

MORNING ENGLISH PROGRAM (MEP) AS A STRATEGY TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS AT SMK BHAKTI MULIA PARE KEDIRI

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the activities of MEP and their impact on improving students' speaking skills. This study applied a descriptive quantitative method. In collecting the data, the researchers of the administered questionnaire were divided into two groups: an English teacher at SMK Bhakti Mulia Pare and 11th-grade students who became members of the MEP. Then, the researcher interviewed five students and one teacher to expand the information received. Data analysis was done by calculating the percentage of students' participation in each activity. The supporting qualitative data was analyzed by collecting, displaying, and drawing conclusions. The reliability of the study data was checked through data triangulation. The results of this study showed that the MEP activities consisted of speeches, reading aloud, telling stories and group discussions. Following the implementation of these activities, students' speaking skills, which include grammatical accuracy, pronunciation skills, vocabulary mastery, fluidity, and the ability to organize concepts in speaking, improve. In addition, students experience low anxiety and are more interested in learning English. This positive impact results from the teacher's role in preparing appropriate teaching methods and creating a positive learning environment. Henceforth, this study emphasizes the importance of planning before implementing an English program and adopting similar activities to improve students' speaking skills.

Keywords: Community Language Learning, Extracurricular Activities, Morning English Program, Speaking Skills

INTRODUCTION

Based on the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 62 of 2014 concerning extracurricular activities in primary and secondary education, it is stated that each school can provide opportunities to develop students' competencies by implementing extracurricular programs. Extracurriculars are programs that can facilitate the development of students' potential through the development of talents, interests and creativity, as well as the ability to communicate and work with others. Since this is not compulsory, students have the right to take it. As mentioned by Azoua (2020) and Khikmiah (2011), there are several ways to improve English proficiency, one of which is to join an English club, a program for students who want to learn and be more

involved in English with their additional schoolmates outside class or extracurricular program. Bhakti Mulia Pare Vocational School is a vocational school with various majors that implements an extracurricular program called the Morning English Program (MEP). This research aims at improving the students' English language skills.

MEP is an English language proficiency improvement program designed in such a way for students at SMK Bhakti Mulia Pare that focuses more on students' speaking skills. Mulyasa (2007) states that extracurricular programs are certain programs that are held outside of regular school time to support and improve student competence. This school's material presented is about English communication skills delivered in stages. MEP is a learning process based on community language learning (CLL) that relies on language training and habituation to help students improve their Speaking skills. Surahman and Sofyan (2021) mention that CLL's strengths are its emphasis on individual learning, the informative and nonjudgmental role of the facilitator, and the transfer of learning tasks and responsibilities of the students themselves.

Meanwhile, Halimah (2018) believes that learning CLL strengthens relationships among students in class. Students can acquire new skills through contact with one another and by engaging directly with the instructor. At least four skills must be mastered in MEP learning: listening, speaking, reading and writing. By mastering listening and reading, students can get information from what they hear and read. Speaking and writing skills are types of output skills that students get from listening and reading processes. Therefore, this article focuses more on students' Speaking skills because extracurricular MEP dominates to enrich students' speaking skills. Another goal of MEP is to support student's academic achievement and improve students' ability in English according to each major.

The standard for students' English skills in vocational schools is that they are expected to be able to use English in communicating according to the context of the field. In previous research, Woods (2005) stated that oral communication skills depend on listening skills while listening skills require reading and writing skills because these skills are interdependent on one another. That is, oral skills cannot be separated from other skills and teaching and learning activities in MEP evidence this. In addition, a fun classroom environment at MEP can make students stress-free and increase enthusiasm for learning. In addition, Fitriany (2021) in her study found that a good strategy allows students to achieve effective learning outcomes and makes it easier for them to design ideas to speak. Furthermore, the findings of Melviza (2017) and Pereira (2013) explained that students believe they have improved their pronunciation, vocabulary, and fluency through participation in English extracurricular programs. This outside class program is quite beneficial for students to improve their linguistic and speaking skills.

