

Strengthening English Vocabulary for Children at DTA Amaliyah, Istana Yatim Mutiara Harapan 2, and RA Al-Khoiriyah

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ABSTRAK

Pembelajaran kosakata bahasa Inggris sejak usia dini penting untuk mendukung perkembangan anak pada masa emas melalui metode menyenangkan dan interaktif. Masalah utama meliputi keterbatasan paparan kosakata, kurangnya pembelajaran terstruktur, dan minimnya media ajar. Program Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat ini bertujuan meningkatkan pemahaman kosakata dasar dan motivasi belajar anak usia dini dan sekolah dasar di Desa Mekarjaya, Istana Yatim Mutiara Harapan 2, dan Raudhatul Athfal Al-Khoiriyah Gantar. Program menggunakan pendekatan Rapid Rural Appraisal untuk menilai kebutuhan belajar secara cepat dan mengembangkan aktivitas relevan dengan kondisi lokal. Melalui identifikasi kebutuhan, observasi, dan perancangan aktivitas berbasis proyek, materi disesuaikan dengan kapasitas dan minat anak. Aktivitas kreatif seperti permainan kosakata, lagu, dan cerita interaktif diterapkan untuk meningkatkan retensi kata baru dan kemampuan komunikasi sederhana. Hasil menunjukkan peningkatan minat, partisipasi siswa, media ajar yang dapat digunakan kembali, serta penguatan kolaborasi dengan lembaga mitra. Pendekatan ini efektif meningkatkan pemahaman, kepercayaan diri, dan kemampuan sosial anak.

ABSTRACT

English vocabulary learning from an early age is essential to support children's development during the golden period through enjoyable and interactive methods. The main challenges include limited vocabulary exposure, lack of structured learning, and insufficient teaching media. This Community Service Program aims to improve basic vocabulary comprehension and learning motivation among early childhood and elementary school children in Desa Mekarjaya, Istana Yatim Mutiara Harapan 2, and Raudhatul Athfal Al-Khoiriyah Gantar. The program uses a Rapid Rural Appraisal approach to quickly assess learning needs and develop activities relevant to the local context. Through needs identification, observation, and project-based activity design, materials are tailored to children's capacities and interests. Creative activities such as vocabulary games, songs, and interactive stories are implemented to enhance word retention and basic communication skills. The results show increased student interest and participation, reusable teaching media, and strengthened collaboration with partner institutions.

This approach effectively improves children's comprehension, self-confidence, and social skills.

INTRODUCTION

Almost all of the world's population uses English as their daily language of communication. This is important for everyone, including young children. English language education is fundamental for young children to learn as preparation for the future. One of the benefits of learning English from an early age is that it makes learning easier for them (Triyanto & Astuti, 2021). In the Indonesian educational context, particularly within non-formal institutions, exposure to English remains limited due to the absence of structured learning, insufficient learning resources, and inadequate teacher training. This condition is evident in DTA Amaliyah in Mekarjaya Village, Istana Yatim Mutiara Harapan 2, and RA Al-Khoiriyah in Gantar Village, where most children have not been properly introduced to basic vocabulary such as colors, numbers, animals, and everyday objects. These limitations are compounded by the lack of teaching media, restricted interaction opportunities, and teaching methods that do not align with the learning characteristics of young children.

This situation becomes more serious in communities without a formal English curriculum, as it reduces children's opportunities to develop language awareness from an early age. Without enjoyable and age-appropriate learning activities, children may lose interest and confidence in learning English. The absence of structured vocabulary learning may hinder communication skills and reduce academic preparedness in the future.

To address this issue, a community service program that adopts adaptive learning strategies is required. Introducing vocabulary through interactive methods such as educational games, songs, storytelling, and the use of flashcards has been proven effective for early childhood. This approach creates an engaging learning environment, facilitates comprehension, strengthens memory, and helps children apply newly learned vocabulary in real-life contexts.

The Community Service Program carried out in Mekarjaya Village, Istana Yatim Mutiara Harapan 2, and RA Al-Khoiriyah in Gantar Village is designed to improve English vocabulary comprehension among early childhood and elementary students. Through enjoyable and structured activities, the program aims to provide a foundation for vocabulary mastery, stimulate learning motivation, and assist partner institutions in implementing sustainable English teaching practices.

This introduction presents the theoretical basis of vocabulary learning in early childhood, identifies key problems faced by partner institutions, and explains the rationale behind choosing interactive learning methods. Furthermore, it emphasizes the significance of this program in improving children's English learning outcomes through innovative, practical, and easily applicable approaches.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was conducted in three partner institutions, DTA Amaliyah in Mekarjaya Village, Istana Yatim Mutiara Harapan 2 in South Tangerang, and RA Al-Khoiriyah in Gantar Village, targeting early childhood to elementary school students. To gain a quick and accurate understanding of the English language learning conditions in these three institutions, the study used the Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) approach. This

approach allows for rapid, participatory, and contextual field data collection through direct observation, brief interviews, and simple mapping. The use of RRA in the context of education is still relevant and recognized in recent research as an effective method for identifying local needs and mapping learning dynamics in a short period of time, as shown by Entsminger (2024), who emphasizes that modern RRA emphasizes speed, accuracy, and community involvement in the assessment process. The integration of this participatory method is also in line with the findings of do Rosário Cameira (2024), who states that RRA is effective when combined with a community-based approach, particularly in educational and social interventions.

