Indonesian Students' Growth Perception of an English Immersion Program

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Abstract. Becoming a part of an English village as a form of immersion program differs significantly from studying English in a classroom setting where students can directly practice speaking in real-life situations. This study looks at how Indonesian students perceive the benefits of intense classes in an English Immersion Program on their cognitive development both during and after the program. The biggest Indonesian English Village, Kampung Inggris Pare, was the location. This qualitative case study involving participant observation, interviews, and photos included 14 participants. An interactive analytic model was then used to gather, reduce, present, and make conclusions from the data. According to the study, most participants improved after taking intense English classes in Kampung Inggris Pare, especially in the cognitive areas. Vocabulary was the area where they felt most Heavily Upgraded (HUg), followed by fluency and pronunciation. This study suggests that an immersion program like English Village is one way to address several issues with English learning in schools. An English Immersion Program's intense sessions might be advantageous for students.

Keywords: Students' perception; Cognitive Progress; Immersion Program; English Village

Introduction

English is taught as a foreign language in Indonesia and is rarely used in a broad community. Nevertheless, learning English is very important because it is an international lingua franca (Köylü & Tracy, 2022). It facilitates the bridge between languages, economies, and cultures, provides information, and enables people from different countries to interact and work together. As part of a globalized free market, the Indonesian government works to prepare its citizens for many opportunities. It provides the exchange of experience, knowledge, and expertise for which English is needed as a communication medium.

Globalization unavoidably affects all walks of life, including Indonesia. However, English language learning is limited in Indonesian communities (Liando & Tatipang, 2022). In addition, Indonesian EFL teachers face many challenges. Students may be reluctant to learn English. They could be shy, afraid to make mistakes, or disinterested. English instruction may need more timetabling, poor resources, inappropriate materials that do not match student proficiency, limited facilities, and overcrowded English classrooms (Pratiwi, 2019). Grammar-based pedagogies persist even though the practical use of English has been promoted in Indonesian curricula since 1980. While functional approaches foster communicative competence and a comfortable and engaging environment that encourages learning and teaching, grammar-based approaches engender students' perceptions that English is burdensome (Ayuni & Susanti, 2018).

Fitriani (2019) explains that a lack of authentic experiences in using English for communication is a significant obstacle for Indonesian EFL students. Even after studying English for many years, students are often unable to communicate well with native speakers. Some affluent parents, dissatisfied with Indonesian English education, may send their children to study overseas, which is very expensive (Pratiwi et al., 2020). However, not all parents can choose this option, perpetuating unequal access to appropriate English

education. Seeing reality, the Indonesian government is working to improve student attainment of desired foreign language outcomes by providing more opportunities for immersive education. This initiative is a response to increasing dissatisfaction with instruction focused on English grammar and memorization, which is common in many public schools (Knell et al., 2007).

Actually, some ways can be accomplished by EFL students to acquire the English language acquisition, such as taking courses at language institutes, private tutoring, international schools, or studying abroad. However, learning works best when the students feel comfortable and relaxed (Crespo, 2020). In fact, as has been explained, EFL teachers find some difficulties in teaching oral communication skills (Utami, 2019). One affected factor is a learning environment. Based on the problems, some researchers (Lan, 2020; Crespo, 2020) report that immersion programs have been demonstrated to positively influence the students' English competence, and these programs may be far more costly in time and money. English immersion programs obtained some advantages not only in language acquisition but also in cultural recognition for all the program participants (Noguchi, 2019). Thus, immersion programs can be a solution to learning English comfortably and relaxed with a supporting environment.

One kind of immersion program provided in Indonesia is English villages ((Pratiwi, 2019; Supriyono et al., 2020). *English village* is a rich environment that integrates the learning of a foreign culture with language teaching through experiential classes in which students can interact in English outside of the classroom, offering substantial opportunities for transactional authenticity (Erni et al., 2021).

The concept of English village is one of the immersion programs developing in EFL and ESL countries that share the goal of offering students an immersive experience in a second or foreign language habitat. The English village setting offers many opportunities for true transactional interaction. Students can communicate in English outside of the classroom in larger society once they have acquired the knowledge in lessons. Inside multicultural theme parks, the English villages blend content-based language immersion with informal and experiential learning. The English Village themes promote a more universal, forward-thinking, and constructivist understanding of learning in general and English language learning in particular in educational theory, policy, and practice.

