

IMPROVING ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY THROUGH ENGLISH WEEKEND PROGRAMME AT MAA: AN ACTIVITY-BASED APPROACH

Gita Utari¹

gitaaa04sep21@gmail.com

Zulfi Zumala Dwi Andriyani²

zumalazumala@iaida.ac.id

Abstract

This study aims to determine the improvement of English language skills of students of Madrasah Aliyah Al-Amiriyyah (MAA) through the English Weekend program, with a qualitative approach and case study design. The Object of the study consisted of 200 MAA students participating in the English weekend program, as well as 9 tutors from KH. Mukhtar Syafaat University. Data collection was carried out through three main techniques: semistructured interviews with the Head of Activity Coordinators, Prajapka, and 2 tutors, direct observation of learning activities, and collection of documentation related to the program, including learning modules and student progress notes. Data analysis was carried out using a thematic analysis approach, which included identifying main themes such as improving speaking skills, increasing vocabulary and student confidence, and student motivation to learn English. To ensure the validity and reliability of the study, data triangulation was carried out by comparing information from various sources and discussing the findings with colleagues. This study explores the improvement of English language skills of students of Madrasah Aliyah Al-Amiriyyah (MAA) through the English Weekend program which adopts an activity-based approach. In an increasingly connected world, English language skills are essential. These findings provide valuable insights for the future development of English language learning programs in madrasahs and similar educational institutions.

Keywords: English Language Proficiency, English Weekend, Activity-Based Approach

² University of KH. Mukhtar Syafaat Darussalam, Blokagung, Banyuwangi



¹ University of KH. Mukhtar Syafaat Darussalam, Blokagung, Banyuwangi



INTRODUCTION

English Weekend is a program to improve English language skills at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Amiriyah (MAA) which can be achieved through a program that emphasizes activities, the English Weekend program is very interesting to study because it has succeeded in providing an understanding of learning English and has succeeded in providing evidence of the existence of the English Weekend program at MAA, this activity-based approach is expected to provide a more effective and enjoyable learning experience for students. (Khoiriyah et al., 2024,; Active & Fun, 2021; Kurniawan et al., 2024). In responding to the complexity of educational challenges that are increasingly prevalent in this era of globalization, especially regarding improving English language competence (Students et al., 2022), these problems appear increasingly real and have a significant impact on various levels of society. In today's fastpaced world, English language skills are not only a desirable asset, but also a vital need that can bring change. (Fransiska et al., 2023) However, the implementation of this program can face challenges in terms of active participation of students and availability of time, so maximum support is needed from all parties. The activity-based approach in the English Weekend Program was chosen because it allows students to actively practice and interact in English directly. This is in line with language learning theory which states that active participation in interactive activities can effectively improve language skills (Daya, 2024). Furthermore, a more enjoyable learning environment tends to motivate and engage students more enthusiastically in the program.

Research has shown that activity-based learning significantly improves language skills (Riris Nurkholidah Rambe et al., 2023; Purwadi et al., 2021), especially in speaking and listening. For example, a study conducted in several schools showed that students involved in interactive learning activities experienced significant improvements in their understanding and use of English, However, the same study also found that active student participation was often hampered by time constraints (Nurhayati &, Langlang Handayani, 2020) and commitment issues, highlighting the need for stronger support from teachers, parents, and the school environment to achieve optimal results. The improvement of English skills in MAA can be achieved effectively through the English Weekend Program using an activity-based approach. This method is not only in line with language learning theory, which emphasizes the benefits of active and interactive participation, but also offers a more engaging and enjoyable learning



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experience for students. Research supports the efficacy of activity-based learning in improving language skills (Kartika et al., 2024; Silalahi et al., 2023), especially in speaking and listening. However, the successful implementation of this program can be hampered by various issues related to student participation and time constraints. Therefore, to maximize the effectiveness of the program, it is essential for all stakeholders including teachers, parents, and the school community to provide strong support and overcome these challenges.

Research on English Language Skills Improvement through English Weekend Program at MAA: Activity-Based Approach has been studied extensively by several researchers. Extensive research on English language skills improvement through English Weekend Program, which uses an activity-based approach, is motivated by the recognition of the effectiveness of interactive and participatory learning methods. Tutors have a great responsibility in making the learning process interesting, interactive, and meaningful (Ekaputra et al., 2024). This approach is believed to improve language acquisition by actively engaging students in practical language use, overcoming the limitations of more traditional passive learning methods. The emphasis on the activity-based approach aims to make learning more dynamic and enjoyable. Inspiring learning should be able to unlock students' potential and enhance their abilities which can lead to better retention and application of language skills.

