

IMPLEMENTING ENGLISH DAY AS A LANGUAGE EXPOSURE PROGRAM IN A VOCATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXT

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Abstract

This study aimed to analyze the implementation of the English Day Program at Politeknik Keselamatan Transportasi Jalan (PKTJ) Tegal within a vocational higher education context. The study employed a qualitative case study design involving 26 fifth-semester students of the Automotive Technology Department, with six participants selected for follow-up interviews. Data were collected through observation, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews and were analyzed descriptively to identify patterns of program implementation in daily academic activities. The findings revealed that the English Day Program was implemented as a structured institutional language initiative through fixed schedules and organized activities, including vocabulary drilling, English conversation sessions, morning roll calls, and language judgment. Supported by institutional regulations and facilitator involvement, these activities created a consistent language environment that encouraged regular English use in campus interactions. The results indicate that structured institutional routines play an important role in sustaining language exposure in vocational higher education contexts.

Keywords: *English Day Program; program implementation; language exposure; vocational higher education;*

1. INTRODUCTION

English has become one of the most widely used international languages in education, technology, and professional communication, particularly in contexts where access to global knowledge and professional interaction is required. In higher education contexts, particularly in vocational institutions, English proficiency is increasingly important for accessing technical information, understanding professional documentation, and communicating within global professional environments (Rose & Galloway, 2019). Students in vocational programs such as automotive and transportation studies frequently encounter technical manuals, safety procedures, and industry terminology that are predominantly written in English. Therefore, English competence is not only relevant for academic purposes but also for future professional practice (Nguyen & Hamid, 2016; Rose & Galloway, 2019).

Despite its importance, opportunities to use English in daily communication remain limited in many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. English learning is often confined to classroom instruction, while authentic communication outside the classroom occurs infrequently. As a result, students may possess basic knowledge of English vocabulary or grammar but still experience difficulty using the language spontaneously in real interaction. In vocational education settings, this challenge may become more pronounced because students tend to prioritize technical competencies and practical training over language learning (Nguyen & Hamid, 2016; Sari & Muliani, 2020). Limited exposure and low confidence, therefore, become significant factors influencing students' willingness to communicate in English.

To address the limited exposure to authentic English communication, educational institutions often introduce language exposure programs designed to encourage habitual English use within the academic environment. One commonly implemented initiative is the English Day Program, which encourages students to use English during designated days or specific campus activities within the campus environment. In institutional contexts, such programs function not only as learning activities but also as forms of language policy aimed at shaping linguistic behavior within educational environments (Baldauf, 2017; Widodo, 2020). The effectiveness of language policies in education depends not only on formal regulation but also on consistent implementation and institutional commitment.

From the perspective of educational implementation theory, successful institutional programs depend on clear procedures, sustained support, and alignment between policy and daily practice (Fixsen et al., 2015; Spillane et al., 2004; Fullan, 2020). A program becomes meaningful when it is translated into shared routines and collective practices within the institutional environment rather than remaining as a symbolic regulation. Therefore, examining how English Day is implemented in daily campus activities becomes essential for understanding the actual functioning of such language initiatives.

Second language acquisition theories also highlight the importance of meaningful language exposure in developing communicative competence. Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1985) suggests that language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to comprehensible input slightly above their current proficiency level. However, exposure alone is insufficient to support language development. Long's Interaction Hypothesis (1996) emphasizes that negotiation of meaning during interaction facilitates deeper processing of language forms, while the Output Hypothesis explains that producing language encourages learners to notice gaps in their linguistic knowledge and refine their communicative ability (Loewen & Sato, 2018). An institutional program such as English Day therefore has the potential to create a structured language environment that integrates exposure, interaction, and language production within everyday academic contexts.

Previous studies have examined English Day programs from various perspectives, including their influence on speaking practice and student motivation. Research conducted in school contexts indicates that English Day can increase students' opportunities to practice English and encourage habitual language use (Sinaga, 2018; Tathahira & Nahrissy, 2020; Utami & Handayani, 2021). These studies highlight the importance of consistent implementation, teacher involvement, and institutional support in sustaining the effectiveness of the program.

However, most previous studies have focused on English Day implementation in junior or senior high school environments, including Islamic boarding schools where English immersion conditions differ from those in higher education institutions. Research examining the implementation of English Day in vocational higher education settings, particularly among non-English major students, remains relatively limited. This limitation is important because vocational institutions possess distinct academic characteristics in which students primarily focus on technical competencies and professional preparation (Sari & Muliani, 2020; Putra, 2021). In such contexts, language programs must demonstrate both institutional consistency and practical relevance to sustain student participation.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze how the English Day Program is implemented at Politeknik Keselamatan Transportasi Jalan (PKTJ) Tegal within a vocational higher education context. By examining how the program is organized, conducted, and integrated

into daily campus activities, this study seeks to provide a clearer understanding of how institutional language exposure programs operate in vocational higher education environments.

2. METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design to investigate the implementation of the English Day Program within a vocational higher education context. A case study design was selected because it allows an in-depth exploration of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context (Yin, 2018, p. 16).

Time and Place of the Research

The research was conducted at Politeknik Keselamatan Transportasi Jalan (PKTJ) Tegal, Central Java, Indonesia. The data collection was carried out during the academic year 2025/2026 when the English Day Program was actively implemented as part of the institutional language policy.

Research Subjects

The participants of this study were 26 fifth-semester students from Class A of the Associate Degree (D3) Automotive Technology Department at PKTJ Tegal. These students were selected because they had experienced the English Day Program for several semesters and were directly involved in its daily implementation. In addition, six students were purposively selected for follow-up semi-structured interviews to obtain deeper insights into their experiences.

Procedure

The research was conducted through several stages. First, the researcher observed the implementation of the English Day Program during scheduled activities to understand how the program operates in practice. Second, questionnaires were distributed to all participants to identify general tendencies in students' perceptions toward the program. Finally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected participants to obtain more detailed explanations regarding their experiences and participation during the program.

Data, Instruments, and Data Collection

Data were collected through three instruments: observation sheets, questionnaires, and semi-structured interview guides. Observation was used to examine the real implementation of the English Day Program, including its timeline and frequency, learning activities, facilitators' roles, and students' engagement. The questionnaire consisted of 24 Likert-scale items measuring students' perceptions across cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted to capture participants' experiences and perspectives regarding the program.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed descriptively through qualitative procedures. Observation findings were organized and described narratively to explain the implementation of the English Day Program. Questionnaire responses were tabulated to identify general patterns in students' perceptions, while interview data were transcribed and analyzed thematically to interpret participants' experiences. Data triangulation across observation, questionnaire, and interview findings was applied to enhance the credibility of the analysis.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that the English Day Program at Politeknik Keselamatan Transportasi Jalan (PKTJ) Tegal is implemented as a structured and institutionalized language initiative rather than merely a symbolic language policy. The program is conducted regularly three times a week, on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, from 07.00 to 08.00, before regular academic classes begin. This schedule is formally regulated and communicated through official institutional announcements, ensuring that students are aware of the designated English Day sessions. As a result, English Day has become an established part of the campus routine rather than an occasional language activity. The consistent scheduling allows students to anticipate English use as part of their daily academic environment.

Observation results show that the program schedule is implemented consistently and that activities generally begin and end according to the predetermined time allocation. Students gather and participate collectively during these sessions, indicating that the program has been integrated into the institutional culture of the polytechnic. Schedule changes rarely occur except during urgent institutional activities, which further reflects the stability of the program. This stability helps students mentally prepare for English use during the designated days and strengthens the continuity of the program implementation. The main characteristics of the program structure are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Schedule and Institutional Structure of the English Day Program

Implementation Aspect	Findings
Schedule and Time Allocation	English Day is conducted three times a week (Tuesday–Thursday) from 07.00 to 08.00 before regular classes begin.
Institutional Regulation	The program follows an official weekly schedule issued by the institution.
Schedule Stability	Schedule changes rarely occur except during urgent institutional activities.
Students' Engagement	Students participate collectively during English Day sessions.

The consistency of this implementation demonstrates a systematic effort by the institution to integrate English exposure into everyday academic practices. According to implementation theory, the success of educational programs depends not only on policy formulation but also on the consistency of their execution and institutional support (Fixsen et al., 2015; Fullan, 2020). In this context, English Day at PKTJ reflects how institutional language policies can be translated into daily routines that shape students' language behavior. As argued by Spillane et al. (2004), educational programs become meaningful when they are enacted through shared practices and collective norms rather than remaining as formal regulations alone. The structured schedule and routine implementation, therefore, strengthen the credibility and operational stability of the English Day Program.

Beyond its schedule, the implementation of English Day is also reflected in the types of activities conducted during the program. Observation findings indicate that several structured activities are organized to encourage habitual English use in both formal and semi-formal campus contexts. These activities include vocabulary drilling, English conversation sessions, morning roll calls, and language judgment. Each activity contributes differently to increasing students' exposure to spoken English while also reinforcing institutional discipline. Together, these

activities create a learning environment where English is practiced regularly within the campus setting.

Vocabulary drilling and English conversation sessions function as guided language practice activities. During these sessions, lecturers introduce several new vocabulary items related to daily communication or basic technical contexts. Students repeat the vocabulary collectively to ensure familiarity with pronunciation and meaning. After the repetition stage, students are encouraged to construct simple sentences and engage in short conversations using the newly introduced vocabulary. Through this sequence of repetition, sentence construction, and group interaction, students gradually develop confidence in using English in spoken communication.

Morning roll call represents another distinctive component of the English Day Program. During this activity, students assemble on the campus field while appointed student officers deliver procedural commands and announcements in English. Commands such as “attention,” “parade rest,” and “dress right, dress” are used throughout the assembly, and students respond collectively to the instructions. This activity exposes students to functional English expressions within a formal institutional context. By integrating English commands into the disciplined culture of the polytechnic environment, the program encourages students to become familiar with English communication beyond classroom settings.

