

## Optimizing the School Environment in Improving the Students' Speaking Ability of Class X SMK Taruna Terpadu 1 Bogor

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**Abstract:** *This research aims to optimize the school environment in improving the English-speaking ability of class X students at SMK Taruna Terpadu 1 Bogor. The research method used is a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data collection was carried out through direct observation in the classroom, in-depth interviews with teachers and students, and analysis of learning documents. Data analysis was carried out in a qualitative descriptive manner by identifying contextual learning elements applied in schools. The results show that a supportive school environment and contextual learning that are integrated effectively can improve students' speaking skills. This research contributes to the development of learning strategies that make optimal use of the school environment to improve students' language skills at the vocational secondary education level. This research can be a reference for other schools that want to improve student's language competence through a similar approach.*

**Keywords:** *School environment, speaking ability, English, contextual learning*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

A supportive school environment can significantly improve students' learning process, including foreign language proficiency. That a comfortable and safe environment not only contributes to improved academic achievement but also increases student engagement in the learning process. At SMK Taruna Terpadu 1 Bogor, the school environment is specifically designed to support the use of English in daily activities, such as communication between students and in school announcements, thus creating an atmosphere rich in language practice. The application of contextual learning methodologies, which assimilate authentic scenarios into the educational framework, demonstrably augments students' communicative competencies. Empirical investigations have indicated that contextual teaching and learning (CTL) strategies proficiently facilitate the enhancement of students' linguistic acquisition and oral proficiency by furnishing pertinent contexts for practice (Lukman, 2024; Qudsyi et al., 2018). This pedagogical approach not only renders the educational experience more stimulating but also assists students in more effectively articulating their thoughts and concepts in the English language. This environmental design has proven to be effective in helping grade X students significantly develop their English speaking skills. The application of contextual learning strategies supported by the school environment allows students to become more familiar with and confident in using English in real-life situations. Other studies also support these findings, suggesting that a well-structured learning environment plays an important role in the mastery of language skills. Thus, optimizing the school environment is one of the key factors in improving students' English speaking skills.

The ability to speak English is an essential skill that is a focus in education in many schools, given its importance in today's globalized world. Various methods have been applied to improve these skills, such as project-based learning and the use of interactive technology. At SMK Taruna Terpadu 1 Bogor, a different approach is taken by optimizing the school environment to encourage the natural use of English in daily communication. When learners engage in collaborative groups or partake in discourse, they exhibit a heightened propensity to refine their verbal communication competencies within a minimally stressful environment. Lemberger et al. underscores the significance of fostering a nurturing community within educational institutions, wherein a sense of belonging among pupils contributes to enhanced academic performance, encompassing linguistic abilities (Lemberger et al., 2015). This strategy not only creates a more contextual learning atmosphere but also encourages students to actively speak the United Kingdom in a variety of real situations, that have proven to be effective in improving their skills. Application of This supportive learning environment is also in line with the finding that constant exposure to the target language in everyday life can accelerate the mastery of speaking skills. Thus, optimizing the school environment is a key strategy in supporting more effective United Kingdom language learning among students.

English, as an international language, is widely taught in almost all schools in Indonesia, including as a compulsory subject. With its crucial status, students are expected to have good skills in communicating using this language, both oral and written. At SMK Taruna Terpadu 1 Bogor, an innovative approach to learning English is applied by integrating the use of the language into various aspects of the school environment. Research has indicated that when learners partake in contextualized educational experiences, they not only assimilate knowledge but also cultivate a sense of competence and self-assurance regarding their abilities (Qudsyi et al., 2018). This augmented self-efficacy is paramount, as it serves to incentivize students to engage more proactively in verbal communication activities, thereby further augmenting their linguistic competencies. The contextual learning paradigm promotes introspection regarding learning experiences, which is vital for fostering critical analytical skills and proficient communication abilities (Puastuti & Sinthiya, 2021). This approach not only speeds up the learning process but also makes students more confident in speaking English. As a result, grade X students can strengthen their speaking skills more quickly and effectively compared to traditional methods that only focus on learning in the classroom. This suggests that a school environment designed to support the use of the English language can have a significant impact on students' language skills.