According to several other studies, the learning approach in the form of a language learning community has certain weaknesses that must be known and highlighted. Cheng (2019) stated that the fundamental problem that arises from English club extracurricular learning activities is the repetition of topics carried out continuously so that they do not arouse students' enthusiasm for learning. Then, the low quality of the program reduces the interaction involvement of students. This scenario arose because of a lack of careful planning in the English extracurricular program. For this reason, regarding the benefits and

limitations of the CLL method in teaching English, it must be planned following the initial objectives of the activity. The program can assist in developing and preparing students' personalities as a whole thoroughly and be useful in the world of work after graduation according to each major. This article explores how MEP activities influence improving students' speaking skills and what activities are carried out by MEP at SMK Bhakti Mulia Pare to strengthen students' speaking skills.

Speaking Skills

Speaking is communicating thoughts, ideas, or feelings through spoken words or verbal language. It involves producing sounds and forming words and sentences so others can understand. Hymes (1971) defined speaking as an interactive verbal process that involves a speaker and a listener engaged in the act of communication and considers the social, cultural, and situational factors that influence the communication process. In addition, Thornbury (2005) explains that speaking has two primary functions: the first is a transactional function, and the second is an informational function. When someone speaks to others as part of an informational function, the focus is on the exchange of information or on enabling the trading of goods by one person to another. To have a conversation like this interaction, speakers need to acquire the skills of explaining a need or something, asking questions, asking for clarification, justifying opinions, making suggestions, clarifying understanding, and making comparisons to agree and disagree. Everyone can practice all of them if they understand and master speaking skills. If students have a good command of English, they should be able to communicate with others easily and effectively (Leong & Masoumeh, 2017).

Brown (2004) classifies five stages of effective speaking skills. The first is the silent or receptive stage. At this moment, a person cannot produce words to speak but has already started to understand the language being heard. The second is the early production stage. In this case, a person can produce short and simple words which mainly relate to daily physical needs. A person can use simple phrases, longer sentences, and proper grammar at a later stage. In the fourth stage, a person can already speak fluently and start using more complex and proper language. The last stage is advanced fluency, when a person can use the language fluently and properly in complicated communication situations. Students or people need to learn those skills to form the correct words when speaking. However, it should be noted that these stages of effective speaking skills are general and may vary depending on the person and the situation. According to the CEFR Council of Europe (2018), Speaking skills is the capacity to produce and understand oral messages in a given language at a given level of proficiency.

Communicative Language Learning (CLL)

Community Language Learning (CLL) is a humanistic and holistic approach to language teaching and learning that Charles Curran developed in the 1970s. It is based on the idea that learning a language is a social and emotional process and that learners should be encouraged to work together in a supportive and collaborative environment. This idea is in line with CLL, which acts as a learning approach by involving students in a language set and sharing their understanding of the language by involving others (Nurhasanah, 2015). Surahman and

Sofyan (2021) mention the strengths of CLL in its emphasis on individual learning, the informative and nonjudgmental role of the facilitator, and the transfer of learning tasks and responsibilities of the students themselves. In addition, CLL emphasizes the linguistic aspects of language study and the more humanistic and philosophical aspects of acquiring a second language. This position goes beyond highlighting the advantages of a student-centered teaching approach (Nurhasanah, 2015).

In CLL, language learning is a deeply personal and emotional process influenced by the learner's attitudes, beliefs, and experiences. The teacher acts as a facilitator or counselor, helping the learners to express their thoughts and feelings in the target language. The goal of CLL is not only to help learners acquire language skills but also to develop their self-awareness and self-confidence. Halimah (2018) believes that CLL strengthens relationships between students in class. The students can gain new knowledge through their relationship with each other and from how they engage with the instructor. In the CLL procedure, the teacher and learners sit in a circle, facing each other. The teacher starts a conversation in the target language, and students respond in their native language. The teacher then translates the learners' responses into the target language and helps them rephrase their thoughts in the target language. Through this process, learners gradually begin to speak in the target language and develop their speaking skills. In their research, Yulindasari & Kusriandi (2018) said that students' motivation to use the English they had just produced could be increased through participation in a community language club. Therefore, English teachers must provide many opportunities for their students to speak English during the education process in regular courses. Additionally, learners should be encouraged to express their emotions and feelings freely, which can help reduce anxiety and increase motivation.

