responsive implementation. Through such comparative frames of reference, this study contributes to a growing body of literature critically examining English-only initiatives in schools. It emphasizes the importance of measuring not only linguistic outcomes but also the affective, social, and cultural dimensions of language learning initiatives like English Day.

3. Methods

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative case study approach to investigate the pedagogical and sociolinguistic impact of the English Day program at SMA Global Madani. A case study was chosen because it allows for a comprehensive exploration of a real-life educational intervention within its specific context, capturing complex interactions between learners, language use, and institutional culture (Yin, 2018). This design enabled an in-depth understanding of how the program influenced students' speaking proficiency, sociolinguistic awareness, and emotional responses to language learning.

3.2. Participants and Sampling

Fifteenth-grade students were selected through purposive sampling, focusing on individuals actively engaged in English Day activities and representing diverse speaking proficiency levels. This sampling strategy was chosen to ensure rich, contextually grounded insights from information-rich participants (Nyimbili & Nyimbili, 2024). The sample included both high and low performers, male and female students, and varied

social engagement patterns, to capture a broad spectrum of language learning experiences.

3.3. Data Collection Instruments

Classroom observations were conducted during two separate English Day sessions. The primary aim was to examine students' actual speaking behavior, interaction patterns, and responsiveness to the immersive language environment. An observation checklist was used to assess five core speaking dimensions: comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar, adapted from (Irawan et al., 2022).

Table 1 - Five core aspects observed

Aspects of speaking	Definition	Observation result	Brief description
Comprehension	Ability to understand spoken input and follow classroom activities.	Achieved	Students actively responded to instructions and engaged well with English Day tasks.
Fluency	Ability to speak smoothly without unnatural pauses.	Moderately Achieved	Students spoke in simple sentences but often paused when forming more complex expressions.
Vocabulary	Appropriateness and variety of words used during speaking tasks.	Partially Achieved	Students reused common vocabulary and demonstrated limited lexical diversity.
Pronunciation	Accuracy of sounds, stress patterns, and intonation when speaking.	Partially Achieved	Mispronunciations were observed, especially with longer or unfamiliar words.
Grammar	Use of correct sentence structure, tenses, and subject-verb agreement.	Partially Achieved	Students often made errors in verb tenses and sentence structure, especially in spontaneous speaking.

The observation results indicate that the English Day program effectively promotes student participation and strengthens basic speaking skills, particularly in comprehension and fluency. Students actively engaged in classroom activities, followed instructions, and attempted to express ideas using English, showing growing confidence in using the language. However, the limited range of vocabulary, frequent grammatical errors, and recurring pronunciation issues suggest that while the program fosters willingness to speak, it does not fully address the accuracy or complexity of spoken language. These findings imply that immersion alone may not be sufficient to develop advanced speaking proficiency, and that additional structured support such as explicit vocabulary instruction and corrective feedback may be necessary to reinforce language mechanics and elevate overall performance.

a) Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were administered to all participants to gain insights into their individual perceptions, challenges, and sociolinguistic experiences during the English Day program. The interview format allowed for consistency across participants while maintaining the flexibility to explore unique responses and follow-up questions.

Sample Interview Questions:

1. Do you find speaking English difficult?
2. How do you feel when speaking English in class?
3. Does English Day improve your speaking skills?
4. Are you more confident in public speaking after English Day?
5. What are the challenges you face on English Day?
6. How does social interaction influence your speaking during English Day?

Table 2 - Themes of the interview

Theme	Sub-Themes	Description
Speaking Confidence	a) Confident speakers b) Hesitant speakers	Some students reported increased confidence due to repeated practice, while others still feared making mistakes and speaking in front of peers.
Influence of Social Environment	a) Peer support b) Teacher encouragement c) Social media exposure	Students' speaking habits were shaped by their interactions with classmates, supportive teachers, and exposure to English through digital media platforms.
Consistent Language Practice	a) Regular use of English b) Habitual	Weekly English Day immersion encouraged students to practice English regularly, helping to normalize its use in daily communication.
Speaking Challenges	a) Limited vocabulary b) Pronunciation errors c) Grammatical difficulties d) Speaking anxiety	Despite improvements, students faced ongoing challenges in producing accurate and fluent speech, especially due to linguistic limitations and performance anxiety.

This interview highlights a dynamic interplay between individual learner traits and sociolinguistic context. While the English Day program successfully nurtures confidence and fosters consistent language use, its effectiveness is shaped by the presence of peer interaction, teacher modeling, and personal affective factors such as anxiety and self-esteem. The challenges noted by students suggest that emotional readiness and linguistic competence must be addressed in tandem to optimize outcomes.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

Results from this study evidence that the English Day program influences students' developing speaking confidence and fluency of English positively. Most students suggested that they are more comfortable and courageous when expressing themselves in English after regularly coming to the program.

This tells us that the immersion and communicative learning condition can significantly dispel anxiety associated with foreign language use. To this end, Krashen's (1982) in Yaoqing (2021) Affective Filter Hypothesis is remembered as it posits that increased confidence decreases affective filters on language learning. Additionally, students reported noticing enhanced performance in their speaking, though not as developed as needed for fluency. The above findings adhere to Ningsih et al. (2022) study that established that English Day enhances the students' fluency, particularly when applied in informal speaking contexts. However, classroom observations revealed that fluency improvements were not always accompanied by pronunciation, vocabulary, or grammatical accuracy improvements.