Contextual learning is an educational approach that relates subject matter to real-life situations, allowing students to relate what they learn to everyday life. Through the demonstration of proficient communication methodologies and the provision of constructive critiques, educators can profoundly impact the oratory competencies of their students (Satriani et al., 2012). The congruence of instructional methodologies with the authentic experiences of learners not only enhances the relevance of the educational process but also enables students to articulate their thoughts with greater freedom and confidence in the English language (Maemonah & Nafi'ah, 2018). This approach has been implemented in various schools and has proven to be effective in improving comprehension and mastery of the material by students. At SMK Taruna Terpadu 1 Bogor, contextual learning is applied holistically in the school environment, where the English subject matter is not only taught in the classroom but also integrated into various daily activities. This approach not only facilitates students' understanding of the subject matter but also significantly improves their United Kingdom speaking skills, as students are encouraged to use the language in real-life situations. The application of contextual learning at SMK Taruna Terpadu 1 Bogor shows how a well-designed learning environment can have a direct impact on the mastery of language skills.

A strategically designed school environment plays an important role in shaping students' behaviour and skills, including in language acquisition. Not only does it function as a place to learn, but an optimal school environment can be an interactive space that encourages the natural use of the target language. At SMK Taruna Terpadu 1 Bogor, the school has implemented this strategy by optimizing the school environment into an English-speaking zone. This means that grade X students are exposed to the English language throughout the day, both in formal and informal activities, such as student-to-student communication, school announcements, and extracurricular activities. Many students tend to regard English as a formal discipline rather than as a practical instrument for communication, which may impede their motivation and academic performance (Nasihin & Oktarini, 2022). This perspective highlights the necessity for an educational environment that not only emphasizes the significance of English but also incorporates contextual learning methodologies that connect language application to authentic real-world scenarios, thereby rendering the learning experience more pertinent and stimulating for students (Zulherman, 2018). Continuous exposure to this language has been shown to indirectly encourage the improvement of students' speaking skills, as they are more accustomed and confident in using English in daily life. Optimizing the school environment is a key factor in achieving language learning goals.

The ability to speak in a foreign language is often more difficult to develop without constant interaction that involves using the language in a real context. At SMK Taruna Terpadu 1 Bogor, an innovative approach is applied by creating a school environment that supports spontaneous and natural English interaction. Grade X students are actively involved in English conversations in a variety of everyday situations, ranging from classroom activities to extracurricular activities, such as group discussions, extracurriculars, and informal communication between students. The utilization of digital storytelling and mobile technologies within blended learning contexts has been demonstrated to significantly augment student engagement and interest in oral communication activities (Ergün Elverici, 2024; Nair & Md Yunus, 2022). These innovative methodologies not only promote the enhancement of speaking competencies but also cultivate a collaborative educational environment wherein students can exchange ideas and learn from each other, thereby advancing their overall communicative proficiency (Motallebzadeh et al., 2018; Shadiev et al., 2018). The Students at SMK Taruna Terpadu 1 Bogor showed faster progress in English language proficiency compared to students at other schools who did not implement similar strategies. This emphasizes the importance of continuous interaction in the development of foreign language speaking skills.

English teaching generally focuses on learning in the classroom but often lacks emphasis on the importance of habituating language use in everyday contexts. Research shows that continuous exposure to the target language in various real-life situations can accelerate the mastery of language skills. At SMK Taruna Terpadu 1 Bogor, this approach is adopted by integrating the use of English into various activities in the school environment, from school announcements to communication between students. The engagement of students in group discussions, presentations, and various collaborative endeavours is correlated with enhancements in numerous dimensions of speaking proficiency, encompassing grammar, vocabulary, and fluency (Wahyuni et al., 2018). Such activities not only furnish students with the chance to hone their speaking abilities but also facilitate the cultivation of critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which are indispensable for proficient communication in English (Motallebzadeh et al., 2018). The involvement of educators in orchestrating these activities is paramount, as they possess the capacity to establish a conducive environment that promotes risk-taking and linguistic experimentation (Yeni et al., 2022). The consistent use of English in everyday contexts has been proven to be more effective in developing language skills than traditional learning methods that only rely on activities in the classroom. Thus, the English language integration strategy at SMK Taruna Terpadu 1 Bogor has succeeded in significantly

improving the speaking skills of class X students.