Morning English Program as an Extracurricular

Morning English Program is a learning process based on community language learning (CLL). It relies on language training and habituation to help students improve their Speaking skills at SMK Bhakti Mulia Pare Kediri. MEP is an intensive English language learning extracurricular program guided by experienced tutors. This guidance is carried out in the class of students from each department. An English tutor guides each class. This activity was carried out by English tutors recruited from several English language courses in the English language village of Pare-Kediri, which is domiciled in the Tulungrejo area. This activity is held in the morning during the first hour of class from 06.45 to 07.45 am. The students receive this guidance four days a week on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday. Elnadeef and Abdala (2019) state that the English club program aims to create a friendly atmosphere where participants can practice their spoken English without feeling inferior, expand their vocabulary and increase the use of idiomatic expressions.

The material in MEP is delivered in three stages of English for communication. The first stage is the pre-elementary level when the students are still in class X semester 1. The second stage is called elementary level, when students are still in class X semester 2. The third stage is survival level, when students are still in class XI semester 3. This program is delivered when students are in class XI, semester 4, to prepare students to enter class XI. For the students to be more enthusiastic about participating in this lesson, the school held a study

tour program to Bali at the end of the third stage. This activity was held to hold the final exam for MEP activities. The students will meet with foreign tourists to communicate directly to prove they can speak English. Students can participate with their chosen group for this final project. Most educators know that leaving the classroom is the most effective way to encourage student dialogue. Classroom limitations can be reduced by cultivating favorable conditions for learning; one example of such an arrangement is the English club (Arum, 2018).

METHODS

This study used a quantitative descriptive method by observing objects using field facts according to observations. Researchers used this research method to discover information directly and deeply and be able to describe and analyze data in a well-defined way. This study aims to collect data on MEP activity and its impact on students' speaking skills development from Vocational High Schools (SMK) Bhakti Mulia, Pare, Kediri, East Java, Indonesia. Study participants were divided into two groups: one English tutor at SMK Bhakti Mulia Pare and 44 11th-grade students who became members of the MEP. The 11th grade was selected because they took longer to join the MEP than lower grades. So, their perspectives and experiences are more diverse, and they provide a large amount of data for this research. Data were obtained using two methods: an online questionnaire using the Guttman scale to avoid the ambiguity that arises through the Google Form and direct interviews in class. After completing the questionnaire, five students were randomly selected from the participants in this class to be interviewed to continue data collection. The data is then processed in several steps, as Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested, including data compression, data presentation, and conclusion of all the data collected.

RESULTS

This study aims to examine the activities of the Morning English Program (MEP) and its impact on improving students' speaking skills. Therefore, this study's results are presented per the research objectives.

Morning English Program (MEP) Activities

Questionnaires and interviews were carried out with teachers and students to obtain data. Based on the results of the questionnaire, the MEP activities that students take part in are described in

Table 1. Morning English Program (MEP) Activities that the Students' Joined

| No | Activities | Yes (%) | No (%) | Total Respondents |
|----|------------------|------------|----------|-------------------|
| 1. | Speech | 44 (100%) | (0%) | 44 |
| 2. | Reading Aloud | 43 (97,7%) | 1 (2,3%) | 44 |
| 3. | Story Telling | 41 (93,2%) | 3 (6,8%) | 44 |
| 4. | Group Discussion | 43 (97,7%) | 1 (2,3%) | 44 |

Table. 1 shows that the speaking activity is students' most preferred MEP activity, with evidence of 100% student participation. Then followed by the second favorite activity, reading aloud and group discussions with the same percentage of student participation, and in fourth place was storytelling. The percentage of each MEP activity will represent their agreement on the impact of the activity on improving their English proficiency. Furthermore, the results of more detailed quantitative calculations supported by interview results and descriptions of activities will be presented in the following sub-themes.

