

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the foundation of the study. The study begins by explaining its background, which outlines the context, rationale, and urgency. It also formulates the research problem to direct the study. The key terms used in this study are defined operationally to make them unambiguous. After that, the objectives of the research are outlined to emphasize the results. Lastly, this chapter also discusses the significance of the research, with emphasis on its contribution theoretically, practically, and empirically.

1.1 Background of the Study

English grammar refers to the structural rules that govern the arrangement of words into meaningful sentences. Harmer (2001) stated that grammar explores how to create arrangements of words. It explains how sentences should be constructed, along with the meaning that each form conveys. In line with this, Tomakin (2014), as cited in Zuhriyah (2017), stated that a person cannot become proficient in a language without learning grammar, as it enables them to construct meaningful words or sentences. Furthermore, Khan (2016) emphasized that knowing the meaning of words alone is not sufficient; applying grammatical principles allows speakers to convey clear and detailed messages. Mustakim and Ismail (2018) also revealed that to use a language effectively, all elements, including vocabulary, pronunciation, and structure, must be mastered. In other words, learning grammar is crucial for students to construct meaningful sentences and express their ideas accurately.

Despite its importance, many English language learners still face challenges in mastering grammar, one of which is in understanding the transformation between active and passive voice. Khansir (2008) found that from 100 students, there were 1,678 grammatical errors, including errors in auxiliary verbs (33%), passive voice (28%), and tenses (39%). Similarly, Azizah et al. (2025) found that students struggled with singular and plural nouns, prepositions, pronouns, the use of correct

tenses, the difference between active and passive voice forms, and word order, reflecting students' difficulty in sentence arrangement. Banditvilai and Cullen (2018) revealed that 520 EFL students struggled in language skills such as writing, speaking, reading, and listening due to a lack of grammar understanding. This lack led to difficulties in constructing correct sentences, comprehending meaning, and confidently using the language.

In Indonesia itself, although English is taught from elementary to university level, the ability of students to understand English grammar is still poor. Asroni (2023) and Prasetyo (2020) mentioned that some students can speak English, but they struggle to arrange the words they want to speak according to the appropriate grammar, considering that English grammar is different from Indonesian grammar. Sorohiti et al. (2024) also noted that students often fail to organize ideas clearly because of poor grammar. The contributing factors include limited exposure to English and a lack of motivation since English is not their first language. Moreover, the challenges are not only faced by students but also by teachers. Dewi (2015) noted that ineffective methods and limited time hamper grammar teaching. This condition is also further emphasized by Syafrayadin et al. (2022), who pointed out that time constraints make grammar instruction even more difficult.

To address these challenges, there is a growing need for alternative learning environments that provide more intensive and contextualized exposure to English. One such approach is the English camp, an immersive learning environment where students are encouraged and often required to use English in various real-life contexts. The goal is to create a supportive atmosphere that promotes practical use of English through engaging activities. A literature review by Rachmawati et al. (2020) demonstrates that English camps serve as an engaging learning method that encourages language use outside the traditional classroom, enabling learners to practice English actively and meaningfully.

English camp can be viewed as a type of immersion program that combines practice and learning in a relaxed and natural environment. Students are exposed to

the use of English in communicative contexts through a variety of interactive activities, including role-playing, group games, and grammar-based activities. This aligns with the statement by Muda et al. (2024), who noted that English language camps offer learners an immersive environment where they can practice and improve their English skills through activities such as games, group discussions, and cultural exchanges, thereby encouraging consistent language use outside formal classroom settings. This consistent exposure allows them to internalize grammatical patterns through active practice rather than rote memorization, strengthening their understanding of sentence structures

Supporting this, a study by Thahira et al. (2023) reported that the participants of the English camp program improved not only speaking skills, but also their grammar understanding, pronunciation, and vocabulary mastery. Furthermore, through interactive activities, participants can improve their knowledge of new words, idioms, and grammar (Asroriyah et al., 2024). Therefore, the use of English language camps as an approach proposed in this study is rationally related to grammar learning, as it provides structured and experience-based opportunities for students to apply grammatical knowledge in real contexts, thereby improving comprehension and retention.

Several previous studies have shown the benefits of English camps. Mustakim and Ismail (2018) showed that a 5-day English camp significantly improved students' speaking skills. Ketamon et al. (2020) reported positive student perceptions after participating in an English camp, highlighting increased motivation and understanding. This finding is in line with the view that increased motivation can support grammar learning, as motivated learners tend to engage more actively and process grammatical input more effectively (Zuhri et al., 2025). Similarly, Garhani and Supriyono (2021) found that English camp activities enhance motivation and learning through a fun and engaging environment. It has been proven that learner engagement, as demonstrated through participation in interactive activities, improves grammar acquisition because it promotes deeper cognitive processing and grammatical pattern memory (Abdulbaki et al., 2025).

However, while many studies focus on speaking or motivation, research on the direct effect of an English camp on students' grammar mastery remains limited. Most existing studies were also conducted outside Indonesia, making their findings less applicable to the local context. Thus, this study aims to fill that gap by investigating the effect of an intensive English camp program on students' mastery of English grammar, using a pre-experimental study with a pre-test and post-test design. This study is expected to offer practical insights and theoretical contributions for improving English language teaching in Indonesia, particularly in EFL contexts.

