

**ENHANCING ENGLISH PROFICIENCY THROUGH INTERACTIVE
LEARNING: A FIELDWORK PROGRAM AT PANTI ASUHAN TUNAS
MELATI**

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Abstract

This program explores the implementation of a Fieldwork Practice (PKL) program for children in care, focusing on enhancing their English language proficiency through innovative teaching methods. The program addressed challenges such as varying proficiency levels, engagement difficulties, and limited technological resources by incorporating tailored materials, gamification, and technology-driven learning. Through interactive activities like storytelling, role-playing, and online quizzes, children in care demonstrated significant improvements in vocabulary, listening, and speaking skills. Additionally, community-building initiatives fostered a supportive learning environment. The results indicate that adaptive methodologies and interactive approaches effectively enhance language acquisition and children in care engagement, offering insights for future educational programs in similar settings.

Keywords: community-based education, english language learning, gamification in education,

INTRODUCTION

Fieldwork Practice (PKL) is a program that must be undertaken by university students. This program serves as a form of community service carried out by students in an interdisciplinary, institutional, and partnership manner, as part of the Four Pillars (Catur Dharma) of higher education (Kumara, Zaid, and Sukrianto, 2022; Vinsky et al., 2024). Since universities are institutions that prepare intellectually intelligent and skilled generations, students need to be equipped with the ability to adapt and actively participate in community life. PKL is part of the student learning process through various direct activities within the community. Students strive to become an integral part of society and actively, creatively, and innovatively engage in the dynamics occurring within it. Their involvement is not

only an opportunity for students to learn from the community but also to make a positive and active contribution to community development, thereby bringing new and constructive influences to the progress of society.

The targets of the PKL program can include rural communities, urban communities, schools, industrial communities, or other groups deemed suitable as the focus of community empowerment programs. In the 2023 PKL program, the author conducted the program for children in care. The PKL program is a mandatory course included in the curriculum of Universitas Abdurachman Saleh Situbondo (UNARS). Through this program, the team members gain insights, experiences, and skills in engaging with the community while assisting them through empowerment initiatives. The first program the team members provided was English language learning to equip children in care with foreign language skills. Additionally, the team members offered mentoring, helping them with their school assignments. The team members assisted them by explaining lesson materials they did not understand.

This initiative plays a crucial role in addressing the educational challenges faced by children in underprivileged communities. Children in care often experience difficulties in accessing adequate learning resources and support, which can limit their ability to fully participate in educational opportunities (Novitasari and Firdaus, 2023). By offering academic assistance and language skills development, this program aimed to level the playing field, ensuring these children are not left behind and can benefit from opportunities that might otherwise be out of reach. This effort to enhance their learning experience helps nurture future prospects, empowering them with the tools to succeed in an increasingly interconnected world.

PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

The partner organization faces several challenges in maintaining children in care engagement and ensuring effective learning. One significant issue is creating teaching materials that cater to the diverse characteristics, interests, and proficiency levels of the children in care. With varying ages and academic abilities, it can be difficult to design lessons that are engaging for all. Additionally, limited use of technology in teaching reduces opportunities to enhance engagement and learning outcomes through modern, interactive tools. Sustaining interest during formal sessions is another challenge, especially for younger learners who may struggle with traditional teaching methods. Furthermore, assessing individual understanding is difficult due to disparities in English proficiency among the children.

To address these challenges, the program can adopt a more comprehensive and adaptive approach. Tailoring materials to suit the children's interests and abilities, incorporating storytelling, visual aids, and hands-on activities, can make

lessons more engaging and relatable. Introducing technology, such as audio-visual tools and interactive quizzes, can provide a dynamic, multisensory learning experience (Courts and Tucker, 2012; Volpe and Gori, 2019). Gamification, like word guessing or role-playing games, can make learning enjoyable while reinforcing key concepts and fostering teamwork and creativity (Kalinauskas, 2014; Safitri and Tari, 2022; Wulantari et al., 2023).

Regular assessments, such as online quizzes, can help evaluate progress and identify areas for improvement (Putri Pertiwi, 2020). Personalized feedback ensures each child receives targeted support, boosting confidence and motivation (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership [AITSL] 2017; Kutasi 2023). Beyond academics, fostering a sense of community through group events, such as shared meals or cultural activities, can strengthen relationships and provide a nurturing environment for learning (Bunn and Kombou 2021; Hastings et al. 2018; Nurture 2020). By implementing these strategies, the program can overcome its challenges and create an effective, engaging, and inclusive learning environment, empowering the children in care with valuable skills and a love for learning.

METHOD

The methods employed in this program aimed to enhance learning outcomes and foster engagement among children in care. The implementation involved a series of structured and adaptive strategies to cater to their diverse needs. The first step involved tailoring learning materials to suit the varying age groups, interests, and proficiency levels of the children. Interactive and age-appropriate content was developed to ensure that the lessons were relatable and engaging. Techniques such as storytelling, the use of visual aids, and practical examples were incorporated to make the material more accessible. The teaching approach emphasized creativity and adaptability, allowing lessons to align with the unique characteristics and preferences of the children. This personalization ensured that each child felt connected to the material, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation for the lessons.

The integration of technology formed the second pillar of the methodology. To provide a more dynamic and engaging learning experience, audio-visual tools were introduced. Videos, English songs, and interactive online quizzes became integral parts of the teaching process. These tools helped break down complex concepts into digestible formats and catered to different learning styles. By leveraging multimedia, the lessons became more engaging, interactive, and enjoyable for the children, significantly enhancing their retention and comprehension.