In addition to these activities, the program also incorporates a monitoring mechanism known as language judgment. This mechanism functions as an institutional strategy to monitor students’ compliance with the English-only rule during English Day. Students who are observed using Indonesian or local languages are recorded, and sanctions may be administered during a designated evaluation session. Although corrections are not always delivered immediately, the awareness that language use is monitored encourages students to maintain English communication. The core activities that characterize the implementation of the English Day Program are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Core Activities of the English Day Program

Activity	Description	Purpose
Vocabulary Drilling	Students repeat and practice the new vocabulary introduced by lecturers.	Vocabulary exposure and pronunciation practice
English Conversation	Students construct sentences and conduct short conversations in small groups.	Development of speaking skills
Morning Roll Call	Student officers deliver commands and announcements in English during assembly.	Exposure to procedural and institutional English
Language Judgment	Monitoring system to evaluate compliance with English-only rules.	Reinforcement of language discipline

From the perspective of language environment theory, these activities collectively provide repeated exposure to English within the institutional context. Krashen’s Input Hypothesis (1985, p. 2) suggests that language acquisition develops when learners are exposed to meaningful and comprehensible input. Through vocabulary sessions, roll calls, and daily interactions, students

repeatedly encounter English expressions within authentic communicative situations. This repeated exposure allows students to become familiar with commonly used language patterns in the campus environment.

However, language development does not rely solely on input. Long's Interaction Hypothesis (1996, p. 451) emphasizes that language learning occurs when learners interact and negotiate meaning during communication. Activities such as group conversations require students to respond, clarify ideas, and adjust their language in real time. In addition, Swain's Output Hypothesis (1985, p. 248) highlights the importance of language production in developing communicative competence. During English Day activities, students are encouraged to produce English actively, which helps them recognize gaps in their language knowledge and gradually improve their fluency.

The implementation of the English Day Program is also supported by the involvement of facilitators and the participation of students. English lecturers function as instructors, language models, motivators, and supervisors during program activities. They guide vocabulary drilling sessions, provide explanations, and encourage students to participate in English conversations. By consistently using English in their interactions with students, lecturers demonstrate appropriate language use and create a supportive learning atmosphere.

Observation findings also indicate that students' engagement during English Day activities is generally positive. Most students actively participate during structured activities such as vocabulary drilling, group conversations, and morning roll calls. Students attempt to respond in English even when their proficiency is limited, showing a willingness to engage in communication. However, the consistency of English use sometimes varies depending on situational factors and the presence of facilitator supervision.

Table 3. Facilitators' Roles and Students' Engagement in English Day Activities

Implementation Component	Findings
Facilitators' Role	Lecturers act as instructors, language models, motivators, and supervisors during activities.
Instructional Support	Facilitators provide vocabulary input, explanations, and feedback to guide students.
Student Participation	Students actively participate during structured English Day activities.
Language Consistency	English use is more consistent when facilitator supervision is visible.
Experience Difference	Senior students demonstrate greater confidence and consistency in using English.

Observation findings further reveal differences in participation based on students' academic experience. Students who have participated in the English Day Program for a longer period tend to demonstrate greater confidence and consistency in using English. Their familiarity with the program routines enables them to respond more naturally to English commands and

initiate short conversations. This indicates that repeated exposure to English Day activities contributes to the gradual development of communicative habits.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the English Day Program at PKTJ Tegal operates as a structured language exposure environment supported by institutional routines, organized activities, and facilitator involvement. The effectiveness of the program lies not only in its formal designation as a policy but also in its consistent implementation within daily campus practices. Through repeated exposure, interaction, and active participation, the program encourages the gradual formation of English communication habits among vocational students.

4. CONCLUSION

The findings indicate that the English Day Program at Politeknik Keselamatan Transportasi Jalan (PKTJ) Tegal is implemented as a structured and institutionalized language initiative integrated into daily campus routines. The program is conducted through fixed schedules and organized activities such as vocabulary drilling, English conversation sessions, morning roll calls, and language judgment. Supported by institutional regulations and facilitator involvement, these activities create a consistent language environment that encourages students to encounter and use English regularly within the academic setting. The implementation demonstrates that institutional routines and structured activities play an important role in sustaining language exposure in vocational higher education contexts where English is not the primary academic focus.

These findings suggest that the effectiveness of institutional language programs such as English Day depends largely on consistent implementation, clear organizational structure, and sustained institutional support. In vocational education environments, where students prioritize technical competencies, structured language exposure programs can help integrate English communication into daily academic practices. Therefore, maintaining institutional commitment and strengthening supervision during program activities may further support the sustainability of English Day initiatives. Future research may explore how similar language exposure programs operate in other vocational institutions or investigate their long-term impact on students' communicative competence.

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