

ENGLISH STUDENTS' COMMUNICATION SKILLS DEVELOPMENT THROUGH PARTICIPATION IN THE MBKM PROGRAM

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ABSTRAK: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi proses peningkatan keterampilan komunikasi bahasa Inggris dan penerapannya pada mahasiswa jurusan bahasa Inggris. Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan fenomenologi, studi ini melibatkan sepuluh peserta dari Departemen Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris yang berpartisipasi dalam Program MBKM. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui wawancara dan dokumentasi, yang memberikan bukti substansial terkait tujuan penelitian. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan analisis tematik yang dikembangkan oleh Braun dan Clarke. Dua teori utama yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah Teori Pembelajaran Pengalaman oleh David A. Kolb dan Model Komunikasi SMCR oleh David K. Berlo. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan sembilan tema utama dari wawancara: motivasi peserta untuk bergabung dengan Program MBKM, proses awal partisipasi, situasi yang mengharuskan penggunaan bahasa Inggris, faktor-faktor yang meningkatkan keterampilan komunikasi bahasa Inggris di Departemen Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, tantangan yang dihadapi selama program, peningkatan keterampilan komunikasi bahasa Inggris, mata kuliah yang dikonversi dalam Program MBKM, relevansi mata kuliah departemen dengan Program MBKM, dan dampak keseluruhan Program MBKM pada Departemen Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris. Kesimpulannya, penelitian tentang Program MBKM memberikan wawasan penting tentang pengalaman mahasiswa bahasa Inggris, menekankan tema seperti motivasi, proses partisipasi, tantangan, dan peningkatan keterampilan komunikasi. Studi ini selaras dengan Teori Pembelajaran Pengalaman dan Model Komunikasi SMCR, menyoroti pentingnya keterlibatan aktif. Temuan ini juga menghubungkan dengan literatur yang ada tentang pendidikan bahasa berbasis pengalaman, menegaskan relevansi dan dampak yang lebih luas dari Program MBKM dalam meningkatkan keterampilan komunikasi bahasa Inggris di kalangan mahasiswa.

Kata Kunci: Pengalaman Belajar, Komunikasi Bahasa Inggris, Program MBKM

ABSTRACT: This research aims to explore the process of enhancing English communication skills and its application to English department students. Employing a qualitative method with a phenomenology approach, the study included ten participants from the English Education Department who were part of the MBKM Program. Data collection involved interviews and documentation, providing substantial evidence related to the research objectives. Thematic analysis, as developed by Braun and Clarke, was used to analyze the data. Two primary theories guided this research: Experiential Learning Theory by David A. Kolb and the SMCR Model of Communication by David K. Berlo. The research findings revealed nine main themes from the interviews: participants' motivation to join the MBKM Program, the initial participation process, situations requiring English use, factors enhancing English communication skills in the English Education Department, challenges faced during the program, improvement in English communication skills, courses converted into the MBKM Program, the relevance of department courses to the MBKM Program, and the overall impact of the MBKM Program on the English Education Department. In conclusion, the research about the MBKM Program provides important insights into English students' experiences, emphasizing themes such as motivation, participation process, challenges, and communication skill improvement. This study aligns with Experiential Learning Theory and the SMCR Model of Communication, highlighting the importance of active involvement. The findings also connect with existing literature on experience-based language education, affirming the broader relevance and impact of the MBKM Program in enhancing English communication skills among students.

Berlo. The findings revealed nine key themes from the interviews: participants' motivations for joining the MBKM Program, the initial process of participation, situations necessitating the use of English, factors enhancing English communication skills within the English Education Department, challenges faced during the program, improvements in English communication skills, converted courses within the MBKM Program, the relevance of department courses to the MBKM Program, and the overall impact of the MBKM Program on the English Education Department. In conclusion, the research on the MBKM Program provides significant insights into the experiences of English students, emphasizing themes such as motivation, participation processes, challenges, and the improvement of communication skills. This study aligns with Experiential Learning Theory and the SMCR Model of Communication, highlighting the importance of active engagement. The findings also connect to existing literature on experiential language education, underscoring the broader relevance and impact of the MBKM Program on enhancing English communication skills among students.

Keywords: *Learning Experience, English Communication, MBKM Program*

INTRODUCTION

The MBKM policy has been introduced to promote autonomous and flexible learning in higher education, enabling universities to implement innovative methods that help students achieve optimal levels of attitude, knowledge, and skills. Additionally, the policy aims to strengthen ties between academia and industry, preparing students for the workforce from the outset. Activities under the Merdeka Campus include internships, student exchanges, teaching assistantships, research, humanitarian projects, entrepreneurial activities, independent studies, and thematic community services (KKNT). This experiential learning program allows students to realize their full potential by pursuing their interests and talents.

According to Kolb (2014), experiential learning uses personal experiences as a learning medium, encompassing information not only from books or teachers but also from students' own experiences. This theory posits that experiential learning engages the entire person, including their body, thoughts, feelings, and actions, significantly enhancing the learning process.