Contextual learning is usually applied in certain subjects such as science or mathematics, but it is rarely applied comprehensively in language learning, especially foreign languages. At SMK Taruna Terpadu 1 Bogor, this approach is adopted comprehensively in English language learning, not only in the classroom but also in the wider school environment. By applying contextual learning in various aspects of school life, such as in extracurricular activities, daily communication, and school announcements, grade X students are encouraged to use the United Kingdom in real-life situations. Numerous learners encounter feelings of anxiety and self-restraint when engaging in English oral communication, a condition that may be intensified by insufficient opportunities for practice (Ferdiyanto & Suciati, 2023; Indrawati et al., 2022). By cultivating a secure and supportive environment, educators can mitigate these apprehensions and encourage a culture of transparent dialogue. The implementation of organized initiatives aimed at enhancing speaking competencies, such as English communication clubs or supplementary extracurricular endeavours, can further augment students' confidence and proficiency in the English language (Harahap et al., 2024; Yeni et al., 2022). The comprehensive application of contextual learning can have a greater positive impact than traditional methods that only focus on teaching in the classroom. Thus, the approach at SMK Taruna Terpadu 1 Bogor is an important example of how contextual learning can be integrated into language learning effectively.

The need for effective language acquisition strategies has become increasingly urgent as educational institutions aim to equip students with proficient English-speaking skills in a globalized world. Many students face significant challenges in developing their speaking skills due to a lack of engaging and supportive learning environments. It has been observed that conventional pedagogical approaches frequently do not adequately cater to the pragmatic requirements of learners, resulting in heightened anxiety and diminished self-assurance when engaging in English communication (Nwokedi, 2023; Yusyac et al., 2021). The inequity in language acquisition opportunities across various educational environments, such as those found in public versus private institutions, further intensifies these difficulties (Silva et al., 2014). An optimized school environment, which integrates language use into daily activities, has been shown to significantly enhance students' ability to speak English fluently. Understanding how such an environment influences language acquisition is crucial for addressing the gaps in current methodologies, which often focus too narrowly on classroom instruction. By creating immersive language environments, schools can provide students with continuous, context-rich opportunities to practice and improve their speaking skills.

This research introduces a novel approach by integrating contextual learning into the school environment, offering a unique and effective solution to enhance English speaking skills among students. Through the prioritization of practical applications and cooperative learning, contextual teaching and learning (CTL) can markedly augment students' engagement and motivation (Utami et al., 2023; Yusyac et al., 2021). This pedagogical strategy facilitates group collaboration, idea exchange, and the practice of verbal communication within a nurturing environment, which is pivotal for the process of language acquisition (Nwokedi, 2023; Yusyac et al., 2021). The integration of language learning into daily activities and interactions within the school environment allows students to practice English in authentic, real-world contexts, leading to improved fluency and confidence. The findings from this research highlight the potential of environmental strategies to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical language use. As such, this study provides actionable insights for educators seeking to enhance language acquisition through innovative and context-driven methodologies. These insights could lead to broader implementation of contextual learning environments in schools, ultimately improving language outcomes.

The objective of this research is to explore how optimizing the school environment can significantly improve the English-speaking abilities of Grade X students at SMK Taruna Terpadu 1 Bogor, by applying contextual learning strategies. The study focuses on identifying effective methods for seamlessly incorporating English language use into daily school activities, such as classroom interactions, extracurricular activities, and informal communication among students. Through a comprehensive examination of diverse pedagogical approaches and their effects on student engagement and academic performance, this research endeavours to furnish practical recommendations for educators and educational policymakers (Khotimah & Masduki, 2016). The investigation aspires to delineate optimal strategies for fostering a nurturing educational atmosphere that promotes risk-taking behaviours and active involvement in oral communication activities (Nwokedi, 2023). Traditional methods often isolate language learning from practical application, highlighting the importance of context in developing language skills.