The implementation of the RRA approach in this study was carried out through rapid observation of the learning environment, teacher-student interactions, and the availability of learning facilities. Preliminary findings indicate a limitation of visual teaching materials and a lack of interactive methods, which was later confirmed through brief interviews with teachers; this practice is similar to the RRA field study model used by Zuhdi (2021), which emphasizes the importance of direct validation from local practitioners to ensure accurate needs analysis. This participatory approach is also consistent with the contemporary RRA model, which places local actors as the main source of information for understanding learning challenges and potential (Cameira, 2024).

Based on the results of the needs assessment, the team developed learning materials in the form of thematic flashcards, worksheets, game cards, and illustrated storytelling texts. The materials were developed based on the concept of visual and multisensory media, which has been proven effective in improving vocabulary mastery in early childhood. This finding is in line with Leasa (2024), who asserts that the use of concrete and visual media can increase learning engagement, especially in the context of rural community education. In addition, the material design was adapted to the local context as recommended by the community-based literacy approach, which is also evident in the findings of Zulkarnain (2023), which show that simple and familiar media are easier to apply and accept by teachers and students.

The intervention was implemented through several learning sessions that combined vocabulary introduction using flashcards, game-based activities such as matching cards and Simon Says, thematic storytelling, and reinforcement tasks through worksheets. This process was observed using an observational checklist compiled based on the principles of early childhood vocabulary learning. During the implementation, the team conducted formative evaluations using the RRA reflection principle, namely rapid adaptation based on field conditions, a practice recommended in Entsminger's (2024) study, which emphasizes that RRA is iterative and must be continuously adjusted to field findings.

The final evaluation of the activity used a simple pretest–posttest in the form of picture recognition and vocabulary naming. This quantitative data was analyzed descriptively, while qualitative data from observations and teacher interviews was used to interpret learning changes more comprehensively. This triangulation approach was

chosen because it is in line with the characteristics of contemporary RRA, which combines rapid data, community-based validation, and in-depth contextual analysis (Cameira, 2024). All activities were carried out with the approval of partner institutions, teacher assistance, and the application of child protection principles.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Community Service (PkM) activities carried out at DTA Amaliyah, Mekarjaya Village; RA Al-Khoiriyah, Gantar Village; and Istana Yatim Mutiara Harapan 2 demonstrated significant improvements in students' basic English vocabulary skills. Based on field observations and pre- and post-activity evaluations, it is evident that the children showed notable progress in recognizing, mentioning, and using simple vocabulary. Before the intervention, most students were unable to name colors, numbers, animals, or common objects in English. This situation changed after the implementation of interactive learning through visual media, educational games, storytelling, and movement-based activities.

These improvements were visible from the increased responsiveness of students when asked to identify or mention specific vocabulary. The children became more capable of following simple instructions such as "point to the cat" or "touch red" more quickly and accurately. They also showed greater confidence in repeating vocabulary aloud, even without being prompted. Beyond vocabulary comprehension, student participation also increased. Children who were initially passive became more actively involved in games, answering questions, and joining group activities.

Games such as matching cards and Simon Says created an enjoyable learning atmosphere, which helped improve students' interest and focus throughout the lessons. Teachers from the three institutions responded positively to the methods and media used. They noted that flashcards, game cards, and worksheets were very helpful in the learning process and were easy to apply in routine activities. This statement is in line with the results of a study by The Implementation of Flash Cards to Improve Simple English Vocabulary for Young Learners at SD Negeri 6 Ngabul - Jepara, which found that the meaningful use of flashcards significantly improved students' vocabulary mastery through pre-tests and post-tests.

The results also highlight the effectiveness of RRA in the initial planning stage. Quick observations and brief interviews allowed the team to identify the institutions' primary needs accurately within a short time. This information facilitated the development of learning materials and media that were relevant to the real conditions of the students. The RRA findings aligned well with the characteristics of early-childhood learning, which require concrete, visual, and interactive methods.

The implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) contributed to increased student engagement through simple projects such as coloring vocabulary items, matching pictures, and arranging letter cards. These project-based activities allowed children to learn through direct experience, which improved vocabulary retention and comprehension. PjBL proved effective for young learners because it supports fine motor

development, early cognitive skills, and self-confidence when completing tasks successfully.



Figure 1. The atmosphere during the presentation of material by group one led by Mr. Sutarman

The image illustrates the implementation of a Community Service (PkM) activity focused on introducing and strengthening basic English vocabulary for elementary school students. The activity takes place inside a classroom. Within the context of PkM, the presence of a visually supportive environment plays an important role in the learning strategy, emphasizing accessibility and affordability of instructional media.

