

Exploring Experiential-Based Learning in Developing English Speaking Skills: A Qualitative Study of English Student Interns in Food and Beverage

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the role of Experiential-Based Learning (EBL) in developing English-speaking skills among English Education student interns in the Food and Beverage Department at Bobby's G-Land Surf Camp. The study focused on three aspects: the types of experiential learning experiences encountered during the internship program, interns' perceptions of the role of EBL in improving speaking skills, and the challenges and opportunities experienced during the learning process. This research employed a qualitative case study design involving two English Education student interns. Data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation and analyzed using Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's interactive model consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings revealed that the interns experienced experiential learning through direct interaction with international guests, workplace communication, reflective learning practices, and the application of communication strategies in authentic workplace situations. The participants perceived EBL as an effective approach for improving speaking fluency, vocabulary mastery, self-confidence, and communicative competence. Furthermore, the interns encountered challenges such as understanding various English accents, limited vocabulary, speaking anxiety, and spontaneous communication demands. However, these challenges also provided valuable learning opportunities that enhanced communication strategies and professional readiness. The findings support Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, emphasizing learning through concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation.

Keywords: *Experiential-Based Learning, English Speaking Skills, Internship Program, English Education Students, Food and Beverage Department*

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Introduction

English has become an essential international language used in education, tourism, business, and global communication. Among the four language skills, speaking is often considered the most important because it enables learners to communicate ideas, opinions, and information

effectively in real-life situations. However, many English learners experience difficulties in developing speaking skills due to limited authentic communication opportunities, low confidence, speaking anxiety, and insufficient exposure to real-world interactions.

For English Education students, speaking competence is particularly important because it supports both academic and professional development. Nevertheless, classroom-based learning often provides limited opportunities for authentic communication. Students may understand English theoretically but struggle to communicate effectively in real-life situations. Therefore, alternative learning approaches that provide meaningful and authentic experiences are needed to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical language use.

Experiential-Based Learning (EBL) offers a potential solution to this issue. Based on Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (1984), learning occurs through a cycle of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Through authentic experiences, learners can apply language knowledge, reflect on communication practices, and improve their speaking competence.

Internship programs represent one of the most practical forms of experiential learning because they provide students with opportunities to engage directly in professional environments. In hospitality settings such as the Food and Beverage (F&B) Department, interns frequently communicate with international guests, requiring them to use English for authentic purposes. These interactions create meaningful opportunities for language learning and speaking development.

Although previous studies have explored experiential learning and internship programs, limited research has specifically examined how English Education student interns develop speaking skills through experiential learning in hospitality settings. Therefore, this study aims to explore the role of experiential-based learning in developing English-speaking skills among English Education student interns in the Food and Beverage Department at Bobby's G-Land Surf Camp.

Method

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a case study design. The research was conducted at Bobby's G-Land Surf Camp, Banyuwangi, Indonesia. The participants consisted of two English Education students who participated in an internship program in the Food and Beverage Department.

Data were collected through three techniques: observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted to identify authentic communication activities performed by the interns during their daily responsibilities. Semi-structured interviews were used to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, challenges, and opportunities regarding experiential-based learning. Documentation was used to support and validate the findings obtained from observations and interviews.

The collected data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. To ensure data trustworthiness, triangulation of data sources and collection techniques was applied.

Findings

Experiential Learning Experiences Encountered by Student Interns The findings revealed that the interns experienced various forms of experiential learning throughout their internship program. The most significant learning experiences occurred through direct interaction with international guests, communication with coworkers, participation in workplace activities, and reflective learning practices.

The interns frequently used English when greeting guests, taking food and beverage orders, explaining menu items, responding to inquiries, and maintaining casual conversations. These authentic interactions provided opportunities to practice English in meaningful contexts beyond classroom settings.

Additionally, the interns engaged in reflective learning by evaluating their communication performance after interacting with guests. Reflection enabled them to identify strengths, weaknesses, and communication strategies for future interactions.

Interns' Perceptions of Experiential-Based Learning

The participants perceived experiential-based learning as highly beneficial for improving their English-speaking skills. They reported that continuous exposure to authentic communication situations increased their confidence and encouraged them to use English more naturally.

The internship environment provided opportunities to develop speaking fluency, expand vocabulary knowledge, and enhance communicative competence. The interns believed that learning through direct experience was more effective than learning

through theoretical instruction alone because it required them to use English for real communication purposes.

Furthermore, the participants emphasized that repeated interactions with international guests helped them become more confident and comfortable speaking English in professional contexts. Challenges and Opportunities in Developing Speaking Skills Several challenges emerged during the internship experience. The interns reported difficulties in understanding different English accents, particularly from guests from various countries. They also experienced vocabulary limitations, speaking anxiety, and difficulties responding spontaneously during conversations.

Despite these challenges, the participants viewed them as valuable learning opportunities. The necessity to communicate effectively encouraged them to develop communication strategies, improve vocabulary knowledge, and adapt to diverse communication situations. These experiences also contributed to greater professional readiness and workplace confidence.

