## English for Communication: Strengthening English Language Skills for Students at Pesantren Mahasiswa Darushohabah Jakarta

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#### **ABSTRACT**

This community service initiative (PkM) addressed the critical need for English communication skills among students at Pesantren Mahasiswa Darushohabah in Jakarta. Recognizing English proficiency as an essential global competency, the program targeted persistent challenges in oral communication faced by pesantren students (Santri) due to limited practice opportunities and confidence issues. The "English for Communication" seminar employed Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) methods, combining motivational lectures with practical speaking exercises including role-plays, simulations, and interactive discussions. Fifteen participants engaged in 2 hours of intensive training focusing on daily communication scenarios, strategies for improving speaking skills, and confidence-building techniques. Pre-activity observations revealed students' initial reluctance and anxiety about speaking English, particularly in formal settings. However, post-activity evaluations demonstrated significant improvement in participation levels, with 80% of attendees actively engaging in conversation exercises by the session's conclusion. Qualitative feedback highlighted increased motivation and reduced speaking anxiety among participants, who particularly valued the non-judgmental learning environment. The program successfully achieved its dual objectives of enhancing practical communication skills and fostering self-efficacy, as evidenced by participants' requests for ongoing English clubs and additional learning materials. This intervention demonstrates the effectiveness of CLT approaches in religious educational contexts and underscores the importance of creating supportive environments for language practice. Recommendations include establishing regular speaking sessions and developing contextual learning resources to sustain the program's impact.

**Keywords:** English for Communication, Communicative Language Teaching, speaking anxiety, self-efficacy, pesantren education

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

English is an international language that plays a vital role in various aspects of life, including education, business, technology, and international diplomacy (Santhosh, 2025). In today's globalized era, English proficiency has become a fundamental competency that every individual must possess, including university students and pesantren (Islamic boarding school) Without adequate students (santri). English skills, individuals will face accessing limitations in global information and opportunities. In the context of education in Indonesia, English has been integrated into the formal curriculum at both secondary and higher education levels. However, empirical evidence shows that students' English proficiency remains relatively low, particularly in oral communication. Many students still lack confidence when speaking English, whether in academic forums or daily interactions (Nety et al., 2020).

This phenomenon stems from multiple factors, including teaching methods that overemphasize grammar and reading comprehension while providing limited opportunities for students to practice English in real-life situations. As Amiruddin et al., (2022) emphasizes, speaking and listening skills are two critical competencies that must be developed in foreign language teaching, as they directly determine an individual's communicative ability. The challenge of English mastery is particularly acute for students in *pesantren* environments. As religious-based non-formal educational institutions, pesantren tend to prioritize Islamic studies such as Quranic exegesis (tafsir), hadith, Islamic jurisprudence (figh), and Arabic. Consequently, English receives inadequate attention in pesantren, both in terms of teaching and practical application. Furthermore, the perception that English is difficult and

daily irrelevant to the needs of *santri* (pesantren students) further diminishes their motivation to learn. This situation is exacerbated by limited access to quality English teaching resources in *pesantren*, including professional instructors, supporting facilities, and contextual learning materials. Yet, in modern context, santri are expected to master not only Islamic sciences but also adapt to global developments, including foreign language proficiency. English competency will open broader opportunities for santri to access international literature, participate in academic conferences, pursue overseas studies, and engage in global discussions (Umar, 2021).

these challenges, To address systematic efforts are needed to enhance English skills among santri, one of which is through Community Service Programs kepada Masyarakat or (Pengabdian) PkM). of higher As part education's *tridharma* (three pillars of service), PkM plays a crucial role in community capacity building, including language education. Through PkM, universities can contribute significantly by applying lecturers' academic expertise to benefit the wider community. In this context, the PkM program aims to equip *pesantren* students with practical English skills while building their confidence to use English in daily life. One effective strategy for teaching university **English** to and pesantren students is the Communicative Language **Teaching** (CLT) This approach. approach emphasizes developing communication skills through direct practice in contexts relevant to learners' lives. Nggawu & Thao (2023) assert that CLT prioritizes language as a tool for conveying meaning rather than merely mastering grammatical structures.

