



An Immersive Speaking Program in Kampung Inggris: Teaching Practices and Learner Difficulties

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Abstract

Immersive English programs have increasingly been seen as a practical way to boost speaking fluency among EFL learners in Indonesia. Even so, little is known about how speaking is taught in these programs and what difficulties learners encounter, especially from an instructor's point of view. This study explores how an instructor with seven years of teaching experience delivers speaking instruction in a one-month immersive program in Kampung Inggris and describes the challenges learners typically face during the process. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected through a WhatsApp interview and analyzed thematically based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework. The findings show that the instructor relied heavily on continuous speaking practice through pair-work, individual presentations, performance-based activities, and playful routines like rap-style ice breaking to lower anxiety and encourage spontaneous speech. However, two persistent issues remained: limited vocabulary and low confidence. According to the instructor, the English-only environment and punishment system helped learners gradually overcome these obstacles. This study adds to the growing body of research on immersive learning by highlighting how teaching practices shape the speaking experience in an offline setting. The findings point to the need for carefully structured speaking instruction that balances pressure, support, and repetition to help learners perform confidently in English.

1. Introduction

Being able to speak English confidently and fluently is a major goal for many EFL learners in Indonesia, yet it continues to be one of the most difficult skills to master. Even after years of classroom learning, a large number of learners still struggle to express ideas smoothly and spontaneously. In response to this gap, immersive English programs especially those located in Kampung Inggris have become a popular choice. These programs expose learners to constant interaction in English, both inside and outside the classroom, and are widely believed to help accelerate speaking development.

Research has shown that short-term intensive exposure can meaningfully improve speaking skills. Ary et al. (2023), for instance, found that a six-week virtual immersion significantly improved learners' confidence and communicative fluency. Kaya (2021) also emphasized that frequent interaction in meaningful contexts leads to better oral performance. However, most of the existing studies focus on learners' personal experiences rather than on how instructors design and deliver speaking instruction. In other words, the perspective of instructors especially those working in offline immersive programs in Kampung Inggris has not been explored extensively.

This study helps fill that gap by looking at an immersive speaking program through the eyes of an instructor who has been teaching in Kampung Inggris for seven years. Two theoretical perspectives guide the analysis. Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis explains how emotions such as confidence and anxiety shape language intake, while Swain's Output Hypothesis highlights the importance of producing language rather than only receiving it to achieve progress. These theories help explain both the teaching strategies used and the difficulties learners experience

The study is built around two research questions:

1. What teaching practices are implemented in a one-month immersive speaking program in Kampung Inggris?
2. What learning difficulties emerge during the immersion from the instructor's perspective?

By centering the instructor rather than the learner, this study offers a more detailed look at how immersive speaking programs are actually delivered in offline settings and what challenges instructors must handle in guiding learners toward fluency.

1. Literature Review

1.1 Immersive Learning and Speaking Fluency

Immersive learning is grounded in the idea that language develops most effectively when learners encounter the target language continuously in meaningful interaction rather than only within structured classroom instruction. In immersive environments, learners are encouraged or sometimes required to use English for daily communication, which exposes them to real-time language use and creates natural speaking opportunities. This type of learning often accelerates fluency because learners cannot rely on their first language and are consistently “pushed” to express ideas verbally.

A growing number of studies support the effectiveness of immersion for speaking development. Ary et al. (2023) found that even short-term virtual immersion can significantly improve speaking fluency and confidence. Likewise, Kaya (2021) showed that frequent and meaningful interaction plays a central role in oral performance gains. These findings highlight that immersion, even when brief, can positively influence speaking, although much of the previous research has been conducted in online or hybrid contexts.

1.2 Teaching Speaking in Immersive Settings

Immersive learning creates favorable conditions, but learner progress still depends heavily on how speaking instruction is implemented. A range of teaching techniques have been shown to promote oral proficiency, such as pair work, student presentations, discussion-based tasks, role-play, and performance-based activities. These activities require students to produce spoken output rather than passively receive input, making them particularly suitable for immersive settings.

The instructor’s role is also crucial in scaffolding the learning process. Effective support can take the form of structured speaking tasks, topic guidance, and affective encouragement that helps learners cope with communication pressure. However, there remains a lack of studies focusing on how instructors design and deliver speaking lessons in immersive offline environments. Earlier research still highlights the learner’s perspective, creating a gap this study attempts to address.

1.3 Learner Difficulties in Speaking

Despite the advantages of immersive learning, progress is rarely linear. Many learners still face significant obstacles, especially in the early stages of immersion. Common difficulties include fear of making mistakes, limited vocabulary, difficulty organizing ideas, and low self-confidence. Limeranto and Bram (2022) reported that vocabulary limitations and anxiety are among the most persistent barriers for Indonesian EFL learners, even at the graduate level.

Similarly, Ary et al. (2023) observed that although virtual immersion improved learners' fluency, many participants still experienced nervousness when required to speak spontaneously. These findings suggest that exposure alone is not enough; emotional readiness and instructional support remain essential.