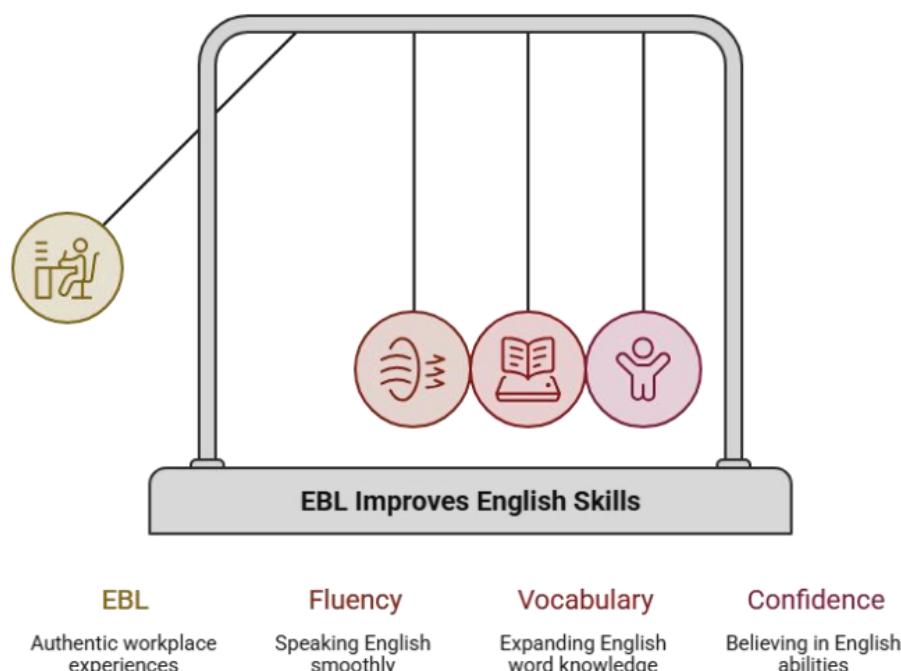


Figure 1. The Role of Experiential-Based Learning in Developing English-Speaking Skills among Student Interns.

Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between Experiential-Based Learning (EBL) and the development of English-speaking skills among student interns in the Food and

Beverage Department. The figure demonstrates that authentic workplace experiences serve as the primary foundation of experiential learning. Through direct interaction with international guests, coworkers, and supervisors, interns are exposed to meaningful communication situations that require the active use of English in real-world contexts.

The figure further shows that these authentic experiences contribute to the improvement of several key aspects of speaking skills, namely fluency, vocabulary, and confidence. Fluency develops as interns repeatedly engage in English conversations during daily workplace activities, enabling them to communicate more smoothly and naturally. Vocabulary knowledge expands through continuous exposure to workplace-related expressions, guest interactions, and hospitality terminology. In addition, confidence increases as interns successfully participate in authentic communication situations and gradually overcome their fear of making mistakes. These findings suggest that experiential-based learning provides a valuable environment for language development by transforming workplace experiences into opportunities for meaningful speaking practice and communicative growth.

Discussion

The findings support Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory by demonstrating that English-speaking skills can be developed through authentic workplace experiences, reflection, and continuous practice. The internship program provided opportunities for interns to engage in all four stages of Kolb's learning cycle.

The direct interaction with international guests represents the stage of Concrete Experience, where interns actively participated in authentic communication situations. Reflective Observation occurred when interns evaluated their communication performance and identified areas for improvement. Through Abstract Conceptualization, they developed new understandings regarding vocabulary use, communication strategies, and language patterns. Finally, Active Experimentation was demonstrated when they applied these insights in subsequent interactions.

The findings also align with previous studies indicating that experiential learning enhances speaking fluency, confidence, and communicative competence. Authentic workplace interactions required interns to use English meaningfully rather

than merely practicing language forms. This supports the view that language acquisition is strengthened through real-world communication experiences.

Moreover, the challenges identified in this study, including accent comprehension difficulties, vocabulary limitations, and speaking anxiety, are consistent with common obstacles experienced by English language learners. However, the findings suggest that such challenges can function as learning opportunities that promote language development and professional growth when learners are continuously exposed to authentic communication environments.

Overall, the internship program served as an effective experiential learning environment that facilitated both language development and workplace competence among English Education students.

Conclusion

This study explored the role of Experiential-Based Learning in developing English-speaking skills among English Education student interns in the Food and Beverage Department at Bobby's G-Land Surf Camp.

The findings indicate that the interns experienced experiential learning through direct interaction with international guests, workplace communication, reflective learning activities, and the application of communication strategies in authentic workplace situations. The participants perceived experiential-based learning as an effective approach for improving speaking fluency, vocabulary mastery, self-confidence, and communicative competence.

Although the interns encountered challenges such as understanding different accents, vocabulary limitations, speaking anxiety, and spontaneous communication demands, these challenges became valuable opportunities for learning and professional development. The findings support Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory and highlight the importance of internship programs as authentic learning environments that facilitate speaking skill development.

Future research may involve a larger number of participants and different workplace contexts to gain broader insights into the relationship between experiential learning and English language development.

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