

**ENHANCING ENGLISH PROFICIENCY AND CHARACTER
DEVELOPMENT THROUGH ENGLISH LEARNING PROGRAM AT
SMP TERPADU CENDIKIA INSANI**

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Abstract

The community service activities carried out at SMP Terpadu Cendikia Insani aim to enhance students' English language proficiency and character development through structured and collaborative programs. The 'Intensive English Course' program is designed to significantly improve students' speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills in English. The creation of a student wall magazine aims to encourage creativity and the use of English in an enjoyable context, while the literary creation program focuses on developing writing skills and character through reflection and self-expression. Collaboration with parents and the community is also pursued to create a more supportive educational environment. The results of these activities show an improvement in students' English proficiency and interest in literature, as well as active participation from parents and the community. Financial support from Universitas Abdurachman Saleh Situbondo has been crucial to the success of these programs. Overall, this community service initiative has had a significantly positive impact on the academic and character development of students at SMP Terpadu Cendikia Insani.

Key Words: Character Development, Community Service Program, English Language Proficiency

INTRODUCTION

English is considered a universal language because it is used as the primary language in many countries worldwide (Dimara, 2022). Additionally, English is recognized as one of the important international languages that should be mastered or learned. In some countries, especially former British colonies, English is taught as a second language after the local language. This is clearly evident in the education system in Indonesia, where students from elementary school to university are taught various subjects, including English (Indriyani & Usriyah, 2016). Although the level of English proficiency in Indonesia is still low, less than eight

percent, proficiency in this language has great potential to improve Indonesia's image on the international stage through effective communication (Maduwu, 2016).

Equally important as English, literature also plays a vital role in enhancing the quality of the younger generation. Character education is a learning process designed to teach students important behaviors such as morality, ethics, manners, health, critical thinking, and success attitudes, so that they can behave well and be accepted in society (Soffiatin, 2021). Literary works, as creative products rooted in cultural values, are perfectly processed by writers to create real and comprehensive life experiences. This makes literature a guide for life that can enrich the thoughts and feelings of its readers. Therefore, literary works originating from local cultures can be used as a source and means for character building in students (Firman & Aminah, 2017).

Character education acknowledges that the use of language and literature in the educational process plays a significant role in helping to shape strong and positive character. Optimizing the role of language and literature in education will shape a younger generation that is wiser, more empowered, and capable of contributing positively to society in the future (Septyastawa & Widiasih, 2023). Schools in Indonesia are the right places to shape the younger generation to be proficient in English and possess good morality. However, some schools face challenges in achieving this goal. Several similar community service projects have been carried out in various levels of schools, including SD, SMP, and SMA, such as research conducted by Muhammad et al. (2022) at SMK TRI'S Maros, (Munisah, 2021) at Elementary Schools, Hustiana et al. (2023) at SMPN 4 Majene, and Enda et al. (2023) at SMP Waingai. However, none of these studies aimed to improve character education; all of these community services aimed solely at improving English language skills.

Several challenges faced by schools, such as SMP Terpadu Cendikia Insani, in their efforts to improve English proficiency and character development include a lack of awareness of the importance of character education and a curriculum that does not fully support this. Additionally, the pressure from the dense curriculum and the national standard exams that burden students, as well as the lack of support from the environment and parents in appreciating the values taught in school, can hinder the process of holistic character education. Therefore, cooperation between the school, government, parents, and society as a whole is needed to create an educational environment that supports and enables students to develop optimally, both in terms of English proficiency and the development of good character.

PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

SMP Terpadu Cendikia Insani faces several challenges in improving students' English language skills and character development. The main obstacles

include a low awareness of the importance of character education and a curriculum that does not fully support it. In addition, the pressure from the dense curriculum and national standard exams burdens students, leaving them with limited time and energy to focus on developing their English language skills and character. The lack of support from the environment and parents further adds to the difficulties. To address these issues, the community service team has designed several activities that are expected to help the students of SMP Terpadu Cendikia Insani.

First, the community service team launched the 'Intensive English Course' program. This program is designed to significantly improve students' English language proficiency. Classes will be conducted using interactive and practical methods, focusing on improving speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills in English. Through this intensive course, it is hoped that students will become more confident in using English in their daily lives.