Studies have shown that students who participate in interactive, activity-focused programs make significant progress in English language proficiency compared to those who engage in traditional lecture-based instruction. Evidence includes findings that activities such as group discussions, role-plays, and practice assignments improve speaking and listening skills while increasing student motivation and engagement (Buton, 2024; Nisa et al., 2023). These results validate the effectiveness of the activity-based approach and shed light on the extensive research conducted in this area. Extensive research on improving English skills through the English Weekend Program, which uses an activity-based approach, highlights the effectiveness of interactive, participatory learning methods. This approach actively engages students in practical language use, overcoming the limitations of traditional passive learning methods, and making the learning process more dynamic and enjoyable. Research consistently shows that activity-based learning significantly improves language skills (Rita, 2022), with students who participate in such programs showing marked improvements in English proficiency compared to those who follow conventional lecture-based instruction. The positive



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impact of activities such as group discussions, role plays, and hands-on tasks on speaking and listening skills, along with increased student motivation and engagement, validate the effectiveness of activity-based approaches and underscore the value of ongoing research in this area.

The main objective of this study is to evaluate the extent to which the English Weekend program can improve students' English skills at MAA (Madrasah Aliyah). (Mustikasari, 2020) This study will measure the effectiveness of the program in various aspects of English language skills, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. This study is important because it provides clear insight into the effectiveness of the program in various aspects of English language proficiency, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Bakti et al., 2023). By assessing these diverse language skills, this study aims to ensure that the program has a comprehensive positive impact and provides data that can be used to refine and optimize the program to be more effective. Previous research has shown that programs that focus on developing language skills as a whole are generally more successful in improving students' language skills. For example, research conducted in various educational settings has shown that programs that assess listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills simultaneously produce significant improvements in all of these areas (Bulkis & Amelia, 2024; Arifin et al., 2023). Data from evaluations of similar programs suggest that a holistic approach to language instruction produces better outcomes than programs that focus on only one or two skills. Therefore, evaluating the Weekend English Program across a range of language skills would provide a more complete picture of its effectiveness.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach that aims to understand the improvement of English language skills among students of Madrasah Aliyah Al-Amiriyyah (MAA) through the English Weekend program. This approach allows researchers to explore the experiences, perspectives, and challenges faced by students and tutors during the learning process. (Mustikasari, 2020; Nurhalisyah & Putra, 2021) with a case study design to investigate the implementation of English weekend as a key lens for effective foreign language proficiency transformation at Madrasah Aliayah Al-Amiriyah (MAA) Blokagung. The subjects of the study consisted of students of Madrasah Aliyah Al-Amiriyyah who were involved in the English



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Weekend program, as well as tutors from KH. Mukhtar Syafaat University. This study involved interviews with Prajabka as the Head of Activity Coordinator, as well as direct observation in learning activities.

Data collection was conducted using three main techniques: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with Prajabka and tutors to obtain in-depth information regarding the implementation of the program, observation of the implementation of English Weekend activities to gain a better understanding of student and tutor interactions, as well as the learning atmosphere. Collection of documentation related to the program, including learning modules used and student progress records, challenges faced, and their impact on students. This data collection process ensures that the information obtained covers a variety of perspectives and is relevant to the research topic.

Data obtained from interviews and observations were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. Tagging and categorizing relevant information from interview transcripts and observation notes, Identifying key themes that emerged from the data, such as improving speaking skills, challenges of diversity of interests, and the impact of collaboration with universities, Analyzing the identified themes to understand the impact of the diversity of interests of the English Weekend program on students' English skills and how the program addressed the challenges faced.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the research, researchers conducted data triangulation by comparing information from various sources, including interviews, observations, and documentation. In addition, researchers also conducted discussions with colleagues to obtain input on data interpretation, Obtained approval from all participants before conducting interviews and observations, Ensured the confidentiality of participant identities and information provided during the research process.

The results of the study are presented in narrative form describing the experiences of students and tutors, as well as key findings obtained from the data analysis. This presentation aims to provide in-depth insights into the effectiveness of the English Weekend program in improving students' English skills. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to understand the improvement of English skills of Madrasah Aliyah Al-Amiriyyah (MAA) students through the English Weekend program. Through semi-structured interviews, observations, and documentation, the researcher explores the experiences of students and tutors



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and the challenges faced during the learning process. Thematically analyzed data identified several key themes, including improved speaking skills and the impact of collaboration with universities. With data triangulation, the validity and reliability of the study were assured. The results showed that the English Weekend program was effective in improving students' English skills, providing valuable insights for the development of similar programs in the future.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Improving English language skills among students of Madrasah Aliyyah Al-Amiriyah (MAA) can be achieved through the English Weekend program which adopts an activity-based approach. Activities in this program include adding vacancies, practicing speaking English and others. In the process, English Weekend at Madrasah Aliyyah Al-Amiriyah (MAA) collaborates with UIMSYA students based on the results of the MoU that was previously agreed upon together. The following is the Documentation of the Grand Opening and MoU of the Madrasah Al Amiriyyah English Weekend language program as follows.