Gamification served as the third key strategy, transforming learning into an informal and enjoyable activity. Games such as word guessing, role-playing, and charades were introduced to encourage active participation and make the learning process memorable. These activities not only reinforced language concepts but also developed teamwork, creativity, and critical thinking skills among the children. The gamified approach helped sustain their interest and created a positive classroom atmosphere.

To monitor the effectiveness of these methods, regular assessments were conducted. Monthly online quizzes and written tests provided a structured way to evaluate the children's progress. Personalized feedback based on these assessments helped identify areas of improvement and allowed targeted interventions for individual children. This approach motivated them and ensured continuous learning and development.

Beyond classroom activities, community-building events were organized to strengthen relationships and foster a sense of belonging. Events like group dinners during Ramadan and cultural activities encouraged collaboration between children, teachers, and caregivers. These gatherings not only enriched the learning experience but also contributed to creating a supportive and nurturing environment.

By combining tailored teaching materials, technology, gamification, regular assessments, and community engagement, the program succeeded in creating an inclusive and effective learning environment. This holistic approach not only improved the children's English proficiency but also supported their personal and social development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of the learning program for children in care yielded significant improvements in their academic performance, engagement, and overall attitude toward learning. Through tailored methodologies and a holistic approach, the program addressed key challenges and achieved notable outcomes in language acquisition and personal development.

The program demonstrated marked improvements in the children's English proficiency. One key area of progress was vocabulary acquisition. By employing interactive and engaging methods such as storytelling, visual aids, and gamified activities, the children expanded their vocabulary significantly. Regular practice in writing sessions enabled them to construct sentences more confidently, describe directions, identify objects, and articulate basic concepts in English.

Listening skills also improved through the use of audio-based learning. English songs and interactive listening activities encouraged the children to enhance their comprehension of spoken language. By combining listening exercises

with tasks such as identifying new words and singing along, the program made learning both fun and effective.

Furthermore, the children's conversational skills improved notably. Through role-playing and speaking exercises, they practiced using English in everyday contexts, building confidence in their ability to communicate. By the end of the program, many were able to participate in simple conversations, showcasing progress in both pronunciation and fluency.

Another highlight was the creation of a collaborative project: an acrostic poetry book in English. This activity not only reinforced their vocabulary and writing skills but also fostered creativity and teamwork. The final product served as tangible evidence of their progress and provided a sense of achievement and pride.

Assessment results showed a steady improvement in comprehension and retention. Online and written tests conducted monthly revealed increased scores, reflecting a deeper understanding of the material. Personalized feedback proved instrumental in addressing individual weaknesses, further motivating the children to improve.

The success of the program can be attributed to the integration of adaptive teaching methods, technology, and community engagement. Tailored learning materials played a pivotal role in making lessons relatable and accessible. By aligning the content with the children's age, interests, and proficiency levels, the program ensured that every participant remained engaged and could participate meaningfully.

The incorporation of technology was particularly effective in enhancing engagement. Audio-visual tools catered to different learning styles, making lessons more dynamic and interactive. The use of English songs and online quizzes added an element of fun while reinforcing key concepts. The gamified approach further sustained interest and motivation, transforming learning into an enjoyable activity. These strategies not only improved language skills but also fostered a positive attitude toward education.

One of the program's strengths was its focus on building confidence. Activities such as role-playing and group discussions created a safe environment where the children could practice speaking without fear of judgment. This approach helped them overcome their initial hesitation and allowed them to express themselves more freely. The progress in their conversational skills was a testament to the program's emphasis on interactive and participatory learning.

Another noteworthy aspect was the community-building activities. Events like group dinners and cultural gatherings strengthened relationships between the children, teachers, and caregivers. These activities fostered a sense of belonging and collaboration, contributing to a supportive learning environment. They also

allowed the children to interact outside the classroom, building social skills and confidence.

Despite the program's successes, challenges persisted. One recurring issue was the varying levels of English proficiency among the children. While the tailored approach addressed some of these disparities, more advanced learners occasionally found the material too simple, while beginners struggled to keep up. This highlights the need for differentiated instruction or grouping by proficiency levels to ensure a more balanced learning experience.

Additionally, limited technological resources posed challenges in implementing some aspects of the program. Expanding access to devices and internet connectivity could further enhance the program's reach and effectiveness.

In conclusion, the program effectively improved the children's English proficiency, confidence, and engagement. By employing innovative and adaptive methods, the initiative created a nurturing environment that fostered academic and personal growth. Addressing challenges such as proficiency disparities and resource limitations can further optimize the program's impact, ensuring sustained success in the future. This approach not only empowers the children with valuable skills but also instills in them a lifelong love for learning.

CONCLUSIONS

The program at Panti Asuhan Tunas Melati successfully enhanced the children's English proficiency, confidence, and engagement through tailored teaching methods, technology integration, and community-building activities. The use of interactive and gamified learning, along with personalized assessments, fostered a supportive and enjoyable learning environment. Despite challenges such as varying proficiency levels and limited resources, the program demonstrated positive outcomes in language acquisition and personal development. With further refinement in addressing individual needs and expanding technological access, the program has the potential to continue empowering the children and fostering their growth.

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