Psychological aspects such as motivation and confidence also play pivotal roles in successful English learning. According to Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory, individuals with high self-confidence are more likely to attempt and utilize their skills, including speaking a foreign language. Therefore, English training programs or seminars must also address psychological particularly in building participants' confidence. Against this background, the PkM program titled English Communication at Darushohabah Student Islamic Boarding School in Jakarta is both relevant and strategic. Designed to provide motivation, insights, and basic communication English skills to *pesantren* students, this program aims to help them understand English's importance while encouraging them to practice it in daily communication.

The program focuses on improving speaking skills through various methods, including inspirational lectures, conversation simulations, role-playing, interactive discussions. and These methods encourage participants to not only understand theory but also practice directly in a comfortable and engaging environment. Additionally, the program seeks to change participants' mindset that learning English must be difficult and tedious. Instead, with the right approach, it can be an exciting and challenging experience. Strengthening internal motivation and providing self-learning strategies are also crucial components, Low Student Confidence in Using enabling participants to continue learning independently after the program concludes (Nurrahmi et al., 2023).

Thus, this PkM program is expected to serve as a starting point for pesantren students to enhance their English proficiency - not only for academic purposes but also to broaden horizons, strengthen competitiveness, and unlock greater opportunities at national and international levels. This PkM report provides a comprehensive overview implementation process, outcomes, and reflections that can serve as evaluation

material for similar future programs. The program's success also reflects the synergy between universities and nonformal educational institutions improving the quality of globally competitive Indonesian human resources. Recognizing these conditions, Pradita University initiated the English for Communication seminar through its PkM program to enhance santri's confidence and practical English skills for daily communication.

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## 2. PARTNER INSTITUTION'S **CHALLENGES**

The partner institution for this Community Engagement Program (PkM) Darushohabah Student Islamic Boarding School in Jakarta, a non-formal educational institution that serves as both a residence and a center for character and skill development for university students from various Jakarta institutions. While emphasizing Islamic and moral values, this pesantren (Islamic boarding school) also encourages its santri (students) to acquire supporting skills relevant to contemporary challenges, including foreign language proficiency.

However, several challenges exist regarding English language competency among the pesantren's students:

# **English**

The primary issue is students' lack of confidence in English, particularly in spoken communication. Despite having learned English in school and university, many remain reluctant to speak due to fear of mistakes or lack of fluency. This speaking anxiety significantly hinders their speaking skill development.

#### 2. Limited Access to Contextual **English Learning**

English learning opportunities within the

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pesantren environment remain scarce. There are no dedicated classes or programs - either formal or informal - designed to improve students' English skills. Previous English instruction typically overemphasized theoretical aspects like grammar and reading, neglecting practical communication skills like speaking and listening.

## 3. Unsupportive English Practice Environment

As a student pesantren focused on character and Islamic education, English is rarely used in daily communication. The primary languages are Indonesian for general use and Arabic for religious activities, leaving no natural environment for English practice.

# 4. Limited Awareness of English's Importance for Self-Development

Many students haven't fully recognized how English proficiency could benefit their future development. Some perceive English as irrelevant to their primary focus on religious or other academic studies, creating motivational challenges for English learning.

# 5. Insufficient Teaching Resources and Mentoring Programs

The pesantren lacks qualified English instructors and structured mentoring programs. While some students attempt self-study, these efforts remain sporadic and lack systematic guidance. Given these challenges, intervention through training seminars is necessary to provide enlightenment, motivation, and practical strategies for students to begin developing their English skills. The "English for Communication" PkM program aims to be an initial step in addressing these issues while paving the way for more sustainable English development programs within the pesantren environment.

# 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

# 3.1 The Importance of English Proficiency

English has become a global language used across various domains, including education, business, and international communication. Sharma (2022) asserts that English serves as a lingua franca, bridging nations in social, economic, and political interactions. In education, English proficiency is essential for accessing global literature and pursuing advanced studies abroad. English competence extends beyond grammatical knowledge; oral communication skills are paramount. Shella Gherina Saptiany & Bayu Ade Prabowo (2024) emphasizes that speaking proficiency is the primary indicator of practical language ability in real-world contexts.

## 3.2 English Communication in Non-Formal Education

non-formal educational institution, pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) hold significant potential for equipping *santri* (students) with globalization-era skills, including English. However, Sholihah et al., (2024) that notes **English** instruction in *pesantren* often faces challenges, including limited teaching resources and non-applicable methodologies. Thus. developing approaches that foster motivation and confidence in learning English is critical. One effective method is Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which prioritizes language as a communication tool rather than mere grammatical mastery (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

# 3.3 Building Confidence in English Communication

Self-confidence is a psychological determinant of success in foreign

language communication. Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory posits that individuals with strong self-belief are more likely to attempt and utilize their including speaking English. Therefore. **English** instruction for *santri* requires strategies to strengthen motivation and confidence, such as participatory methods (conversation simulations, role-playing) and inspirational content about English's global relevance.