The instructor is seen delivering verbal instructions while using a simple loudspeaker, indicating that the material is conveyed through direct and repetitive communication. The use of a speech-based approach reflects a teaching method that prioritizes clear articulation and memory reinforcement, particularly when digital resources are unavailable or not integrated into the intervention strategy.

The students participate in the learning process while seated at long, shared tables, allowing interaction to occur collectively and enabling them to listen to and respond to instructions at a uniform pace. This seating arrangement encourages receptive participation, a form of engagement that focuses on receiving, understanding, and processing information before students begin producing language independently.



Figure 2. The atmosphere during the presentation of material by group two led by Kak Sukma

The activity shown in the image is part of a Community Service (PkM) program focused on teaching everyday English vocabulary to elementary school students. The session takes place in a multipurpose room with an informal yet structured spatial arrangement. The facilitator delivers direct instructions using a whiteboard as the primary medium for presenting the material.

The learning environment reflects the typical characteristics of community-based educational activities in semi-urban or rural areas of Indonesia, where facilities may be limited but accessibility to education remains a priority. The facilitator employs a teacher-centered approach, demonstrated through writing, explaining, and directing students to follow the vocabulary material being taught. Meanwhile, the students sit in groups on the floor and participate as active recipients of information through observation, note-taking, and responding to instructions.

The activity represents the implementation of a non-formal English learning intervention designed to strengthen the foundational vocabulary skills of elementary school students. This activity aligns with the objectives of the PkM program, which include expanding educational equity, improving foreign language literacy, and providing learning experiences that are adaptive to local environmental conditions.



Figure 3. The atmosphere during the material presentation by Group three delivered by Mr. Imron Rosyadi



Figure 4. Outdoor learning activities by team one

The image depicts the implementation of a Community Service (PkM) activity focused on teaching basic English vocabulary to elementary school children within a community-based learning context. The activity is conducted in a semi-open public space owned by the local community, functioning as an informal meeting area. The presence of a whiteboard, loudspeaker, and visual teaching materials indicates that the session centers on introducing and reinforcing everyday English vocabulary. The choice of such a location reflects an adaptive PkM implementation strategy that aligns with the local socio-environmental conditions, allowing educational activities to be carried out without relying on formal classroom infrastructure.

The participation of all parties reinforces the nature of PkM as a collaborative effort between academics and the community, rather than a one-directional transfer of knowledge. Additionally, the diversity of the children's ages in this activity suggests that the learning intervention is designed for a multilevel context, with vocabulary selected based on its practical relevance and ease of acquisition.

The community service activity in this session was conducted in an outdoor area that was used as an alternative learning space for elementary school students. The space was arranged in a circle to facilitate direct interaction, ensure visual accessibility to the instructor, and support verbal response activities based on English vocabulary. The outdoor environment was chosen to provide more space for movement and to enable the application of physical activity-based learning strategies (Total Physical Response/TPR) in reinforcing everyday vocabulary. During the session, students were placed in a standing position at a distance that allowed the instructor to demonstrate gestures relevant to the target vocabulary. The instructor provides verbal stimuli in the form of English keywords, then combines them with nonverbal cues to clarify the meaning. This approach is designed to accommodate the characteristics of early learners who are more responsive to multisensory activities. The presence of a companion or classroom teacher

serves as a co-regulator who ensures that the activity proceeds as planned and helps maintain the participants' focus.

The learning situation shows that outdoor spaces help increase student participation in movement and spontaneous responses, which is relevant to the PKM's goal of building a foundation of practical vocabulary that can be applied in everyday situations. The use of short direct instruction-based methods (direct vocabulary elicitation) and guided motor response activities are key elements that support consistent delivery of material

Overall, the PkM activities show that English vocabulary learning through visual media and interactive activities produced positive outcomes in students' language skills and learning behavior. The approaches used complemented one another: RRA ensured accurate needs analysis, PAR ensured teacher involvement and program sustainability, and PjBL made the learning process meaningful and relevant. This program not only improved children's basic vocabulary skills but also provided a sustainable learning model that partner institutions can continue to apply.

CONCLUSION

The Community Service Program (PkM) demonstrates that basic English vocabulary can be effectively taught outside formal classrooms using a community-based approach. By utilizing public spaces and simple visual tools, the program shows that successful learning depends on adapting to the local environment rather than relying on institutional facilities. This contextual and participatory strategy allows children to connect new vocabulary directly to their daily lives, making the educational process more practical and engaging.

Furthermore, the program's success highlights the importance of collaboration between educators and the local community, where residents act as active partners rather than passive recipients. The involvement of parents and local figures not only improves literacy but also strengthens the community's social bonds. This flexible and inclusive model proves that educational quality can be maintained even with limited resources, offering a replicable framework for expanding English literacy in other regions.

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