1.2 Formulation of the Problems

Based on the background above, the writer formulates the research problem as follows: Does attending an intensive English camp have an effect on grammar mastery among junior high school students?

1.3 Operational Definitions

1.3.1 Intensive English Camp

English camp is generally considered a program offering an intensive language learning approach that immerses participants in English through various interactive and communicative activities. It is called intensive because students engage in multiple English learning sessions each day. They learned English in about four to five sessions daily, providing them with sustained and focused English exposure. Even though it is not considered a formal teaching method, it serves as a strategy to create a more engaging and student-centred environment. English camp typically combines formal instruction with informal exposure to English, such as games, songs, role-playing, group assignments, and cultural simulations, aimed at building students' confidence and fluency in practical language use.

In the context of this study, English camp refers to an English learning program that is implemented at eL-BAS Islamic Junior High School and lasts for 2 months. The main focus of this program is to improve students' English skills and knowledge through a combination of classroom learning and interactive activities. Specifically, grammar learning is emphasized through interactive games, such as chain sentence and whisper and change activities. These activities are designed to address common problems that students face in learning grammar, specifically in active and passive voice, such as confusion about tense differences, limited motivation, and a lack of practice opportunities. For example, the chain sentence activity encourages students to construct sentences collaboratively while paying attention to word form and function, allowing students to reduce errors caused by first language interference. Meanwhile, the whisper and change activity requires students to transform between active and passive sentences in various tenses, helping them overcome common errors such as incorrect verb forms, misuse of "to be", and inappropriate sentence order. Through these activities, the English camp provides a supportive and engaging environment to address both linguistic and non-linguistic challenges that students face in learning grammar.

1.3.2 Grammar Mastery (Active-Passive Voice)

According to Yuliawati (2018), grammar mastery is defined as the students' understanding of the theoretical aspects of sentence structure, such as functions, units, forms, and their ability to produce grammatically correct sentences according to the rules of the language. In the context of this study, grammar mastery refers to the students' ability to understand and apply grammatical rules in constructing correct and meaningful sentences in English. It involves the comprehension of grammatical structures and the capability to use them in both spoken and written communication.

In this study, the focus of English grammar is limited to students' mastery of active and passive voice. According to Batubara and Mahardhika

(2020), active voice is a sentence where the subject of it does the task, while passive voice is a sentence where the subject is subjected to the task. This area is chosen based on the initial interview with an English teacher at eL-BAS Islamic Junior High School, who highlighted that many students still have difficulties in transforming the sentences from active to passive, particularly in different or complex tenses. The teacher noted that this difficulty often hindered students' writing accuracy and their grammatical performance on classroom assessments. Therefore, the active and passive voices are chosen to be the target grammar aspect in this study.

1.3.3 eL-BAS Islamic Junior High School

eL-BAS Islamic Junior High School is a modern Islamic school under the auspices of Bina Anak Soleh Foundation (eL-BAS) located in Ciamis, West Java, which integrates religious and general education with the development of two foreign languages, namely Arabic and English. This school is affiliated with the Islamic boarding school Daarul Ma'arif Ciamis and has programs that support interactive language learning. One of its flagship programs is English camp, a language program that offers a supportive environment for students to enhance their English proficiency. eL-BAS Islamic Junior High School is the only school in the region that provides an in-depth and immersive language learning experience as well as consistently applies Arabic and English language habits in the students' daily life, making it relevant as a research location for this study.

1.4 Aims of the Study

Based on the formulation of the problem above, this research aims to determine the effect of an intensive English camp on grammar mastery among junior high school students, specifically focusing on active and passive voice as measured by pre-test and post-test scores. This research also seeks to address the gap in previous studies by evaluating the effect of English camp programs on grammar mastery within the EFL context in Indonesia.

1.5 Significances of the Study

1.5.1 Theoretical Use

Theoretically, this study is expected to help readers learn more about English camp in the setting of eL-BAS, particularly as a strategy to improve students' understanding of English grammar. This study contributes to the theoretical understanding, grounded in Krashen's (1985) input hypothesis and Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory, of how informal learning environments, such as English camps, can facilitate grammar acquisition in EFL settings, particularly in Indonesia.

1.5.2 Practical Use

Practically, this study can give some insights to teachers, students, and future researchers. For the teachers, the results of this study can guide teachers in designing more effective English camp activities that integrate interactive, task-based, and game-oriented grammar learning, providing engaging and intensive practice to improve students' grammar mastery.

Then, for the students, this study gives information that can help them improve their understanding of English grammar. Through this program, students can improve their understanding of the structures of grammar through intensive practice over a certain period.

This study also provides an empirical basis for the next researchers who are interested in studying the English camp. The next researchers can use the results of this study as a reference to expand their research or to develop a similar program in different settings with a focus on more specific outcomes or other variables besides grammar.

1.5.3 Empirical Use

Empirically, this study provides data that can support or reject claims about the effect of an intensive English camp on students' mastery of English grammar. Through a quantitative approach with a one-group pre-test and post-test design, this study provides concrete empirical evidence on the extent to which the camp program plays a role in improving students' grammar skills.