## 4. METHODOLOGY

This Community Service Program (PkM) employed a participatory approach, actively involving partner institutions in planning, implementation, and evaluation (Hall et al., 2021). This method ensured the program aligned with the actual needs and conditions at Darushohabah Student Islamic Boarding School in Jakarta, fostering a collaborative environment that promoted sustainable development and mutual learning.

#### 4.1 Implementation Stages

This Community Service Program (PkM) was carried out through several stages as follows:

#### a. Partner Needs Assessment

The initial stage was carried out through ISTR communication and coordination with the Islamic boarding school administrators to identify the problems faced by students regarding their English language skills. Information was gathered through informal interviews with the administrators and several students residing at the boarding school. The identification results revealed a need to enhance students' confidence in speaking English and a lack of speaking practice in their daily activities.

## **b.** Material Development

Based on the results of the needs assessment, the team designed a seminar material with the theme *English for Communication*, focusing on:

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- The importance of mastering English in the era of globalization.
- Strategies to improve speaking skills effectively.
- Introduction to basic phrases and expressions for daily communication.
- Tips for building self-confidence in using English.

The materials were designed in the form of an interactive presentation combined with simulations and simple conversation exercises.

## c. Program Implementation

The activity was conducted on May 20, 2025, at the hall of Darushohabah Student Islamic Boarding School in Jakarta, attended by approximately 15 university students from various higher education institutions in Jakarta. The session lasted for 2 hours, from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM (Western Indonesia Time).

#### **Methods Used:**

# - Interactive Presentation of materials on the importance of English and strategies for enhancing speaking skills. The speaker encouraged participants to actively engage by posing thought-provoking questions to spark discussion.

Simulation and Role Play: practiced **Participants** simple **English** dialogues through conversation scenarios relevant to daily life, such as selfintroduction, asking for

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- information, or engaging in short discussions.
- Discussion and Q&A: A session was provided for participants to share their experiences, challenges in learning English, and possible solutions to overcome them.

## d. Program Evaluation

After the activity, a simple evaluation was conducted through verbal feedback from participants regarding the perceived benefits and their expectations for follow-up programs. The majority of participants felt that the program was beneficial as it provided motivation and broadened their perspectives, encouraging them to be more confident in using English.

#### 4.2. Data Collection Methods

During the program implementation, data was gathered through three primary approaches:

- **1. Direct observation** of participant engagement levels and responses throughout the seminar sessions
- 2. Post-event informal interviews to collect participant feedback, impressions, and suggestions for future program improvements
- **3. Photographic documentation** to visually capture activities and support reporting of PkM outcomes

#### 4.3 Data Analysis Approach

The data were analyzed descriptively to assess the level of participants' engagement, enthusiasm, and the effectiveness of the methods used during the activity. The analysis integrated the results of observations, interviews, and documentation. Through this methodological approach, the PkM activity was expected not merely as a one-way knowledge transfer, but as an

empowerment process that could motivate students to continuously develop their English language skills independently (Budiman et al., 2023).

### 5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Direct Observation Results** 

Direct observation was conducted during the English for Communication seminar at Pondok Pesantren Mahasiswa Darushohabah Jakarta on May 20, 2025. Based on observations during the event, it was noted that the 15 participating students showed a fairly good level of participation, although with varying intensity in each session. In the initial sessions where the material was delivered through interactive lectures. participants appeared passive and tended to listen without much interaction. A few participants seemed hesitant to ask questions or provide responses when the speaker initiated discussions. This was understood as initial awkwardness, especially since the topic discussed related to skills they rarely practiced directly, namely speaking in English.

However, changes began to appear the activities progressed conversation simulations and role plays. After being given simple dialogue examples by the speaker, participants were encouraged to try, albeit with limited Enthusiasm vocabulary. increased noticeably when participants were paired to simulate self-introductions in English. Some participants even began to laugh and enjoy the learning process due to the relaxed and pressure-free atmosphere.