The largest English village that exists in Indonesia is *Kampung Inggris Pare*. Indonesia's premier English Village of *Kampung Inggris Pare is* translated as the English village of Pare. It is different from English Villages in other countries such as South Korea. According to Yulianingsih et al., (2018.), *Kampung Inggris Pare* is a fully-running community located in a suburb of Pare in Kediri, regent of East Java. The village is organized around 160 English institutions (Rasyad & Riyanto, 2018). The village includes many community businesses such as bicycle rentals, food stalls, dormitories, boarding houses, cafes, and restaurants to meet the daily needs of students from across Indonesia. These institutions provide students with instruction in English. In addition, the surrounding Javanese and Bahasa-speaking communities support an immersive language environment by providing facilities and services to the students in English.

Many people from around Indonesia and neighboring countries participated in this English village to learn and practice speaking English directly. The diversity of students' origins certainly makes the adaptation process in the English village of Kampung Inggris Pare unique. Besides, This uniqueness attracts researchers' attention to studying this Indonesian center of English acquisition, even though it is less of a study (Mahruf, 2019; Malik, et al., 2020; Sari & Rozimela, 2021). Most researchers found that this English village effectively improves students' English skills. However, none investigated and linked the studies as an immersion program domain. Therefore, this study was focused on investigating Indonesian students' perception of immersion programs regarding their progress, especially related to their communicative competence, during and after joining

intensive classes in this English village-based immersion program. The guiding research question was:

1. At what level is the progress of Indonesian students' growth during and after studying in this English village-based immersion program?"
2. How do Indonesian students perceive their progress during and after joining intensive courses in this English village-based immersion program?.

Theoretical Framework

This session presents some theoretical frameworks that support the current study. It involves an immersion program, speaking skills, and the nature of perception.

Immersion Program

Immersion refers to an approach to second language instruction where the usual school curricular activities are conducted in a second language (Curtain, 1986). Immersion is a communicative approach that reflects the essential situation of first-language learning and, at the same time, responds to the special needs of second-language students (Genesee, 1985). In this approach, the second language is not taught as the content of instruction. However, it functions as its medium of instruction, the material or communication between teacher and students or between students in the classroom. For example, in a science class, a teacher uses a second language to lead a lesson on simple and complex cells, where the second language functions as academic communication (Genesee, 1985). Thus, a language immersion program provides for the teaching and learning of regular school subjects while at the same time responding to the communicative needs of second language students.

EFL immersive learning accelerates English acquisition. Language institutes, private tutoring, international schools, and studying abroad may not be as effective or desirable in improving linguistic proficiency. In contrast, immersion programs have been demonstrated to positively influence the students' English competence, and these programs may be far more costly in time and money.

One form of English immersion program found in some Asian countries is the English Village. It shares the goal of providing students with an immersive experience in a second or foreign language environment. The English village provides many facilities that support the use of English in daily interaction (Pratiwi et al., 2020). Therefore, it is believed to have many features that contribute to the improvement of English learning in Indonesia.

Speaking Skills

Language has a central role in students' intellectual, social, and emotional development, and it is the key to successfully studying all subjects and evolving all areas of human working. Learning the language is aimed at communicating or speaking. Good English speaking is essential, especially for students, because it becomes a weapon for exploring the world. Therefore, improving English speaking competence is a critical point for Indonesian students, as it is highly needed to contribute to students improving their communication skills.

According to Porcheron et al. (2018), speaking is a speech production that becomes an element of daily activities. It is reported as an effective language acquisition skill, which involving communication skills, as well as other crucial components like pronunciation, intonation, grammar, vocabulary, etc. (Rizqiningsih & Hadi, 2019). It is the process of sharing knowledge, emotions, needs, opinion, or ideas that take place between the speaker and the listener. In conclusion, speaking is a creative process and an active interplay between speaker and listener that integrates feeling and thought.

According to Harris (1969), speaking ability comprises four elements: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and fluency.

1. Pronunciation: Students can talk more clearly by pronouncing their words while they speak. It concerns the phonological processes determining how sounds vary and pattern in a language.
2. Grammar: These processes are necessary for students to arrange a correct sentence in conversation or to be able to manipulate the structure and tell appropriate grammatical forms apart from inappropriate ones. Grammar helps learn the right approach to becoming proficient in a language orally and in writing.
3. Vocabulary: Lack of word choices makes it difficult for someone to express themselves verbally or in writing effectively. Hence, vocabulary refers to the proper diction employed in communication.
4. Fluency: Fluency is known as the capacity to talk clearly and smoothly. If students can speak English fluently, they might be described as English masters or as having a good command of the language.