## **2. METHODS**

The research design adopts a qualitative approach to investigate the impact of an optimized school environment on students' English-speaking abilities, with a particular focus on contextual learning strategies implemented within the school setting. By utilizing methods such as in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and analysis of student interactions, the

study aims to uncover how the school environment contributes to the development of English-speaking skills. The investigation will concentrate on the identification of particular contextual learning strategies that can be proficiently incorporated into the educational curriculum. Through the employment of surveys, interviews, and classroom observations, the study aspires to collect insights from students, educators, and educational administrators concerning their experiences and perceptions of the prevailing school environment and its influence on oral communication competencies (Dörnyei & Chan, 2013; Tódor & Dégi, 2016). The qualitative nature of the research also enables the exploration of the students' and teachers' perspectives, providing insights into how they perceive the effectiveness of these strategies. Additionally, the study examines the role of the physical and social environment in supporting language learning, offering a comprehensive view of the factors that influence students' speaking abilities. Ultimately, this research seeks to provide actionable recommendations for educators looking to improve English language outcomes through the strategic design of school environments.

The study targets Grade X students at SMK Taruna Terpadu 1 Bogor as its primary population, focusing on those who are actively engaged in the school's English language programs. To capture a comprehensive understanding of how the school environment influences language acquisition, a purposive sampling method is employed. By choosing participants who are directly involved in different aspects of the school's language activities, the study aims to explore the varied impacts of these experiences on their speaking abilities. The purposive sample also allows the research to delve into the specific contextual factors that may enhance or hinder language development. Through this targeted selection process, the study seeks to provide a detailed analysis of how different elements of the school environment contribute to students' overall language acquisition. The findings are expected to offer valuable insights into the effectiveness of the school's English language learning strategies.

Procedure Data collection for this study will involve a comprehensive approach, beginning with semi-structured interviews conducted with both students and teachers. These interviews are designed to explore their perspectives on the implementation of contextual learning strategies and how these strategies influence English speaking proficiency. Classroom observations will be conducted to capture real-time interactions and teaching methods, providing a deeper insight into the practical application of these strategies within the school environment. Classroom observations shall be conducted to assess the application of contextual learning methodologies and their effects on student involvement and verbal performance (Gan, 2013). Additionally, the study will analyse relevant school documentation, such as lesson plans, curriculum outlines, and student performance records, to understand how contextual learning

is integrated into the broader educational framework. By combining these methods, the research aims to gather a holistic view of the factors that contribute to the development of English-speaking skills. This multi-faceted approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between the school environment and language acquisition. The data collected will be crucial in identifying key elements that can enhance the effectiveness of English language education in similar settings.

The data collected in this study will be analysed using thematic analysis, a method that allows for the identification of recurring patterns and themes within the qualitative data. The qualitative data obtained from interviews and focus group discussions will undergo thematic analysis, thereby facilitating the discernment of significant themes and patterns pertinent to student's experiences and perceptions (Baharun et al., 2021; Burgos, 2023). By systematically coding the interviews, classroom observations, and school documentation, the research will uncover key insights into how an optimized school environment and contextual learning strategies contribute to the enhancement of students' English-speaking skills. This process will help to reveal not only the effectiveness of these approaches but also the specific elements that make them successful. The themes that emerge from the analysis will provide a deeper understanding of the best practices in language education, highlighting the strategies that most effectively support language acquisition. Furthermore, the thematic analysis will enable the study to draw connections between the various factors within the school environment that influence students' ability to develop fluency in English. These insights will be valuable for educators and policymakers seeking to implement similar strategies in other educational contexts, ultimately aiming to improve language learning outcomes on a broader scale.

### **3. RESULTS**

Interviews with students revealed that the optimized school environment, characterized by frequent English interactions and contextual activities, plays a crucial role in enhancing their confidence and fluency in speaking English. Many students reported that the consistent exposure to English through daily conversations, classroom discussions, and extracurricular activities has made them feel more comfortable using the language in various settings. This immersive language exposure, which is integrated into nearly every aspect of their school experience, has not only improved their speaking abilities but also reduced their anxiety when communicating in English. Students noted that being surrounded by an English-rich environment has allowed them to practice and apply what they learn in real time, reinforcing their language skills in a practical, meaningful way. This experience underscores the



effectiveness of an immersive approach to language education, where students are encouraged to engage with the language regularly and naturally. The positive feedback from students highlights the value of creating a school environment that actively promotes the use of English, leading to significant improvements in their overall language proficiency.