Moreover, participants' responses during discussions were very positive. They were willing to express the difficulties they faced in learning english, such as lack of vocabulary, fear of mispronunciation, and difficulty in understanding rapid english conversations. Participants were also actively seeking effective ways to expand

their vocabulary and practice speaking skills without having to attend formal courses. Overall, the observation results indicate that participants became more confident over time. Initially passive participants became actively engaged in plays and discussions. demonstrates that interactive methods and direct practice are effective in building students' confidence to communicate in english. The presence of speakers who shared personal experiences in learning english from scratch also motivated participants not to hesitate to try. This aligns with the previous findings of ardhana & sadikin (2025), who reported that the use of role-play methods helps students become more active confident in speaking English.

## 6. DISCUSSION

The observations demonstrate that an engaging, participatory, and practiceoriented learning approach is crucial for building participants' confidence in speaking English. A relaxed classroom atmosphere that avoids judgment of mistakes proved to be a key factor in encouraging active participation. These findings align with the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which emphasizes creating authentic learning situations where participants can use meaningful, real-world contexts. Furthermore, Bandura's (1997) selfproves particularly theory efficacy relevant here, as participants' confidence in their own abilities demonstrably grew when provided with opportunities to practice in a supportive environment. These findings provide empirical evidence that **English** language acquisition among pesantren students can enhanced significantly through instructional methods that incorporate deliberate practice opportunities, self-reflection, structured and psychologically safe learning space.



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Foto1: Group discussion

However, the observation also noted some challenges, such as a number of participants who were still shy and only joined the simulation because they were invited by their peers. This indicates the deeper need psychological reinforcement strategies to consistently foster their confidence. In addition, the limited time available restricted each participant's opportunity to practice. Therefore, follow-up activities in the form of regular coaching programs or the establishment of an English community within the pesantren environment are important recommendations to ensure that the participants' growing enthusiasm can be continuously developed and enhanced in a sustainable manner. The participants showed great enthusiasm throughout the activity. They were actively engaged in the discussion sessions and conversation practice. The participants' responses indicated that the practical and interactive learning methods helped them gain more confidence to start speaking in English.

This activity also revealed that participants' motivation to learn English can be enhanced through an inspiring approach that is relevant to their needs as university students. Some participants even suggested follow-up programs such as speaking classes or the establishment of an English club within the pesantren.

# **6.1 Informal Interview Results with Participants**

After the English for Communication seminar at Pondok Pesantren Mahasiswa Darushohabah Jakarta, informal interviews were conducted with several participants to gather their impressions, messages, and suggestions regarding the

> event. These interviews were carried out spontaneously and casually to obtain honest and genuine responses from the participants. The interview results showed that, in general, participants felt happy and found the materials delivered in the seminar helpful. They admitted that they rarely received training or specific motivation to improve their Englishspeaking skills, especially through interactive and practical approaches like those they experienced in this event. Several participants mentioned that the delivery method used by the speaker felt light, easy to understand, and did not make them feel pressured even though they had to speak in English. They felt more encouraged to try despite still having shortcomings, especially pronunciation and vocabulary.

One of the participants said:

"Usually, learning English feels tense and I'm afraid of saying something wrong. But earlier, the atmosphere was relaxed, so I felt braver to try, even though I still made mistakes."

Another participant added that activities like this should not be held just once, but should be made continuous so that their skills can keep improving. They also suggested having weekly speaking classes or a special practice forum for pesantren students who are interested in developing their English proficiency.

"If possible, there should be follow-up speaking classes every week, so we don't forget and can keep practicing."

In general, the participants gave very positive impressions of the activity they attended. They expressed their happiness in gaining a new experience that was different from the English learning they usually received at school or university. One of the participants stated:

"Usually, learning English is just theory in class, and we never get to practice speaking directly. Earlier, we were given the opportunity to try speaking, and even though I was still nervous, it made me more enthusiastic."

Another participant also expressed that the relaxed atmosphere of the activity made them less afraid to try speaking in English despite making many mistakes. They felt more confident because the speaker did not criticize their mistakes but instead appreciated their efforts each time they tried. One participant said:

"What I liked about this activity is that we weren't scolded for making mistakes when speaking. So I felt more confident to try speaking even though it was still broken."