Figure.1 Gren Opening & MoU for the Aliyah Al Amiriyah language program

The picture above is an MoU activity carried out by KH. Mukhtar Syafa'at University with Madrasah Al Almiriyyah. Followed by students of class X, accompanied by tutors from UIMSYA students. With the implementation of the English Weekend program which has been agreed upon by Aliyah Al Amiriyyah (MAA) school and KH. Mukhtar Syaf'aat campus, the





students who became companions in the English Weekend activities are presented in the following table:

Table 1. Data on uimsya students who are tutors at MAA

NO	STUDENT NAME	STUDY PROGRAM	FORCE
1.	M. REHAN ADITIA	TBIG	Year 2023
2.	NIA KUNIA WARI	TBIG	Year 2023
3.	NUR HASELIN	TBIG	Year 2023
4.	HABI SUSANTO	TBIG	Year 2023
5.	JUNI ANDRI	TBIG	Year 2023
6.	NUR SELA DWI ANGREANI	TBIG	Year 2022
7.	ARIA MELINDA	TBIG	Year 2022
8.	AVIKA RAHMA	TBIB	Year 2022
9.	MIFTAHUL HUDA	TBIG	Year 2022

Source: informant based on interview

The table above is the data of UIMsya students who are tutors at MAA, representing English Education students who are entrusted to be responsible for the implementation of cooperation between Madrasah Aliyah Alamiriya school and KH. Mukhtar Syafa'at University campus to organize the English Weekend program. The English Weekend program at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Amiriyyah has proven effective in improving students' abilities, especially in speaking. Based on an interview with Prajabka, Head of Activity Coordinator, here are three main findings that show the significant impact of this program.

Strengthening Speaking Skills

Strengthening speaking skills is an important aspect in developing communication skills. This skill not only plays a role in conveying ideas effectively, but also increases one's confidence in various social and professional situations. Several factors that influence speaking skills include vocabulary mastery, sentence structure, pronunciation, and self-confidence. To strengthen these skills, regular practice such as speaking in front of a mirror, participating in discussions, or using storytelling techniques is highly recommended. In addition, enriching vocabulary and practicing proper pronunciation also helps improve communication effectiveness. Feedback from others or self-analysis through video recordings can speed up the improvement process. In the context of language learning, interactive methods such as role play, debates, or group discussions can be used to practice speaking. Activities such as English Weekend encourage students to use English in real situations, significantly improving their



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speaking skills and confidence. Evaluation of these skills can be done by paying attention to fluency, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary use, and clarity of the message conveyed.

Speaking skills are key to effective communication and boosting self-confidence. Important factors such as vocabulary mastery, sentence structure, and pronunciation play a role in strengthening this ability. Regular practice, such as storytelling and discussions, as well as feedback, can help improve speaking skills. In language learning, interactive activities such as English Weekend encourage students to use English in real situations, significantly developing speaking skills and self-confidence. Evaluations based on fluency, grammar, and clarity of messages are benchmarks for progress in these skills. He explained that the approach used in this program is very different from traditional teaching methods. The results of the interview with the activity coordinator Prajabka stated.

"We implement the Outdoor Learning concept that allows students to learn in a fun and interactive atmosphere. In this activity, students do not just sit in class, but are involved in activities that stimulate them to speak. For example, we hold role-playing games and discuss in groups that make them practice speaking directly. Through this method, they learn new vocabulary and how to correct pronunciation without feeling burdened by the learning process itself."

Outdoor Learning makes students learn interactively through role-playing and discussions, helping them improve their speaking skills and vocabulary in a fun way without pressure. The English Weekend program has had a significant positive impact in improving students' English skills, one of which is seen from their success in participating in the speech contest. In the competition, Fatimah Azzahra won 3rd place. The documentation of the championship is as follows.

image 2 documentation of winning students in the speech contest



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The picture above is proof of the 3rd place winner of the English Speech Contest followed by Fatimah Azahra, held by the English Student Association (ESA) located at Universitas PGRI Banyuwangi. This achievement not only shows their progress in speaking English, but also reflects the effectiveness of the English Weekend program in building students' confidence and speaking skills. This success is real proof that with the right guidance and a supportive learning atmosphere, students are able to achieve proud achievements.