The Nature of Perception

Perception is Perception is the way people try to understand the world and sensory inputs around them involving five sense organs to gather information (Dwinata, 2017).. It is interpreted as observing a person toward the environment by using his feelings to become aware of everything in his environment (Said et al., n.d.). It is also explained that perception is the process of receiving stimuli through the sense, which is perceived by attention or awareness that the individual can determine, interpret, and appreciate what is observed. Based on Said's point of view, it can be assumed that people's perceptions of the same object or concept can differ. It depends on how people pay attention to the item, how deep the interest is, how high the motivation is, how long the process takes, how much hope, and so on.

Material and Method

This research examined Indonesian secondary and tertiary students' growth perception of an English immersion program from the cognitive and non-cognitive aspects during and after having intensive classes in an English village. I purposely selected participants and locations at *Kampung Inggris Pare* in Tulungrejo and Pelem Village, the suburbs of the town Pare in Kediri regent of East Java, Indonesia. I conducted the study in *Kampung Inggris Pare* because it is the largest Indonesian English Village. Besides, teaching and learning differ from what is often encountered at school.

It was a qualitative research design with a case study approach. Atmowardoyo (2018) mentions some kinds of research methods that may be beneficial in TEFL studies, including a case study. He explains that a case study involves an in-depth examination of an individual, an organizational unit, or an event with unique characteristics. Numerous researchers have utilized case study methods in TEFL research to develop theoretical descriptions based on the phenomena associated with English language teaching and learning.

Fourteen participants were involved in this research. They were selected from six English institutions focused on speaking programs: Mr. Bob, The Daffodils, Kresna, Global English, ELLA, and PEACE Academy in Kampung Inggris Pare.

Several factors were taken into account when selecting the participants. First, male or female. Second, the volunteers were my classmates at these six English institutions. Third, they were pupils who had completed at least a junior high school. Fourth, participants traveled to Kampung Inggris Pare for the first time when this research did. And fifth, the selected participants agreed to participate in this research.

These above considerations were made for the following reasons: 1) Males and females were given equal opportunities to participate in this study to avoid gender discrimination; 2) participants were chosen from Is' classmates to be easily observed; 3)

This research did not specifically target elementary or junior high school students because the majority of them lack the capacity to act and make their own decisions, where students in this age group typically still relied on their teachers and parents. The last factor in selecting the participants who first attended Kampung Inggris Pare was to quickly gather the students' standpoints on the differences in their learning experiences and progress before and after visiting and studying in this English village-based immersion program. Of course, these considerations affected the validity of the observations, interviews, and other data collecting.

As a qualitative researcher, I conducted a participant observer. I came to the classroom daily to learn, did the assignment together, and built relationships with potential participants within and outside the classroom. This way encouraged me to have more opportunities to conduct observations, semi-structured interviews, photographs, or even casual conversations. I collected the data using a field note for observation, a voice recorder and a guideline for semi-structured interviews, and a camera to take photographs.

Students' perception of the cognitive progress adapted from four speaking elements echoed by Harris (1969). However, the interview questions that was supported by observation did not focus on grammar due this element was offered in a different class. As observed, in Kampung Inggris Pare, students in level basic and intermediate learned speaking and grammar in different classes. Students who chose speaking class were directed and trained to speak confidently by ignoring grammar. The primary purpose was for students can speak without fear of making grammatical errors.

In contrast, students who took grammar classes were more concerned about how the language was used in good grammar and structure. These students were also trained to complete the English test with grammar. Thus, the questions asked about pronunciation, vocabulary, and fluency.

The questions started by asking closed-ended interviews of participants' thoughts about their speaking elements' progress during and after studying in this place. Further investigations were carried out to explore about some factors behind the highly upgraded or minor improvement (un-upgraded), such as what makes the participants' speaking elements Highly Upgraded (HUg), Upgraded (Ug), Slightly Upgraded (SUg), or Un Upgrade (UUg). The example of open-ended questions as follows:

Table 1. List of Questions

No	Questions	Note
1	What do you think about your pronunciation progress during and after studying in this place?	You may choose four of the choices:
2	What do you think about your vocabulary growth during and after studying in this place?	Highly Upgraded (HUg),
3	What do you think about your speaking fluency during and after studying in this place?	Upgraded (Ug), Slightly Upgraded (SUg), Un-Upgraded (UUg).
4	What makes your pronunciation highly upgraded, Upgraded/ Slightly/ Upgraded/ Un-Upgrade?	
5	What makes your vocabulary highly upgraded, Upgraded/ Slightly/ Upgraded/ Un-Upgrade?	
6	What makes your speaking fluency highly upgraded, Upgraded/ Slightly/ Upgraded/ Un-Upgrade?	