Speech

Based on the administration of the questionnaire (see Table 1), it was found that forty-four students had filled out the questionnaire, and all students answered "yes." This activity became the most chosen by all students to admit that speech could improve their English Speaking skills with 100% agreement. As shown in Figure 1, they think that speaking activities greatly contribute to improving their English speaking skills. Therefore, it can be concluded that all respondents agreed that speaking activities at MEP had a significant impact on improving students' speaking skills.

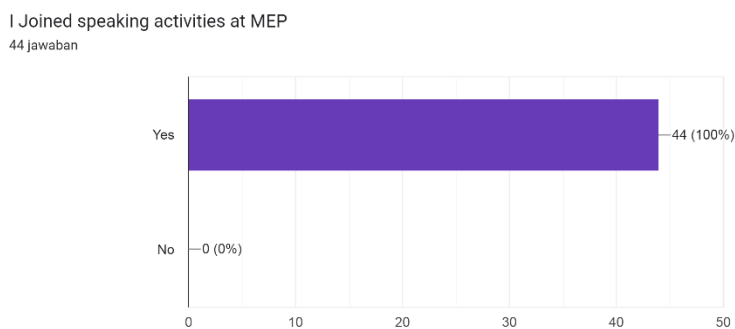


Figure 1. Speech as an activity to improve students' Speaking skills

Students' perceptions about the impact of speaking activities to improve their speaking skills were based on the activities they carried out during speech preparation, implementation, and evaluation under the guidance of an MEP teacher. The teacher gives two types of speaking activities during teaching. The first is a speech prepared by students using tutor materials. The students were instructed to understand the text and record the important points of each speech paragraph. After that, students are expected to be able to develop it using their own words. Then, the speeches that the students themselves write. The students are instructed to make their speech in this section. They are allowed to vote and write on whatever topic they want. The teacher (T) explained,

"I usually use two strategies when practicing my speech. The first is that I offer my writing to them, and the next is that students make speech texts according to their own themes,"

After that, there were the speeches the students wrote themselves. In this section, students are allowed to write their content. They can choose topics that interest them and

are free to write about them. Students have the opportunity to practice speaking in front of groups through this exercise. Instructor and students view performance. Afterward, the instructor and other students provide feedback and ideas about student performance. The instructor also provides suggestions and adjustments to students' pronunciation. Students have the opportunity and experience to speak in front of others due to participating in this event. In addition, it also increases student confidence. This situation also helps students improve their ability to integrate the concepts conveyed in their speech. students 1, 2, and 4 (S1, S2, and S4) stated:

"We are usually told not to be pushed by texts when practicing speaking. Consequently, we use our phrases, which are not always the same as the text. After our performance, the teacher gave us feedback about our performance and pronunciation, what was right and not right,"

Reading Aloud

The second activity is reading aloud. Students who joined in this activity amounted to 43 or 97.7%. They consider this activity useful to improve their English skills. Meanwhile, one other student (2.3%) thought reading aloud could not improve their English proficiency (see Figure 2).