Strengthening speaking skills is a crucial step in developing effective communication skills and self-confidence. Factors such as vocabulary, sentence structure, and pronunciation play a significant role in improving speaking skills. Regular practice, the use of interactive methods such as discussions and role-plays, and evaluations based on fluency and clarity of messages can help accelerate the development of these skills. Programs such as English Weekend have proven their success in improving students' abilities, both in terms of English language skills and self-confidence, as seen from their achievements in competitions. With the right approach and a supportive learning environment, students can achieve optimal results in speaking.

There is an increase in students' vocabulary and self-confidence

English Weekend Program tutor interview results The English Weekend Program has proven effective in improving students' vocabulary and confidence in learning English. Through the experience of Anisa Amalia, a tutor from the English Language Education Study Program, it was revealed that the relaxed and interactive approach in this program successfully overcomes the challenges of low student interest and confidence.





Teaching English often faces obstacles, especially related to students' hesitation and fear in speaking. The English Weekend program offers an innovative solution to build students' confidence and enrich their vocabulary. Anisa applies a relaxed and interactive learning approach. Students are encouraged to speak without fear of correction or ridicule, thus creating a supportive environment. In addition, the program gives students the freedom to learn from their mistakes, which accelerates the process of improving language skills.

Through this program, students who were initially hesitant began to show increased confidence and ability to speak English. Their vocabulary grew from only mastering basic words to being more varied. This achievement not only shows their progress in speaking English, but also reflects the effectiveness of the English Weekend program in building confidence and increasing vocabulary. Interview results Anisa Amalia, a tutor from the English Language Education Study Program, shared her experience regarding the challenges of teaching English in the English Weekend program, especially the low interest and confidence of students.

"Through the English Weekend program, he saw a big change. This program, with a relaxed and interactive approach, has succeeded in helping students who were initially afraid to speak, become more confident even though they use a 'broken language'. In addition to enriching vocabulary, English Weekend also creates an environment that supports students to dare to speak and learn from mistakes, so that their language skills improve over time".

The English Weekend program has had a significant positive impact in improving students' English skills, one of which is seen from their success in participating in the Fatimah Azzahra storytelling competition, winning the championship. The documentation of the championship is as follows.

Figure 3 Documentation of winning students in the East Java level Teling Story competition



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The picture above is proof of the 1st place winner of the Teling Story competition participated by Fatimah Azahrah, one of the MAA students, a competition held by IAIDA FAIR 2023 at the East Java level which took place at the Darussalam Islamic Institute (IAIDA) which has now changed its status to KH University. Mukhtar Syafa'at (UIMSYA) 2024. Through the English Weekend program, a relaxed and interactive approach has proven effective in increasing students' confidence in speaking English. Students who were initially hesitant are now more confident in speaking, even though they still use a 'broken language', and their abilities continue to develop along with the increase in vocabulary and learning from mistakes. The English Weekend program has significantly succeeded in improving students' English skills, especially in terms of vocabulary enrichment and increasing self-confidence. Through a relaxed and interactive approach, this program has succeeded in creating a supportive learning environment, where students feel free to speak without fear of mistakes or correction. This pleasant atmosphere not only overcomes psychological barriers such as doubt and fear of speaking, but also makes students more motivated to continue practicing. In addition, the success of students in regional storytelling and news reading events shows that the program not only builds language skills, but also encourages students to perform confidently in various opportunities. The program clearly shows that when given the right guidance and space to learn from mistakes, students are able to make rapid progress in their English skills.





There is student motivation to learn English

Interview results with English weekend tutor Maudina Fatimatuz Zahro The English Weekend Program has shown a positive impact on students' motivation and engagement in learning English. Through Maudina's experience as a tutor, it was revealed that younger tutors can create a more relaxed and enjoyable learning atmosphere. Children feel more comfortable, reduce fear and increase their confidence in communicating in English.

English learning can often be challenging, especially for students who feel pressured when taught by senior teachers. The English Weekend program offers an innovative approach by involving young tutors, creating a supportive and motivating environment. Maudina, as a tutor, creates an interactive learning atmosphere by inserting games and ice-breakers. This approach encourages children to actively participate and enjoy the learning process, which is proven to increase their enthusiasm even though their abilities are still at a basic level.

The children showed high enthusiasm in participating in this program. They felt more relaxed and more open to learning, which resulted in satisfactory results. This program not only teaches English but also builds students' self-confidence, so that they are more motivated to continue learning. The English Weekend program has had a significant positive impact in improving students' English skills. One of the students who participated in the English Weekend program, Ashtrid Q, has successfully participated in the breaking news competition, winning 1st place. The results of this achievement show that the English Weekend program is very helpful in Motivating students to learn English.

