Fun English Class as an effort to improve English Literacy for Children at Elementary Level

Fitri Nurdianingsih¹, Refi Ranto Rozak², Ima Isnaini Taufiqr Rohmah³, Triananda Rahmatul Izza⁴

¹²³⁴IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro, Jawa Timur, Indonesia
*e-mail: fitri_nurdianingsih@ikippgribojonegoro.ac.id

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Accepted, 12/02/2024
Revision, 22/04/2024
Published, 30/06/2024
Volume (2), Nomor(1), (June), (2024)
EISSN 2988-0246 PISSN 2988-6732
DOI: https://doi.org/10.61233/zijen.v2i1.13

Keywords:
Fun English class, English Literacy, elementary level children

ABSTRACT

The English Literacy Improvement Program for Children at the Elementary Level is a community service initiative that aims to improve the English reading and writing skills of elementary school children. This program is designed specifically for elementary school children, with an emphasis on areas that have high literacy needs. The implementation of this program uses the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach, which focuses on utilizing the assets and potential that exist within the community. In conclusion, this program succeeded in achieving its goals by increasing children's English literacy skills and providing long-term benefits for them and the community. Recommendations for further development include expansion of the program to other regions and continued support from government, schools and communities.

INTRODUCTION

The importance of English literacy in the era of globalization cannot be underestimated. Currently, in the context of globalization, English language skills are the main key to facing the challenges of an increasingly connected world. English is not only a means of communication, but also a means of broadening horizons, strengthening intercultural relations, and increasing individual competitiveness in the global job market. By mastering English, a person can more easily adapt to increasingly rapid developments in technology, information and communication, so that they are able to compete globally and contribute to sustainable development.

The importance of English literacy in the era of globalization cannot be underestimated. In the current context of globalization, English language skills are the main key in facing the challenges of an increasingly connected world. English not only functions as a communication tool, but also as a means to broaden horizons, strengthen intercultural relations, and increase individual competitiveness in the global job market. By mastering English, a person can more easily adapt to increasingly rapid developments in technology,
information and communication, so that they are able to compete globally and contribute to sustainable development (Ulya & Ichsan, 2021; Hamidah et al., 2023; Jasuli & Suhartatik, 2022).

The challenge of English literacy at primary level in Indonesia is a significant issue. Difficulties in learning English in rural schools are often related to student conditions, the learning environment, and the competence of English teachers, (Harlina & Yusuf, 2020). Apart from that, learning methods that are not current and tend to be boring are also the main obstacles in increasing English literacy at the elementary level (Amelia, 2021). Many teachers in elementary schools teach English without an educational background or special training in children’s learning, thus creating challenges in the effectiveness of teaching English for students at the elementary level (Novitasari & Nurfiqih, 2020). To overcome these challenges, strategic efforts need to be made, such as developing innovative learning methods, providing training for teachers, and utilizing learning media that are interesting and appropriate to the needs of students at the elementary level (Santika et al., 2021). With a deep understanding of these challenges, strategic steps can be taken to increase English literacy at the primary level in Indonesia.

Learning designed for children must be carried out in a fun and interesting way. The aim is to help them learn and expand their knowledge of English, especially vocabulary. The PKM team from the English Education Study Program then designed an activity called "fun English class". The learning concept is fun and aims to provide a positive experience for children in learning English. This activity is carried out as a form of Community Service in schools that have limited access to English language learning. One of the schools chosen was SDN Kemamang, because it was deemed to meet the criteria for a school worthy of receiving "fun English class" activities.

The role of literacy in children’s academic and social development is very important in forming the basis of their abilities. Ethnographic and socio-linguistic studies show that families have a crucial role in creating a literacy environment that supports children’s development (Hermawati & Sugito, 2021). Apart from that, informational and emotional support from parents also influences children’s academic achievement, through the development of self-efficacy and the attention given (Indrawati & Alfiasari, 2016). The teacher’s role is very important in directing learning activities to increase early childhood literacy effectively (Nurhayani & Nurhabifah, 2022). Therefore, collaboration between families and schools, as well as the use of digital media in education, is an important strategy in improving children's academic and social abilities (Drupadi et al., 2022; Lindriany et al., 2022). Collaborative efforts between parents, teachers, and the learning environment are key to strengthening children's literacy and supporting their academic and social development.

This activity aims to motivate elementary school students to be interested in learning English from an early age, improve their English reading and writing skills, build a strong foundation for future English learning, and foster their interest and love for English.
METHOD

This research discusses Community Service Lecture activities that use the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) approach. This approach focuses on utilizing the assets and potential of the community. In this case, the community in question is the Elementary School (SD) in Kemamang Village. The ABCD approach was chosen because SD/MI (Primary School/Madrasah Ibtidaiyah) is an important form of education in formal education in Indonesia. At this age, children need systematic and systemic guidance to build their knowledge. Therefore, the role of education in SD/MI is very strategic for the development of children’s intelligence and personality. The target of this activity is 24 grade 4 students at SDN Kemamang.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Strengthening English reading and writing skills at a basic level is essential to building a solid foundation for subsequent English language learning. Cultivating an interest and love for English from an early age allows children to develop essential language skills from a young age. Juel's (1988) research shows that learning to read and write starting from an early age has a positive impact on children's literacy development. In addition, research by Foorman et al. (1998) demonstrated the importance of effective instruction in preventing reading failure in at-risk children. Therefore, through the right approach and integrated support from the learning environment, children at the elementary level can be empowered to improve their English reading and writing skills, which will ultimately strengthen their literacy foundation for the future.