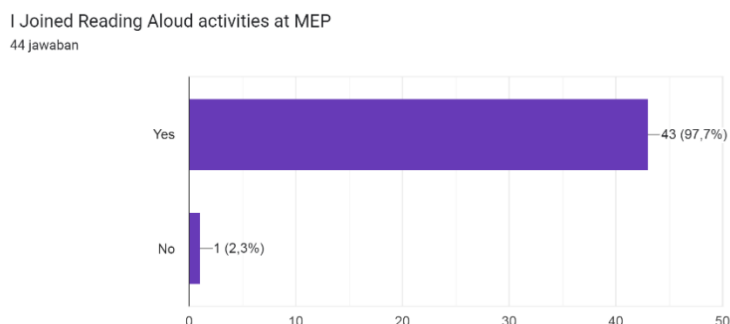


Figure 2. Reading aloud as an activity to improve students' Speaking skills

Describing the implementation of the reading-aloud activity, the instructor asked students to read the material that had been previously assigned. Afterward, students read the assigned material aloud in front of the class. Reading aloud to students is meant to inspire them to read independently. Their understanding of words also increases as a result of this activity. In addition, reading aloud is used as a method to prepare students to take part in competitions. This activity improved Students' communication skills to be more fluent and improved. The goal is to prepare students for the activities that will include learning. The following can be shown through interviews with students who are respondents (S2):

"We were instructed by the teacher to read the text aloud while paying attention to all the reading material. When we mispronounce words, the instructor will also provide feedback on our pronunciation,"

The teacher starts teaching speaking to students by integrating reading aloud with first instructing them to get a lot of practice from reading English textbooks aloud, not only in the school environment but also in their own home. This instruction is provided so students can improve their speaking skills in both environments.

Story Telling

The third Morning English Program (MEP) activity carried out by students is a storytelling. The results of giving questionnaires related to this activity are depicted in Figure 3.

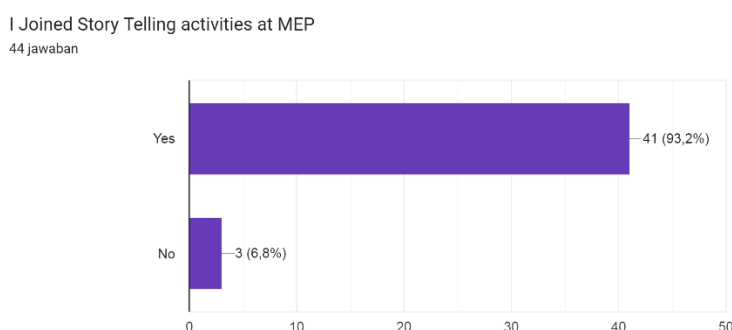


Figure 3. Storytelling as an activity to improve students' Speaking skills

According to students, storytelling is also an interesting activity to be carried out at Morning English Program (MEP). However, it was not as popular as speaking and reading aloud. This result can be seen in Figure 3. Out of 44 respondents who filled out the online questionnaire, 41 (93.2%) respondents stated they "agree" with the storytelling method in MEP to hone their speaking skills. Three respondents (6.8%) disagree. Students find storytelling interesting because everyone is having fun listening to other people's amazing thoughts. In this activity, students are required to find narrative stories to equip them before doing storytelling activities. They are free to make the story as interesting as they see fit. This setting was made to make the plot easier to understand. During their preparation before the performance, students learn about grammar and narration in this exercise. Teacher (T) stated:

"Students will learn grammar through practice questions. Students are first asked to find narrative text. After that, students must identify grammatical and ideas in each sentence of the text. Understanding the subject matter of the text can make it easier for students to tell a narrative. Students are then instructed to remember the passage. Then they are invited to retell a narrative to their classmates,".

Students sometimes make mistakes When they retell the narrative in front of the class. Like errors in pronunciation, they are usually the most common mistakes. In this case, the teacher does not interrupt their performance in the middle of it. The teacher provides feedback on their performance when the activity has been completed. This exercise will also

encourage other students to concentrate on listening and understanding the context of their friend's presentation. They were then invited to provide input and critique their friends' performances. This situation was also shown through conversations with other students who were respondents (S3):

"This exercise is often used as a competition between classes every year, similar to a class meeting. As a result, each student submits one representative to compete. If there is an outside competition, the instructor usually selects one of the best students from the English club to compete,".

Group Discussion

The last activity implemented in the Morning English Program (MEP) was group discussion. There were 43, or 97.7%, students who considered this activity to improve their English Speaking skills. While the other three students (2.3%) thought group discussion could not enhance their English Speaking skills. It is the same with reading aloud activity (see Figure 4).