Analyzing the data began with gathering the raw data, such as transcripts, field notes, or pictures. The subsequent phases included gathering and preparing the data for analysis, looking through all the data, manually or digitally coding it, connecting themes and descriptions, and finally assessing the significance. Then, for the trustworthiness degree of this research result, Creswell (2014) reported eight primary validity strategies, some of which were applied in this research, namely triangulating, detailed description, member checking or negotiation, clarifying the bias I brings to the study, and prolonged time.

Results and Discussion
Result

To find out how Indonesian students perceive their progress after intensive classes in an English village, especially in improving speaking skills, I investigated the impact of implementing learning strategies based on students' perceptions. Studying the world indicates the need to examine perceptions and ideas constructed, and the world is mainly the world of perceptions, images, or mental concepts. Thus, when people want to study something, what should be initially known is where, when, and how to meet and learn it. Therefore, perceptions and senses perform a unique source of how to experience something.

Three questions were developed based on the cognitive strategy applied in learning English, especially for those who took the speaking class. These questions aimed to know the students' perception of their pronunciation, vocabulary and speaking fluency after studying for months in an English village of *Kampung Inggris Pare*. As has been explained before, to make it more measurable, I limited participants to give firm responses to one of the answer options: Highly Upgraded (HUg), Upgraded (Ug), Slightly Upgraded (SUg), Or Did Not Upgrade/ Un Upgraded (UUg). Further investigations were carried out on students who were still experiencing a minor improvement. I presented the student's answers in the chart below.
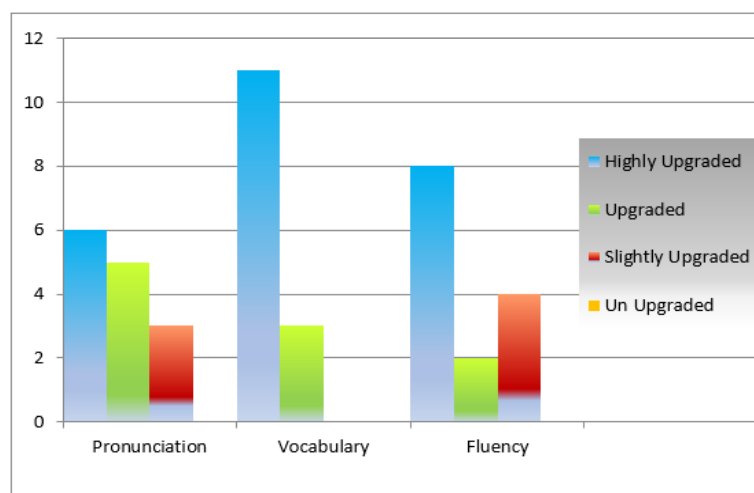

Figure 1. Indonesian Students' Perception of the Cognitive Progress

The chart explains that among the three types of cognitive aspects that appeared in learning English, especially speaking skills, vocabulary proficiency was the most greatly improved speaking element (Hug). Eleven students responded to it. Then, the second cognitive aspect that highly increased was speaking fluency, in which eight students contributed to sharing their feelings. Meanwhile, the last one was pronunciation, in which less than half of the participants felt a level of highly upgraded (Hug).

Vocabulary Development

Two reasons were echoed by students who had rapidly progressed toward vocabulary proficiency. First, they said vocabulary improved rapidly because they often discovered new vocabulary when they engaged in natural conversations in this English village, whether in class, camp, or broader social interactions. Some also said that apart from getting the benefits of daily use, they had a target of vocabulary memorizing or reviewing at camp. Some were based on their self-initiation, partly because it was mandatory and a camp rule. The number of words focused varies depending on the ability or agreement with the tutor. However, they are mostly memorized or reviewed 30-50 per week or five words daily. This rapid increase was felt by both the primary level and more advanced students. The example of an interview extract is presented

> *Our vocabulary especially me improve because we always listen to people around us speak. At camp, we have an English zone so we must speak English. At class, the tutor will punish us to sing when speak Indonesia. Begitupun ketika berjalan-jalan di sekitar Pare ini. Sehingga, secara tidak langsung, From unknown to be known especially for daily vocabulary.* (Interview with P3).