1.4 Theoretical Lens: Krashen and Swain

Two theoretical perspectives are particularly relevant when analyzing immersive speaking programs.

Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis explains that emotional factors play a major role in language learning. When learners experience anxiety, low confidence, or strong fear of failure, the "affective filter" rises and blocks language intake even if input is available (Chao et al., 2020; Nie, 2018; Gandeza, 2023). Conversely, when learners feel relaxed, motivated, and welcomed, the filter lowers, allowing language intake to occur more freely (Du, 2009; Nie, 2018). This theory aligns closely with immersive environments, which can both challenge and support learners depending on how speaking is facilitated.

Meanwhile, Swain's Output Hypothesis suggests that language development requires more than exposure; learners must also produce language. Speaking compels learners to retrieve vocabulary, select grammatical forms, and construct meaning in real time, leading to cognitive and linguistic growth. Therefore, immersive programs that encourage frequent speaking opportunities rather than passive listening tend to produce better outcomes.

1.5 Time to Achieve Speaking Fluency

Even though immersion provides ideal conditions for oral development, research shows that fluency takes time. The level required for comfortable conversational interaction—Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) typically takes 2–3 years in a language-rich environment (Excell, 2019; Iber, 2016; Rantala et al., 2020). Other studies estimate 3–5 years for

stable oral proficiency (Palacios et al., 2024) and 2–4 years to converse fluently with ease (Kotze et al., 2017). These findings imply that short-term immersion programs cannot guarantee full fluency. Instead, they should aim to build confidence, reduce speaking anxiety, and develop speaking routines that learners can improve over time.

1.6 Research Gap Summary

Collectively, existing research confirms that immersive programs can accelerate speaking development, especially when learners receive high exposure and frequent speaking opportunities. However, most studies emphasize the learner's experiences and emotions rather than the instructional strategies that enable or restrict learning. Very few studies in the context of Kampung Inggris examine immersion from the instructor's perspective.

This leaves limited understanding of how teachers design speaking activities, respond to learner difficulties, and manage affective factors in full-English environments. The present study attempts to fill this gap by investigating teaching practices and learner difficulties through the eyes of an instructor with extensive teaching experience in Kampung Inggris.

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design to explore how speaking instruction is carried out in an immersive English program and to identify learner difficulties from the instructor's perspective. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth understanding of teaching practices and learning experiences within a real educational context rather than measuring outcomes numerically.

2.2 Research Context

The study took place in Kampung Inggris, Pare, an educational hub known for its short-term intensive English programs. The selected course implements an English-only environment, where learners are required to use English inside and outside the classroom. This context represents a typical immersive learning setting that emphasizes daily speaking practice and strict verbal interaction rules.

2.3 Participant

The participant in this study was a speaking instructor with seven years of teaching experience in Kampung Inggris. The instructor teaches various immersive speaking classes ranging from basic to intermediate levels. Although the instructor's academic background is at the senior high school level, he has accumulated extensive practical experience in immersive speaking instruction over the years. The participant was selected using purposive sampling because he had direct and substantial experience with the phenomenon under investigation. To protect confidentiality, the instructor's name and the name of the institution are not disclosed.

2.4 Data Collection

Data were collected through a semi-structured WhatsApp interview. This format enabled the researcher to obtain detailed insights while allowing flexibility for follow-up questions. The interview covered instructional approaches, speaking activities, learner engagement, learning difficulties, and strategies used to overcome challenges. All responses were saved and transcribed for analysis.

2.5 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. The analysis followed six steps:

- familiarizing with the data,
- generating initial codes,
- identifying potential themes,
- reviewing themes,
- defining and naming themes, and
- producing the analytical report.

The analysis was conducted manually without the assistance of qualitative software. Thematic analysis was selected because it provides flexibility for identifying and interpreting recurring patterns in narrative data.

2.6 Research Ethics

Ethical considerations were applied throughout the study. The instructor participated voluntarily, and consent was obtained prior to the interview. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, personal details—including the name

of the instructor and the course institution—are not reported in this article. The data were used solely for research purposes.

3. Results & Discussion

The analysis generated two major themes: (1) teaching practices used in the immersive speaking program, and (2) learner difficulties during immersion. Each theme is presented with supporting excerpts from the instructor and interpreted through relevant theories and prior research.

3.1 Teaching Practices in the Immersive Speaking Program

The first theme highlights that the instructional approach in the immersive classroom was designed to maximize continuous speaking rather than prolonged explanation. From the beginning of each lesson, learners were placed in situations that required them to speak. The instructor explained:

“I pair them up to speak about a topic for five minutes, then each of them has to come forward to explain what they understood from their partner.”
(Instructor, personal communication, 2024)

This structure represents a high-output learning environment: learners must produce spoken language in pairs and then individually, which encourages both real-time processing and accountability. This aligns with Swain’s Output Hypothesis, which proposes that language development occurs when learners are pushed to articulate ideas and notice gaps in their linguistic knowledge through production.