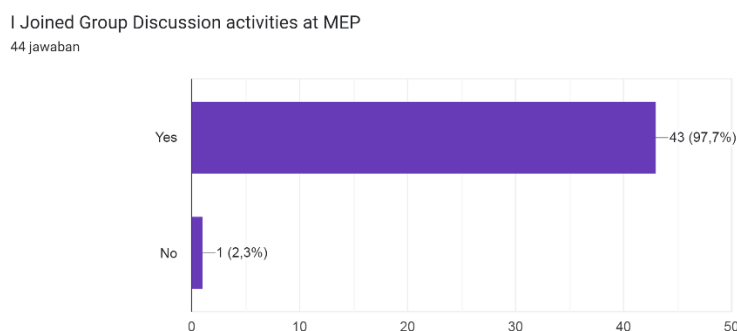


Figure 4. Group discussion as an activity to improve students' Speaking skills

Describing the implementation of the group discussion activity, students found that the activity was interesting since everyone had fun listening to others' amazing thoughts. Moreover, it is frequently held outdoors and it made more relaxing situation. The students were then separated into groups. They frequently talk about intriguing issues. They may review the day's assessment of their MEP activities or express their ideas. Students 3 and 4 (S3 and S4) stated:

"The majority of discussion activities take place outside of the classroom. We were then separated into many groups, each of which discussed a different topic. We also communicate their amazing thoughts on occasion,".

In the group discussion process, the teacher gives freedom to the topics to students so they can express opinions and issue ideas according to their wishes. Teacher (T) stated:

"We continue to provide supervision while students discuss the themes they have chosen. Then the results of these discussions are presented one by one with arguments,"

The Impact of MEP Activities on Students' Speaking Skills

The second research problem to be answered is knowing the impact of Morning English Program (MEP) activities on improving students' speaking skills. Based on the data collected from the interviews, several MEP contributions help improve students' speaking skills. MEP activities at the school had several impacts on students. Students claim that MEP activities gain better grammatical accuracy, flexibility in speaking due to frequent reading, vocabulary mastery, and confidence to speak in front of an audience. These conditions include the S1 and S2 statements, which underline the positive side of their mastery of English due to joining MEP:

"I have benefited a lot since joining MEP. For example, I can improve my speaking skills by studying grammar materials and frequently reading English phrases. There are also storytelling games to help you learn new words. There is more practice than MEP material, such as speeches and storytelling, so I have many opportunities to improve my speaking skills as well as my courage to speak English."

The Morning English Program's contribution to improving students' Speaking skills was also found in vocabulary mastery. Students find words all over the place here. It might also be the words of a classmate, the teacher's explanation, or from another text. The students also become accustomed to playing activities related to vocabulary. They enjoy playing games while learning a new language. It helps them gain a lot and learn to speak well.

Furthermore, through participating in various activities, students improve their pronunciation skills. In the assessment section, the tutor corrects the student's performance and provides examples of correct pronunciation for students' incorrect pronunciation. The students were then taught to repeat a few words accurately. All students in this study felt that their pronunciation had improved since participating in MEP activities.

All participants in the Morning English Program at SMK Bhakti Mulia Pare Kediri, East Java, Indonesia, would probably agree that it is very beneficial for them to become MEP members. They participate in various speaking exercises, one way that activities at the English club help people improve their English skills. If students are to speak English fluently, they must pronounce words correctly, use the proper stress and intonation patterns, and speak in related discourse. Because the audience won't understand our thoughts if we don't speak fluently, the ability to communicate fluently is very important.

DISCUSSION

The discussion section will examine the Morning English Program (MEP) activities and their impact on students' English Speaking skills with theory and studies in previous literature reviews. According to previous research by Jannah et al. (2020), students' speech performances can be a medium for them to share thoughts and ideas with others through the use of words that have been spoken. In speech activities, students must be confident, ready with ideas, and ready to appear in front of many audiences and listeners in a short

time. As with speeches, reading aloud also positively impacted students' English Speaking skills. MEP teachers believe that making reading English textbooks routine will benefit students, including improving students' speaking skills. Through reading, students will have sufficient information as a source of speaking, will be trained to articulate ideas more often to prepare to speak fluently, and will be prepared with better pronunciation when they listen to the reading aloud. This finding aligns with Supraba et al. (2020), who stated that reading aloud can effectively introduce students to English words and pronunciation.