Figure 4 documentation of winning students in the Breaking News competition



The picture above is proof of the 1st place winner of the Breaking News competition followed by Ashtrid Q, one of the MAA students, a competition held by Education at the East





Java level which took place at the Universitas PGRI Banyuwangi. The English Weekend program has succeeded in increasing student motivation and involvement in learning English with a relaxed and fun approach. The use of young tutors such as Maudina Fatimatuz Zahro creates a more relaxed learning atmosphere, making students feel comfortable and more confident in communicating. Through fun games and interactions, students become more enthusiastic and motivated, even though they are at a basic level. Their success in the regional level competition proves that this program not only improves language skills, but also students' enthusiasm for learning.

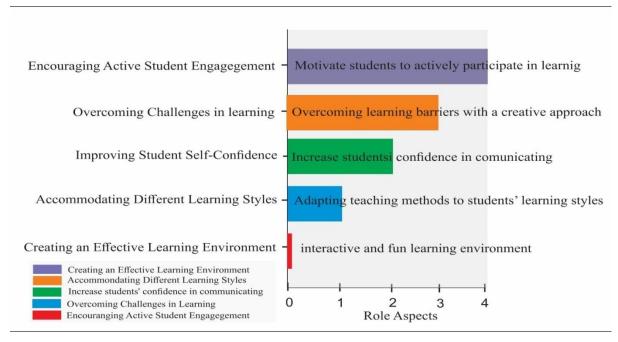


Figure.4 The Important Role of a tutor in The Learning Process

Based on the picture above, as a tutor, having good teaching and interacting skills with students is very important because the role of a tutor is not only limited to transferring knowledge, but also acts as a facilitator in creating a conducive learning atmosphere. The role of a tutor above:

First creating an effective learning environment. A competent tutor can create an interactive and enjoyable learning environment. This is important so that students feel comfortable and motivated to learn. With the right approach, tutors can build a classroom





atmosphere that encourages students to actively participate, especially in activity-based activities such as the English Weekend program.

Second accommodate different learning styles. Every student has a different learning style. As a tutor, it is important to be able to adapt your teaching methods to accommodate these differences. For example, some students may learn better by listening, while others may prefer to learn through hands-on practice. A good tutor will understand this and adapt their approach to ensure that all students are fully engaged.

1. Encouraging Active Student Engagement

A competent tutor is able to encourage active student involvement in learning. An activity-based approach, such as that implemented in the English Weekend program, requires tutors who can make students feel comfortable and motivated to participate in discussions, role-plays, and other activities that improve speaking skills.

1. Overcoming Challenges in Learning

A skilled tutor can identify and address learning challenges, such as students who are unmotivated or having difficulty understanding the material. With a creative approach and appropriate solutions, tutors can help students overcome these obstacles, ensuring that each student can reach their full potential.

2. Improving Students' Self-Confidence

One of the main goals of a tutor is to increase students' confidence in using English, especially in speaking skills. A patient tutor who is able to provide the right guidance can help students feel more confident in communicating, so that they dare to speak and interact using English.

4. Accommodating Different Learning Styles

As a tutor, it is important to ensure that each student receives learning that is appropriate to the way they understand information. Some students may be more visual, while others prefer a kinesthetic or auditory approach. By adapting your teaching methods, you can maximize their learning potential, making the learning process more effective and meaningful.

5. effective learning environment





In addition, a tutor must also create an effective and crucial learning environment, where an interactive and fun atmosphere will motivate students to continue to be involved and enthusiastic in learning. When the environment supports and suits the student's learning style, they tend to be more enthusiastic and learning outcomes increase.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study "Improving English Skills through the English Weekend Program at MAA: Activity-Based Approach", it can be concluded that this program has a significant positive impact on improving students' English skills at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Amiriyah (MAA). The activity-based approach applied in this program has proven effective in improving students' speaking skills which are the main focus of activities in English Weekend.

The English Weekend program at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Amiriyah (MAA) has proven to be an effective innovation in improving students' English language skills, especially in speaking skills and vocabulary enrichment. With a relaxed and interactive activity-based approach, the program creates a supportive learning environment, where students feel comfortable speaking without fear of mistakes. Students' active participation in activities such as role-playing and group discussions not only improves their communication skills but also builds self-confidence. The success of students in storytelling and news reading competitions at the East Java level further underlines the positive impact of the program, which not only trains language skills but also motivates students to be more involved in the learning process. Therefore, support from all stakeholders is essential to overcome possible challenges, ensuring that the program can continue to grow and provide maximum benefits to students.

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