In addition to pair and individual speaking tasks, the instructor incorporated performance-based activities to create a low-stress atmosphere:

“The most frequent activities are ice breaking using rap songs and speaking activities.”

Such playful routines function as affective support. They reduce tension and make the learning atmosphere more relaxed, which is consistent with Krashen’s Affective Filter Hypothesis. When anxiety decreases and learners feel comfortable, language intake becomes more effective.

The teaching approach observed in this program reinforces findings from Kaya (2021), who noted that frequent interaction and speaking-centered activities stimulate communicative fluency in immersive settings. It also complements Ary et al. (2023), who reported increased confidence in virtual immersion — whereas this study offers insight into how confidence is

fostered in an offline immersion classroom through structured speaking practice, emotional support, and enjoyable activities.

3.2 Learner Difficulties in the Immersion Program

The second theme centers on learners' challenges. Despite constant speaking opportunities, students struggled with two persistent issues: limited vocabulary and low confidence. The instructor explained:

"The biggest challenges are low confidence and low vocabulary; many learners often ask 'sorry, how to say...'"

(Instructor, personal communication, 2024)

These difficulties mirror findings by Limeranto and Bram (2022), who identified vocabulary limitations and speaking anxiety as the primary barriers among Indonesian EFL learners. Immersive environments create a need and pressure to speak continuously, which can amplify these emotional and linguistic challenges during the early stages of the program.

To help learners overcome these obstacles, the program employed an English-only policy supported by a punishment system:

"The English-only environment and punishment system make them more confident step by step."

While such a system may seem strict, it appears to normalize speaking behavior over time and develop risk-taking attitudes. As learners repeatedly speak despite discomfort, their affective filter is gradually lowered, enabling greater confidence and more secure use of English.

Still, the instructor acknowledged a realistic limitation of short-term immersion:

"They become more confident, but one month becoming fluent is unrealistic."

This perspective aligns with research showing that conversational English proficiency typically requires years rather than weeks. Previous studies indicate that Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills take roughly 2–3 years to develop in a language-rich environment (Excell, 2019; Iber, 2016; Rantala et al., 2020), and oral proficiency can require 2–5 years depending on context (Kotze et al., 2017; Palacios et al., 2024). Therefore, one-month immersion should be viewed not as a path to full fluency but as a catalyst for confidence building, speaking habits, and foundational communicative skills.

3.3 Synthesis of Findings

Taken together, the findings show that successful immersion in speaking requires both pressure to produce language and support to manage anxiety. The instructor's teaching practices intensive speaking activities paired with enjoyable and motivating routines align with both Swain's Output Hypothesis and Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis. Learners benefit most when they are repeatedly encouraged to speak while feeling emotionally safe. Immersion alone does not eliminate challenges; instead, its effectiveness depends on how teachers structure speaking opportunities and regulate affective barriers.

Limitations

Although this study provides meaningful insights into immersive speaking instruction in Kampung Inggris, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the findings are based on the perspective of a single instructor. While the participant had extensive teaching experience, perspectives from multiple instructors or institutions would allow a broader comparison of teaching practices across different immersive programs. Second, the study focuses on a one-month program.

Immersion effects may evolve differently over longer periods, and the study does not capture learners' speaking development beyond the program duration. Third, data were obtained through a WhatsApp interview; therefore, classroom observations or learner interviews might have offered additional layers of understanding. Future studies are encouraged to include multiple data sources and diverse participants to deepen the analysis and strengthen generalizability.

5. Conclusion

This study investigated teaching practices and learner difficulties in a one-month immersive speaking program in Kampung Inggris from the instructor's perspective. The findings show that the program prioritized continuous oral production through activities such as pair work, individual presentations, and performance-based speaking tasks. These activities were combined with playful ice-breaking routines, which helped reduce anxiety and create a comfortable learning environment. Such strategies reflect Swain's Output Hypothesis — emphasizing the importance of producing language — and Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis — highlighting the role of emotional comfort in facilitating language intake.

Despite the benefits of immersion, learners still faced persistent challenges, especially limited vocabulary and low confidence, particularly at the beginning of the program. According to the instructor, the English-only environment and

punishment system gradually helped learners gain confidence, even though full fluency in only one month was unrealistic. This aligns with previous research suggesting that sustained exposure over multiple years is typically required to develop stable conversational fluency.

Overall, this study contributes to the literature by providing an instructor-centered view of immersive speaking instruction within an offline learning environment in Kampung Inggris. The findings underscore the importance of balancing communicative pressure with emotional support. Immersive programs may achieve greater effectiveness when speaking tasks are structured in a way that encourages output while simultaneously managing learner anxiety. Future research may further explore how different teaching approaches and learner support systems contribute to speaking development across varying durations of immersion.

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