Compared to speech and reading aloud, storytelling activities also require students to practice confidence by sharing ideas and information with others. Storytelling requires the storyteller to employ his imagination in retelling the story. As A.B. (2016) states, storytelling is an oral exercise in which narrative is constructed in the imagination through discussion between the storyteller and listeners in various situations. Storytelling is one of the fun strategies that learners can use to improve their English skills. People use fairy tales to share their experiences, free their imaginations, understand other people's experiences, and understand things and their goals in storytelling.

Discussing the fourth MEP activity, group discussion provides a more relaxed learning environment so that it has a more positive impact on students' English speaking skills. Harmer (2007) states that unscripted discussion activities allow students to speak freely without feeling obligated to follow a theme. These group discussions also help students increase the number of utterances, increase cooperation and bargaining, and serve as exercises to improve students' problem-solving abilities. Although group discussions improve students' speaking skills by requiring them to communicate with other people in the group, they also develop students' cooperation and courage. In addition, group discussions greatly influence the academic sector and offer students leadership and understanding skills. According to Pereira et al. (2013), students are taught how to organize and develop communities to achieve common goals.

While Morning English Program (MEP) is a learning process based on community language learning (CLL) that relies on language training and habituation to help students improve their Speaking skills at SMK Bhakti Mulia Pare Kediri. Based on this finding, the teacher starts a conversation in a group of this community for the target language, and students respond to their project of language. Sometimes, the teacher translates the learners' responses into the target language and helps them rephrase their thoughts in the target language. In this case, students participate in a language set and share their understanding by involving others. In addition, the CLL of MEP emphasizes the linguistic aspects of language study and the more humanistic and philosophical aspects of acquiring a second language for MEP activities by students, such as speech, storytelling, reading aloud, and group discussion.

As a result, all four MEP activities positively impacted students' English speaking skills. The different percentages in the results of Table 1 represent the freedom of students to choose the best MEP activity that suits their learning style and interests. In addition, the teacher's role is to provide a supportive learning environment by planning MEP teaching methods such as indoor and outdoor, designing MEP with prepared materials and developing student materials themselves, as well as providing serious and relaxed speaking practice, which has proven successful in helping students improve their speaking skills in

English. Finally, this study implies the importance of planning before implementing English programs and adopting similar activities to improve students' speaking skills in schools.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to analyze MEP activities and their influence on students' English-speaking skills at SMK Bhakti Mulia Pare. Based on the findings, students at MEP participated in four activities: speeches, reading aloud, telling stories and group discussions. However, the activity most students chose, which was considered effective in improving their English Speaking skills, was the speaking activity, with 100% of the students' responses agreeing. During the implementation of MEP activities, the teacher's role is very important to design the best methods and provide a more supportive and comfortable learning environment to help students' English performance get better.

As a result, many positive impacts emerged as a characteristic of improving students' English speaking skills. Its characteristics are increased grammatical accuracy, mastery of vocabulary, fluency in speaking, pronunciation ability, and ability to construct concepts in speaking. In addition, students experience lower anxiety and are more interested in learning English after participating in MEP activities. Therefore, this study recommends that educational institutions and teachers consider good planning and providing a supportive learning environment important before implementing an English program.

This research has theoretical implications because it enriches knowledge regarding establishing an English language extracurricular program through the community language learning (CLL) model. Not only that, it also provides practical implications for a teacher or institution outside the context of this research to adapt the implementation of MEP activities to improve students' English speaking skills. However, due to context, time and participant limitations in this study, broader research with similar or different community language learning (CLL) models would be preferable. It could be redeveloped according to the conditions of students in each school.

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