Fun English Class is a fun English teaching program for children. The learning method uses songs and games. Different from teaching for adults, teaching English for children has special characteristics. According to Scott and Ytreberg (1990), children understand situations more easily than the language used. They use language skills naturally and their understanding depends on their experience. Children have short concentration spans, are easily enthusiastic, and are positive learners. They rarely admit their ignorance. MacKay (2006) mentions three characteristics of child learners that are different from adults:

1) Children develop cognitive, social, emotional, and physical abilities that are influenced by motivation and concentration as they learn.

2) They develop literacy knowledge and skills when learning a second language.

3) Children develop literacy skills in their first language simultaneously, or their literacy understanding does not shift as they learn a second language.

Strengthening children's English reading and writing skills at the elementary level requires a focus on areas with high literacy needs or limited access to quality education. Research by Imtiyas et al. (2019) regarding the factors that influence children's modes of transportation in accessing elementary schools in Surakarta City, shows the importance of understanding the challenges of educational accessibility. In this context, efforts to build a
strong foundation for further English language learning need to pay attention to literacy conditions and educational accessibility in these areas. Thus, by focusing on elementary school children in areas with high literacy needs or limited access, a solid foundation can be built for the development of their English language skills from an early age. Long-term programs that focus on elementary school children (grades 1-6) in areas with high literacy needs or limited access to quality education require structured implementation stages. These stages include introduction, skills development, and overall program evaluation. The research results of Wijayanto and Prasetyo (2018) show that a systematic program evaluation approach, which includes evaluation of long-term impacts, program outcomes, program output, program processes and program input, is effective in understanding program effectiveness and success. Therefore, implementing a structured, long-term program with clear stages will ensure that children at primary level in areas in need receive optimal benefits in developing their English reading and writing skills.

Strengthening children’s English reading and writing skills at the elementary level requires teacher and facilitator training as the main key. Intensive training on interactive teaching methods will help them deliver material effectively and interestingly to children (Cahyani et al., 2021). Providing relevant and quality teaching materials and resources is also an important factor in supporting an optimal learning process (Purwati et al., 2022). By ensuring that teachers and facilitators are well trained and have adequate teaching materials, it is hoped that this program can run smoothly and have a positive impact on the development of children’s English language skills at the elementary level.

To achieve the target of improving children’s English reading and writing skills at the elementary level, a curriculum is needed that is adapted to their ability level. A curriculum tailored to children’s characteristics and needs can help ensure that teaching material is delivered effectively and relevantly. The teaching materials used also play an important role in the learning process. The use of a variety of teaching materials such as storybooks, vocabulary cards, posters and digital devices can enrich children’s learning experiences and increase their engagement in English learning. By providing an appropriate curriculum and varied teaching materials, it is hoped that children can understand the material more easily, improve their English language skills, and develop an interest and love for the language.

To support the improvement of children’s English reading and writing skills at the elementary level, supporting activities such as English reading clubs, storytelling or reading competitions, and English-based extracurricular activities can be effective tools. English reading clubs can provide opportunities for children to engage in discussion, analysis and reflection on various reading materials in English Surasni & Sumali (2022). Storytelling or reading competitions can be a fun encouragement for children to improve their reading and writing skills (Astutik & Setyowati, 2022). Meanwhile, English-based extracurricular activities can provide space for children to practice directly using English in a more relaxed and creative context (Pamungkas, 2019). By involving children in these activities, it is hoped that their interest and abilities in English can continue to develop positively.

The success of the program to improve children’s English reading and writing skills at the elementary level can be measured through several indicators. First, the increase in English
literacy test scores at the beginning and end of the program shows the progress that children have made (Yana & Abbas, 2022). Second, increasing children's participation and interest in learning English is also an important indicator of success (Nurchaerani et al., 2022). The positive impact on children's academic achievement is also a significant benchmark in evaluating the effectiveness of English language learning programs (Zati et al., 2021). By monitoring these indicators, it can be ensured that the program has had a positive impact and empowered children in developing their English language skills.

A program designed to improve children’s English reading and writing skills at the elementary level is showing success in achieving its goals. This program not only provides short-term benefits in improving children’s English skills, but also provides long-term benefits for children and the community as a whole. Therefore, this program not only has a positive impact in developing children’s English language skills, but also makes a sustainable contribution to improving their literacy and academic achievement and strengthening the community as a whole.

CONCLUSION

To increase the impact of the program for developing children's English reading and writing skills at the elementary level, it is necessary to expand the program to other regions to provide benefits to more children in various regions. Continuous support from the government, schools and community is the key to the success of this program. Continuous support can ensure the sustainability of the program and have a significant impact on the development of children's English language skills. By expanding the program and getting ongoing support, it is hoped that this program can provide greater long-term benefits for children and the community as a whole (Darmayanti & Wibowo, 2014).

REFERENCES


Pamungkas, N. (2019). Penerapan higher order thinking skills (hots) untuk meningkatkan
keterampilan membaca siswa sma. Tajdidukasi Jurnal Penelitian Dan Kajian Pendidikan Islam, 8(1). https://doi.org/10.47736/tajdidukasi.v8i1.246