Several participants also highlighted the importance of conducting such activities regularly. They felt that attending a one-time seminar was not sufficient to significantly improve their English skills. The participants hoped that the program would continue in the form of weekly speaking classes or the establishment of an English community within the pesantren environment. One participant commented:

"If possible, don't let it be just a onetime event, but make it a regular practice. At least once a week we can have speaking practice together so we don't forget."

In addition, the participants also requested to be provided with learning materials or simple modules as a guide for self-study. They suggested having a list of daily phrases, speaking tips, and recommendations for learning media such as English videos or podcasts. One participant said:

"We also need some guidance for selfpractice. For example, a list of daily words or sentences, and links to videos or podcasts so we can practice listening at home."



Foto 2: Interactive communication

#### **6.2 Discussion**

From these informal interviews, it can be concluded that participants need more than just temporary motivation. They require a sustainable platform such as an English Club, along with regular mentoring, to ensure that the speaking confidence they have begun to develop does not diminish over time. These are in line with findings the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, which emphasizes the importance of direct practice in foreign language learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Moreover, the participants' suggestion to establish a learning community aligns with the concept of a language learning community, which is believed to strengthen language skills through interactions among its members (Thornbury, 2005).

addition to establishing a community, the provision of supporting materials such as modules, lists of daily expressions, and online learning resources is essential to maintain the continuity of participants' learning outside formal forums. This is important to ensure that have participants easily accessible learning tools available at any time. Thus, the interview results reinforce the importance of designing a sustainable development program as a follow-up to the seminar, so that participants' English proficiency can be improved more effectively and continuously. interviews also revealed that some participants struggled to find peers to practice English with in the pesantren environment due to the absence of a

community or like-minded peers. Therefore, they proposed that the pesantren facilitate the establishment of an English Club or an English-speaking community as a platform for regular practice.

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In addition, participants also hoped to be provided with simple modules or materials that they could use for selfstudy, such as lists of common phrases, tips for practicing speaking at home, and video or audio resources to help improve their listening skills. This informal interview indicates that the participants' needs extend beyond merely receiving motivation; they also require facilities and ongoing support to improve their English The participants' positive impressions of this activity suggest that the approach used was appropriate. However, to achieve a more significant impact, it is necessary to follow up with an intensive and systematic program.

The participants' suggestion establish an English-speaking community is highly relevant to the theory of the Language Learning Community, which asserts that foreign language learning becomes more effective when conducted within a supportive community that shares common goals (Thornbury, 2005). With such a community, participants can encourage one another, provide mutual feedback, and practice consistently. In addition, providing supporting materials such as simple modules or lists of practical expressions would participants engage in self-directed learning outside formal forums. This is essential to maintain the momentum and motivation that have been built during the seminar. Thus, the results of this interview serve as an important foundation for developing follow-up programs, whether the form of regular speaking workshops, the establishment of an English Club, or the provision of selflearning materials that are easily accessible to participants within the pesantren environment.

#### 7. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of direct observation and informal interviews conducted during the Community Service (PkM) activity themed English for Communication at Pondok Pesantren Mahasiswa Darushohabah Jakarta, it can concluded that this program successfully participants' increased engagement elicited positive and responses. The activity was attended by 15 students who previously had limited exposure to practical English speaking within the training pesantren environment. From the observations during the seminar, it was evident that although participants were initially passive and hesitant, they gradually showed the courage to try speaking in English. The application of interactive methods such as role play, conversation simulations, and open discussions proved effective in overcoming their initial awkwardness. Participants became more comfortable and motivated due to the relaxed atmosphere of the activity, which demand perfection did not pronunciation or grammar.

The results of the informal interviews reinforced these findings, where participants expressed that they felt confident after having opportunity to practice speaking. They also appreciated the delivery method, which was not only theoretical but also participants practical. In addition, suggested that such activities should not end with a single session but should be continued through sustainable programs, such as weekly speaking classes or the establishment of an English community within the pesantren. Participants also requested support in the form of simple learning modules, lists of common phrases, and recommendations for selflearning resources such as videos or podcasts. This suggestion highlights the need to strengthen the aspect of

continuous learning that supports the participants' English skills beyond the seminar sessions.

Thus, it can be concluded that this PkM activity was effective as an initial stimulus in building students' confidence to speak in English. However, to achieve better proficiency, follow-up actions are necessary in the form of regular mentoring, the establishment of a learning community, and the provision of supporting materials to ensure that learning continues in a sustainable and well-structured manner.

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