> [Our vocabulary, especially mine, improves because we always listen to people around us speak. We have an English zone at camp, so we must speak English. In class, the tutor will punish us for singing when speaking Indonesian. Likewise, when walking around Pare. So, indirectly, From unknown to be known, especially for daily vocabulary].

Speaking Fluency

As for fluency, the difference in responses was clearly seen among students who had just come for one or two months with those who had stayed and studied in Pare for a long time. Students who had experienced a rapid increase in speaking fluency were at an advanced level because they had long experienced the impact of this English village. They always claimed to try to use English as much as possible. This effort was undoubtedly beneficial for practicing fluency in speaking because the longer they used English in their interactions, the more fluent they spoke. This statement was supported by Toro et al. (2018) who stated that fluency is the natural use of language that occurs when speakers participate in a conversation despite their limited communicative ability. The extract as follows

> *I have been here for three months. As I dream of taking a scholarship di luar negeri, my ambition to master English, especially in speaking, is high. So, I practice my English with whom I talk, even though my friends speak Bahasa Indonesia with me.* (Interview with P6)

Meanwhile, students who enrolled in basic classes generally felt those who did not feel very fluent or Slightly Upgraded (SUg) in speaking. Some participants took advanced classes and had a knowledge of English, but they had just arrived in the English village of *Kampung Inggris Pare* for a month. They have yet to experience interactions using English in a natural environment for a long time. So, even though they had a basic knowledge of English, they were not fluent in speaking because they had never practiced it outside the English village of *Kampung Inggris Pare*.

> *Yeah I am here for one month. Actually, I have learn English for some years in my city, but saya tidak praktik. No friends.* (Interview with P2)
> [Yeah, I have been here for a month. Actually, I have learned English for some years in my city, but I never practice my English because no peers for practicing].

Pronunciation Growth

Different cases were felt for pronunciation training. The improvement in pronunciation was felt to be the slowest and most difficult compared to the other two types of cognitive aspects. Numerous studies have examined the pronunciation difficulties of EFL students (Indrayadi et al., 2021). P11 argued

Pronunciation is rather difficult because even though a student had made many efforts to resemble a native English speaker, it would still not be exactly the same because the tongue was different. (Interview with P11).

This opinion implied how a person's accent greatly affected pronunciation in English. They needed extra effort to improve this skill. Practicing English in this English village could form good pronunciation by itself. However, this achievement would be found for a long time if it was not given more attention and effort, for example, taking a pronunciation class.

Some students took a speaking packet program which included several speaking aspects classes such as vocabulary, speaking, pronunciation, grammar for speaking, and other classes related to speaking. For example, in pronunciation classes, the students would be taught some tricks to improve pronunciation, such as tongue twister training, the way to read the Oxford dictionary, getting resources from listening material, and pronunciation training through a song or other listening material. In addition, some joined special rapper classes to practice their pronunciation.

Among the total number of students, four participants felt a very significant increase in all types of cognitive aspects, including pronunciation. Two students had lived in Pare for approximately three months, one had stayed for more than eight months, and the other had only stayed for one month. Therefore, the length of the study was not the only factor determining one's success in learning languages. Other supporting factors might have an effect, such as maximum effort.

In addition to student responses, I obtained data from tutors regarding students' learning outputs during one period. This value would then be transferred and appear on the certificate of completion. The accumulative value of the students' speaking skills was based on their cognitive development, which included fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation/ accent, and understanding. The table is displayed below.

Table 2. Students' Final Score

Student	Grade	Interpretation	Student	Grade	Interpretation
P1	90	Highly Upgraded	P8	Excellent	Highly Upgraded
P2	78	Upgraded	P9	Excellent	Highly Upgraded
P3	82	Highly Upgraded	P10	Excellent	Highly Upgraded
P4	80	Highly Upgraded	P11	7	Upgraded
P5	B+	Upgraded	P12	7	Upgraded
P6	B+	Upgraded	P13	A	Highly Upgraded
P7	B	Upgraded	P14	A	Highly Upgraded

The table proves that each course institute had a respective authority in managing their institution. All institutions in *Kampung Inggris Pare* agreed upon no standard rules. Each tutor assigned a grade to the students based on the institution's reference.