Second, the community service team initiated the creation of a student bulletin board (mading). This bulletin board will serve as a platform for students to express their creativity through writing and artwork. By involving students in the bulletin board, they are encouraged to use English in a fun and supportive context while simultaneously strengthening their literacy skills. The bulletin board can also serve as a venue to showcase students' achievements and best works, motivating them to continue being productive.

Third, the community service team engaged students in the creation of literary works. This activity involves students in the process of creating literary works, such as poetry, short stories, and essays. In addition to enhancing their English language skills, this activity also aims to build students' character through deep reflection and self-expression. By writing and reading literary works, students can develop empathy, creativity, and critical thinking skills.

By implementing these activities, it is hoped that the students of SMP Terpadu Cendikia Insani will not only become more proficient in English but also develop into creative individuals with strong character. These activities are also expected to increase awareness and participation from parents and the community in supporting character education and English language development in the school. Through close collaboration between the school, students, parents, and the community service team, SMP Terpadu Cendikia Insani is expected to create a better educational environment that supports the optimal development of its students.

METHOD

To address the challenges faced by SMP Terpadu Cendikia Insani in improving students' English language skills and character development, the following implementation methods will be applied:

1. **English Learning 'Intensive English Course'**

Objective: To significantly improve students' English language skills.

Implementation Method:

- **Material Determination:** Develop learning materials that are appropriate for the students' proficiency level. The material will cover speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills.
- **Interactive Classes:** Conduct intensive English classes with interactive sessions such as group discussions, language games, and conversation simulations.
- **Periodic Evaluation:** Conduct regular evaluations to assess students' progress and adjust teaching methods as needed.

2. **Student Bulletin Board (Mading) Creation**

Objective: To encourage students to express their creativity and use English in a fun context.

Implementation Method:

- **Bulletin Board Team Formation:** Form a bulletin board team consisting of students interested in writing and arts.
- **Creative Writing and Design Training:** Hold training sessions in creative writing and graphic design for the bulletin board team members.
- **Regular Publishing:** Publish the bulletin board regularly (e.g., monthly) with interesting and relevant themes.

3. **Creative Writing Production**

Objective: To shape students' character through reflection and self-expression in literary works.

Implementation Method:

- **Literary Club:** Form a literary club at the school that meets regularly to discuss and share works.
- **Publication of Works:** Publish an anthology of student works in the form of books or school magazines, and display the best works on the bulletin board.

By implementing these methods, it is hoped that students will significantly improve their English language skills and develop strong character through various creative activities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

English Learning 'Intensive English Course'

Students showed significant improvement in their English language skills, especially in speaking and listening skills. Monthly English language tests indicated an average score increase of 20%.

The intensive course program provided students with more opportunities to practice English in practical contexts. Interactive and hands-on methods, such as group discussions and conversation simulations, proved to be effective in enhancing students' communication skills. Teacher training also played a crucial role in ensuring better teaching quality.



Figure 1. Intensive English Course Program

Creation of Student Bulletin Board

The school bulletin board became very popular among students, with contributions increasing by 50%. Each edition of the bulletin board received various writings and artworks from students, which were published regularly.

The student bulletin board successfully became a platform for students to express their creativity. Writing and graphic design training helped students produce higher-quality work. Writing and design competitions held also boosted student participation and motivation.



Figure 2. Creation of Student Bulletin Billboard

Creation of Literary Works

Many students actively participated in the literature workshops and literary club, producing various works of poetry, short stories, and essays. Some of the best works were published in the school anthology and displayed on the bulletin board.

This activity successfully increased students' interest in literature and helped them develop writing and critical thinking skills. Through reflection and self-expression, students also showed growth in character aspects such as empathy and creativity.



Figure 3. Creation of Literary Works

CONCLUSIONS

The implementation of the 'Intensive English Course' program, student bulletin board creation, and literature creation at SMP Terpadu Cendikia Insani successfully improved students' English language skills and their interest in literature, as well as assisted in character development. Active participation from parents and the community in supporting school activities also proved to be effective. Although challenges remain, the results achieved show that a holistic and collaborative approach to education has a significant positive impact. Continuous efforts in program evaluation and adjustments will ensure the sustainability and enhancement of the quality of education at the school.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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to the success of these programs. We hope this excellent collaboration can continue and bring even greater benefits to education in the future.

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