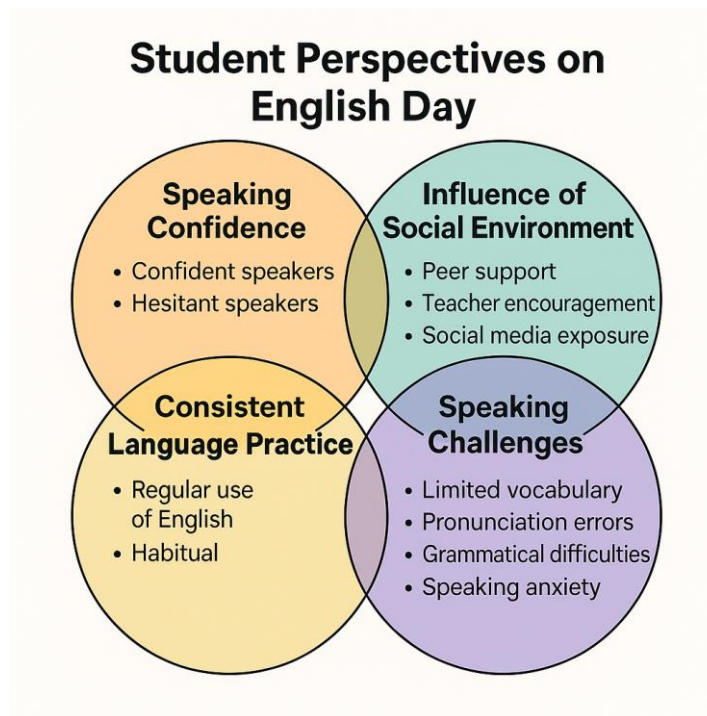


Figure 1 Students' Perspectives on English Day Program

Aside from linguistic progress, the study also found that the social setting plays a role in shaping students' motivation and language behavior. Peer interaction, teacher support, and access to English through social media such as TikTok and YouTube were named significant factors for students' willingness to use English more frequently. These results verify the influence of sociolinguistic context in the learners' speech behavior. This is consistent with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory which cited in (Dewi & Oktapiani, 2024) whereby it gives prominence to the fact that social interaction lies at the core of the learning process, including language acquisition. Natural socio-embedded language use allows learners to encode language patterns in meaningful activity. Further, the presence of digital media brings language exposure beyond the classroom environment, allowing learners to avail themselves of more varied vocabulary, expression, and communicative styles. Therefore, teachers and classmates not just facilitators but also important models of language in the learning context (Rossa et al., 2023)

However, the study also revealed some deep-seated linguistic and psychological impediments to students' progress in speaking skills. Sentence construction, appropriate word usage, and proper pronunciation were complained of by most students. Furthermore, nervousness of public speaking especially if speaking before a group was one significant barrier for certain students, particularly those with limited English exposure outside classroom activities. These findings suggest that while immersion activities like English Day facilitate the use of language in everyday contexts and confidence, these need to be supported by pedagogical practices encouraging linguistic correctness and the reduction of anxiety. This aligns with Norton & Toohey (2011) which cited in (Rahmah, 2013) conviction that language identity and learner confidence are

constructed through social interaction and personal experience of using languages. Therefore, the teacher's role then comes into focus in providing supportive feedback and setting safe, facilitative speaking environments. Systematic practice, lexis building, and anxiety management techniques can also serve as beneficial add-ons in optimizing the general efficacy of English Day.

5. Conclusions

This study concludes that the English Day program plays a significant role in enhancing students' speaking competence by providing an immersive and low-anxiety environment. Students reported increased confidence and fluency, largely influenced by sociolinguistic factors such as peer interaction, teacher encouragement, and media exposure. These findings resonate with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, which emphasizes emotional readiness in language acquisition, and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which highlights the importance of social context in learning. However, despite these gains, challenges remain in the areas of vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and persistent speaking anxiety. This suggests that fluency-building activities alone are not sufficient; targeted instruction and support are needed to address linguistic accuracy and affective barriers.

Given these findings, it is recommended that schools institutionalize English Day as a consistent part of language instruction. To strengthen its impact, English Day can be formally integrated into the national curriculum through ongoing educational initiatives, such as the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project. Teachers should be actively involved in the planning and facilitation of English Day, employing scaffolding techniques, providing timely corrective feedback, and encouraging active participation. Students, in turn, are encouraged to extend their English use beyond school settings, particularly by engaging with digital and social media platforms that provide additional opportunities for practice and authentic communication.

While offering valuable insights, this study is limited by its small sample size and short duration, which may affect the broader applicability of the results. Future studies should adopt longitudinal or comparative approaches to evaluate the long-term effects of English Day and similar immersion programs on language development. Further exploration of individual learner variables such as identity, motivation, and anxiety would also deepen our understanding of the sociolinguistic dimensions that influence second language acquisition, especially within multilingual contexts like Indonesia.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest. All aspects of the research were conducted independently and without any financial, personal, or professional affiliations that could be perceived as influencing the outcomes or interpretations of this study.

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