English is recognized as a global language, with over a billion speakers worldwide, emphasizing its crucial role in today's interconnected world (Dutta, 2019). The use of English facilitates communication and fosters relationships between individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Experiential learning allows students to engage with a

global network, developing a deeper understanding and appreciation of different cultures, and fostering a sense of global citizenship (Cyphert et al., 2016).

Through hands-on experiences, students can apply their language proficiency in real-world settings, improving their capacity to interact with diverse individuals. The SMCR model (Sender, Message, Channel, Receiver) by David K. Berlo, while recognizing communication as a unidirectional process, highlights the importance of clear messaging but lacks feedback mechanisms (Berlo, 2017).

The lack of communication skills among English Department students is a notable issue, as many struggle to improve their English proficiency. White et al. (2023) demonstrated that communication skills can be enhanced through critical thinking and problem-solving techniques. Moreover, honing these skills is crucial for future workforce readiness (Jose et al., 2017). Bethards (2014) found that experiential learning programs improve language skills, and Cho (2020) asserts that strong communication skills enhance academic performance through active participation in field-based learning.

Proficiency in English is essential for both academic and professional pursuits. However, only 24 students from the Muhammadiyah University of Jakarta enrolled in the MBKM Program for the academic year 2022-2023, indicating a low level of interest. This issue highlights the need for further exploration into the application of English in communication.

Therefore, this research focuses on the learning experiences of English students' communication skills in participating in the MBKM Program.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted from December 2023 to February 2024 at Muhammadiyah University of Jakarta, a private campus in South Tangerang. The method employed was qualitative, utilizing phenomenology. Phenomenological research aims to understand participants' descriptions of a phenomenon based on their own experiences. Interviews and documentation were used to collect data. The research design is qualitative phenomenological, using purposive sampling to select participants. Participants were ten English Department students who participated in the MBKM program from 2022 to 2023. Data collection techniques included interviews and documentation. Thematic analysis

was used to analyze the data, involving six phases namely familiarizing the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing potential themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher selected ten English Department students who participated in the Internship Program (Certified Internship/Magang Bersertifikat), Student Exchange (International Credit Transfer and Independent Student Exchange/Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka), and Teaching Assistants in Education (Teaching Campus/Kampus Mengajar) as interview participants.

Before conducting the interviews, the researcher contacted the participants via WhatsApp.

The interviews were conducted between the 18th of December 2023 and to 1st of February 2024, and all participants were required to sign a Statement of Participant Consent form. The interviews took place offline in the library and classroom on campus. The researcher recorded the participants' voices as they responded to the questions. To maintain confidentiality, all participants' names are abbreviated as BNK (Participant 1), RZA (Participant 2), SNRS (Participant 3), TH (Participant 4), ARS (Participant 5), EM (Participant 6), FA (Participant 7), MRSE (Participant 8), NAP (Participant 9), and MC (Participant 10).

The findings of this research have been presented based on the interpretation of data collected from interview recordings of participants. The interviews were conducted in the Indonesian language to minimize misunderstandings between the researcher and participants. The researcher transcribed the interview recordings and analyzed the data by identifying important themes and sub-themes. The findings show that the ten English Education Department students who participated in the MBKM Program had similar experiences. The researcher identified nine themes from the data, namely:

1. Motivation to Participate

Friends from other majors, the program's benefits, parental encouragement, and the desire for new experiences motivated participation.

2. Initial Process

The selection process varied by program (ICT, PMM, Kampus Mengajar, Magang Bersertifikat) and included academic qualifications, language proficiency, and practical skills.

3. Use of English

Participants used English in diverse situations, such as academic activities, international interactions, and job-related tasks, enhancing their language skills.

4. Factors Enhancing English Skills

Classroom experiences, international interactions, learning materials, and supportive environments boosted English communication skills.

5. Challenges in Enhancing English Skills

Challenges included varying proficiency levels, language disparities, teaching strategies, and job demands, requiring adaptability and continuous effort.

6. Skill Enhancement After Participation

Participants saw improvements in confidence, conversation skills, and overall proficiency through social interactions, academic exposure, and practical experiences.

7. Course Conversion

Success in converting courses depended on credit compatibility and program structure, with some requiring additional effort for non-converted courses.

8. Course Relevance

Most participants found their courses relevant to their MBKM programs, with practical applicability in real-world scenarios.

9. Impact on the Department

The program positively affected academic quality, university recognition, and future educator development, though impacts varied by program and individual.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the research on the MBKM Program has uncovered significant insights into the experiences of English Education Department students. The identified themes, such as participants' motivation, the initial process of participation, challenges faced, and the improvement of English communication skills, align well with the Experiential Learning Theory, emphasizing the importance of active engagement and concrete experiences in the learning process.

Additionally, the application of the SMCR Model of Communication sheds light on the communication dynamics within the program, highlighting the roles of participants as sources, the conveyed messages, channels of communication, and the impact on the receiving end.

Moreover, the research draws connections to relevant studies, emphasizing shared focuses on experiential learning and the enhancement of language skills. These connections indicate a broader relevance of the findings, linking them to existing literature in language education and experiential teaching strategies. Overall, the study contributes valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of language development within the MBKM Program and provides a foundation for understanding the effectiveness of experiential learning in enhancing English communication skills among students.

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