Some institutions provided grades based on 1-10 or 10-100. Some also gave grades with the letters A, B, C, D, or Error symbols. These grades were similar to the college level. Furthermore, others were awarded a grade with the words Good, Very good, or Excellent. So, it was not easy to obtain accurate data based on the student's final grade in one period.

However, I tried to balance the four types of values in general. Based on the institutional guidelines shown on the back of the certificate, at the Global English Institute, they equalized 7 with a good user, 8 with a very good user, and 9 with an expert user. The numbers 7, 8, and 9 in Global English could possibly be equivalent to the range 70-90 in ELLA and Kresna English course institutions. Excellent grade and symbol A could possibly be equated with a perfect score of 10 or 100. So, I concluded that students who obtained grades "A, Excellent, 80-100/ 8-10" were highly improved or upgraded (Hug) students. While those who got scores of B and 6-7/ 60-79 were categorized as improved or upgraded students (Ug).

Discussion

It has been generally well-known that most people faced some problems in learning English as a second or foreign language in non-English speaking countries ((Hibatullah, 2019)). *Kampung Inggris* can answer some challenges, the weakness of English teaching to learn English and social needs, which grows fast (Karmala et al., 2018). These statements support the result of the finding in this study.

Immersion refers to an approach to second language instruction where the usual school curricular activities are conducted in a second language ((Ballinger et al., 2017)). Immersion is a communicative approach that reflects the essential situation of first language learning and at the same time responds to the special needs of second language learners ((Kessler, 2018)). In this approach, the second language is not taught as content of instruction. However, it functions as its medium of instruction the material or communication between teacher and students or between students in the classroom. Thus, a language immersion program provides for the teaching and learning of regular school subjects while at the same time responding to the communicative needs of second language learners.

Kampung Inggris Pare is a kind of imersion program tnat provides many facilities that support the use of English in the daily interaction. Therefore, it is believed to have many features that contribute to the improvement of English learning in Indonesia. Based on the result of the study, the English immersion program of *Kampung Inggris Pare* produced a positive impact of students progress both cognitive and non-cognitive aspects especially in metacognitive aspect. These results are in line with some previous research findings. According to (Nguyen & Terry, 2017)), the use of learning strategies significantly brings positive effects on the students' mastery of English." (Lestari & Wahyudin, 2020) reveal that learning strategies are among the primary factors that aid students determine hown and how well learners learn a foreign language.

Learning strategies lead the students to reach excellent language achievement in improving their English-speaking fluency and proficiency (Shahini & Shahamirian, 2017)). The strategies enable students to get the big responsibility to enhance their progress in developing L2 skills, which includes a wide range of behavior that can help build communicative competence in many ways. With learning strategies, students' learning methods could be more disciplined. They also got more comfortable conditions to study by using proper learning strategies, and students could receive and more convenient to understand the lessons that lecturers gave them. The students have critical skills in communicating. Oxford quotes, "more effective learners showed careful orchestration of strategies, targeted in a relevant, systematic way at specific L2 tasks" (2003, p.10).

Among the three types of cognitive aspects that appeared in learning English, especially speaking skills, vocabulary proficiency was a speaking element that was felt greatly improved, followed by speaking fluency, and pronunciation.

Vocabulary improved rapidly because students often discovered new vocabulary when they engaged in natural conversations in *Kampung Inggris Pare*, whether it was in class, at camp, and in broader social interactions. Besides, they had a target of vocabulary memorizing or reviewing at camp 30-50 per week or five words per day. Related to the progress of this strategy, no differences between basic level and advanced students.

In contrast, students who had experienced a rapid increase in speaking fluency were students at an advanced level because they had long experienced the impact of this immersive environment than students' who just arrived. While the improvement in pronunciation was felt to be the slowest and most difficult. Even though students have practiced their English in this immersive environment, they needed extra effort to improve this skill, such as taking a pronunciation and rapper class. By joining these classes, the students will get more reinforcement to exercise the tongue and learn the strategy.

Conclusion

Participating in an English village as a type of immersion program is distinct from learning English in schools, where students can directly practice their speaking skills in authentic communication while studying. According to the study, intense instruction in Kampung Inggris Pare's English village-based immersion programs improved all students' speaking and cognitive abilities. Vocabulary received the highest Heavily Upgraded (HUg) rating, followed by fluency and pronunciation. According to this report, the English village is one solution to the multiple difficulties Indonesian schools have teaching English. The intense English Village sessions offered by the immersion program are advantageous to students. Thus, it is suggested that English can be learned through immersion programs at English Village.

Acknowledgement

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