Observations in the classroom and broader school environment revealed that students were actively engaged in English conversations, not only during formal lessons but also in informal interactions throughout the day. This consistent use of English in various contexts suggests that the integration of contextual learning strategies has successfully facilitated regular language practice. During formal lessons, students participated in discussions and activities conducted entirely in English, demonstrating their growing comfort and proficiency with the language. Outside the classroom, similar patterns were observed, with students conversing in English during breaks, group projects, and even casual conversations with peers. This seamless integration of English into their daily routines highlights the effectiveness of creating an immersive language environment. The observations further indicate that contextual learning strategies, which embed language use into real-life situations, play a crucial role in encouraging students to apply their language skills in meaningful ways. As a result, students are not only improving their English proficiency but also developing the confidence to use the language in a variety of settings, both academic and social.

A review of school documentation, including detailed lesson plans and activity logs, demonstrated that contextual learning methods were systematically implemented across various school activities. These documents revealed a deliberate effort by educators to integrate English language use into a wide range of scenarios, ensuring that students have ample opportunities to practice their skills in practical, real-world contexts. For instance, lesson plans consistently included activities that required students to engage in English conversations, role-playing exercises, and problem-solving tasks that mimic real-life situations. Additionally, activity logs showed that English was not confined to the classroom; it was also a key component in extracurricular activities, school events, and even day-to-day communications among students and staff. This systematic approach to embedding English into the fabric of school life reinforces students' ability to use the language in a variety of settings, thereby enhancing their overall proficiency. The consistent implementation of these methods across different aspects of the school environment highlights the school's commitment to creating a language-rich atmosphere, where students are continuously encouraged to apply their English skills in meaningful and practical ways.

Teachers observed that students exhibited significant improvement in their English speaking

skills over the course of the academic year. They attributed this progress largely to the supportive environment fostered by the school's commitment to contextual learning practices. By integrating English into various aspects of daily school life, students were provided with continuous exposure to the language, both inside and outside the classroom. This constant engagement allowed students to practice their speaking skills in a variety of contexts, which in turn built their confidence and fluency. Teachers also noted that the use of real-world scenarios in lessons helped students better understand and apply the language, making the learning process more relevant and effective. The increased opportunities for students to communicate in English, coupled with the encouragement from teachers and peers, created a positive feedback loop that further accelerated their language development. Overall, the combination of a supportive environment and practical language use played a crucial role in the students' marked improvements in English speaking proficiency.

Classroom observations revealed that the implementation of contextual learning environments, such as designated English-speaking zones and interactive language games, significantly contributed to the more frequent and spontaneous use of English by students. These environments encouraged students to engage in conversations in English naturally, without the pressure often associated with formal language exercises. The English-speaking zones, in particular, created spaces where students felt comfortable practising their language skills in a supportive setting, leading to increased confidence and fluency. Interactive language games further reinforced this by making the learning process enjoyable and engaging, prompting students to use English more actively and creatively. This approach not only made language practice more accessible but also aligned perfectly with the study's goal of enhancing speaking proficiency. By fostering an atmosphere where English was the default mode of communication, these contextual learning strategies helped students internalize the language more effectively. Overall, the observations confirmed that these methods were instrumental in promoting a more immersive and practical use of English, thereby achieving the desired outcomes of the study.

#### **4. DISCUSSION**

Optimizing the school environment at SMK Taruna Terpadu 1 Bogor by making it a United Kingdom language zone has proven to be effective in improving the speaking skills of grade X students in English. This continuous exposure has encouraged more natural and spontaneous use of English among students so that they feel more comfortable and confident in speaking. A significant discovery indicates that a nurturing educational atmosphere, defined

by cooperative learning and participatory pedagogical approaches, enhances student involvement and self-assurance in English verbal communication. Research has demonstrated that when learners are situated in immersive and contextually pertinent educational experiences, they are more inclined to proficiently cultivate their oral communication abilities (Sofyan et al., 2023). Research shows that an immersive learning environment, where the target language is used consistently, can improve students' language skills more effectively than traditional methods. At SMK Taruna Terpadu 1, students not only learn English through formal teaching but also through social interactions that reinforce their understanding and practical use of the language. This shows that the integration of English in various aspects of school life is an important step in achieving improved speaking skills. This success emphasizes the importance of a contextual approach to language learning in the school environment.

The school environment optimization technique applied at SMK Taruna Terpadu 1 Bogor has allowed class X students to engage in English conversations spontaneously and naturally. This environment designed to support English-speaking interaction provides students with a valuable opportunity to develop their speaking skills through constant and contextual interaction. Research demonstrates that when learners engage in activities pertinent to their personal experiences, including role-playing or project-based learning, they exhibit a greater propensity to assume responsibility for their educational journey and diligently refine their speaking competencies (Lee & Lee, 2021). This pedagogical strategy not only augments their linguistic proficiency but also fosters critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which are essential for efficacious communication (Corsino et al., 2022). Continuous exposure to English in various everyday situations, such as when communicating with peers or teachers, is effective in increasing students' fluency and confidence in speaking. This shows that the integration of the United Kingdom into daily activities in schools can be a very effective strategy, although it is still rarely implemented intensively in other schools. Thus, this approach can be used as a model for other educational institutions that want to improve their students' English skills.

SMK Taruna Terpadu 1 Bogor has successfully integrated English into various daily activities in the school environment, which includes announcements, communication between students, and extracurricular activities. This integration not only serves as a complement to classroom learning but also significantly strengthens students' English language skills, especially in terms of fluency or fluency in speaking. Teachers play a crucial role in creating a positive school environment that nurtures students' speaking abilities. Equipping educators with the requisite professional development to proficiently apply contextual learning methodologies has the potential to enhance pedagogical practices and yield superior student performance

(Mukhalalati & Taylor, 2019). By incorporating English into different aspects of school life, class X students get more opportunities to practice and use the language in a real and relevant context. Research shows that consistent use of language in daily activities can accelerate the process of language mastery and increase students' confidence. Therefore, the practice applied at SMK Taruna Terpadu 1 Bogor can be used as a model for other schools that want to improve their students' English language competence.

At SMK Taruna Terpadu 1 Bogor, English contextual learning is applied comprehensively, covering not only activities in the classroom but also various activities in the school environment. Feedback from both students and educators offers significant insights into the efficacy and deficiencies of the strategies that have been implemented, thereby facilitating ongoing enhancement (Khan et al., 2024). Through the establishment of a systematic framework for assessing contextual learning related to students' oral communication abilities, educational institutions can engage in informed decision-making regarding pedagogical methodologies and the distribution of resources. This aims to create an authentic learning environment, where grade X students are encouraged to use English in real-life situations, such as when interacting with peers, participating in extracurricular activities, and listening to school announcements. This implementation provides students with a wider opportunity to practice English continuously, which directly impacts the improvement of their speaking skills. By using English in everyday contexts, students become more accustomed to and confident in communicating, which is important for achieving fluency. Research shows that language integration in daily school life accelerates the process of language mastery and significantly improves speaking skills. Therefore, this approach can be considered an effective model for other schools looking to improve their students' English language competencies.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this research is to investigate how optimizing the school environment can enhance the English-speaking abilities of Grade X students at SMK Taruna Terpadu 1 Bogor. By integrating contextual learning strategies into various aspects of the school, this study aims to provide insights into effective methods for improving language proficiency. One significant contribution of this research is its focus on creating an immersive language environment that extends beyond traditional classroom settings, thereby offering a practical framework for other institutions to adopt. However, the study is limited by its focus on a single school, which may affect the generalizability of the findings to other educational contexts. Additionally, the research primarily relies on qualitative methods, which, while providing in-depth insights, may

not capture quantitative impacts. Despite these limitations, the study highlights the importance of a holistic approach to language learning that incorporates both formal and informal language practice. The findings underscore the potential benefits of embedding English language use into everyday school activities to support continuous improvement in speaking skills.

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