IMPROVING ENGLISH VOCABULARY ACQUISITION IN REMOTE AREAS: THE FEAST PROGRAM AT SDN 6 TAMBAK UKIR, SITUBONDO

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Abstract

The Fun English at SDN 6 Tambak Ukir (FeaST) program was designed to enhance English vocabulary acquisition among elementary school students in 3T (underdeveloped, outermost, and frontier) areas. Implemented at SDN 6 Tambak Ukir, Situbondo, the program addressed the lack of English learning resources and specialized teachers by engaging university student tutors to facilitate interactive learning activities. The program was carried out in three phases: preparation, implementation, and evaluation. Activities included vocabulary games, reading exercises, and storytelling to encourage student participation. The results showed a significant improvement in students' English vocabulary and increased engagement in learning. Teachers also gained new teaching strategies to sustain the program beyond its initial implementation. However, challenges such as limited student attendance and varying language proficiency levels required adaptive teaching methods. The FeaST program demonstrates that structured intervention can enhance English language learning in remote schools. Further development and integration into the school curriculum are recommended to ensure long-term sustainability.

Keywords: english vocabulary, language learning, sdn 6 tambak ukir

INTRODUCTION

English proficiency plays a crucial role in today's globalized world (Budiman et al., 2023), yet students in remote and underprivileged areas often face significant challenges in acquiring basic language skills (Hossain, 2016). Schools in disadvantaged regions, commonly referred to as 3T (underdeveloped, outermost, and frontier areas), frequently struggle with limited access to educational resources, a lack of specialized English teachers, and inadequate learning materials (Fitri et al., 2024; Khatima et al., 2023; Lisnawati et al., 2024). These barriers hinder students' ability to develop essential English vocabulary and comprehension skills.

To address this issue, the Community Partnership Program (PKM) was initiated at SDN 6 Tambak Ukir, Situbondo Regency, through a structured approach involving preparation, execution, and evaluation. This program, known as Fun

English at SDN 6 Tambak Ukir (FeaST), is designed to enhance students' English vocabulary acquisition through engaging and interactive learning methods. The initiative is carried out in collaboration with university students from Universitas Abdurachman Saleh Situbondo (UNARS), who serve as tutors to guide and support students throughout the program.

The implementation of FeaST follows a well-defined methodology. The preparation phase involves selecting SDN 6 Tambak Ukir as the partner school based on its need for language support, recruiting qualified university students as tutors, and conducting training sessions to equip them with effective teaching strategies. Additionally, structured student worksheets (LKS) and various interactive materials are developed to facilitate learning. The execution phase consists of tutor-led activities such as storytelling, guided reading, comic creation, and library visits over a four-month period, fostering an engaging English-learning environment. Lastly, the evaluation phase ensures program effectiveness through regular assessments, feedback collection, and a transition plan to enable the school to sustain the program independently.

By implementing this structured program, FeaST aims to bridge the language learning gap in rural schools, providing students with the necessary foundation to improve their English skills while encouraging a sustainable educational model for the future.

PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

English language acquisition remains a significant challenge for students at SDN 6 Tambak Ukir, particularly due to limited English proficiency and a lack of structured learning opportunities. Many students struggle with vocabulary retention and comprehension, primarily because the school does not have teachers specialized in English instruction. Without proper guidance, students find it difficult to develop basic language skills, which further limits their ability to engage with English-based materials. In addition, the school lacks adequate learning resources such as textbooks, flashcards, and interactive worksheets, making it challenging for students to practice and reinforce their knowledge independently.

Another major obstacle is the school's remote location, which makes accessibility difficult. As a result, external educational support is rare, and students have limited exposure to learning programs outside of their standard curriculum. Moreover, even if an intervention program is introduced, sustainability remains a concern, as students may lose progress once the program ends due to the absence of structured follow-up initiatives.

To address these issues, the FeaST (Fun English at SDN 6 Tambak Ukir) program is designed to improve English learning through engaging and interactive activities. Tutors from Abdurachman Saleh University (UNARS) are recruited to provide structured mentoring and support. These tutors undergo specialized training

to ensure they can effectively introduce basic English vocabulary through creative methods such as storytelling, guided reading, comic creation, and interactive exercises. Additionally, the program provides customized learning materials, including Student Worksheets (LKS), flashcards, and posters, to help make lessons more enjoyable and accessible for students.

Given the school's remote location, tutor selection considers health conditions and transportation feasibility to ensure consistent weekly sessions. Furthermore, school teachers are involved throughout the process, enabling them to take over and sustain the learning model once the program concludes. By integrating these solutions, FeaST not only enhances students' English proficiency but also ensures a long-term impact by equipping both students and teachers with effective language learning strategies.

METHOD

The Community Partnership Program (PKM) at SDN 6 Tambak Ukir is carried out through a structured approach consisting of preparation, execution, and evaluation.

1. Preparation Phase

The preparation phase includes several key steps:

- **Selecting the Partner School**: An initial assessment is conducted to find a suitable primary school, prioritizing institutions in disadvantaged and remote areas (3T). SDN 6 Tambak Ukir was chosen due to its limited resources, lack of English teachers, and students' low English proficiency. A formal agreement is signed with the school.
- **Recruiting Tutors**: University students from Abdurachman Saleh University, particularly from the English Literature and Elementary Education departments, are selected to serve as tutors. The selection considers their teaching ability, health, and transportation accessibility. Tutors will collaborate with teachers to ensure sustainability.
- **Training Schedule and Venue**: Training for tutors will take place at the university at least a month before the FeaST program starts.
- **Developing Learning Materials**: Student worksheets (LKS) with interactive illustrations will be provided to enhance engagement and assess progress.
- **School Coordination**: Organizers will work with the school to arrange classrooms, student participation, reading materials, and other learning aids.

2. Execution Phase

The program is implemented in two stages:

- **Tutor Training**: A three-day training session will prepare tutors with knowledge of teaching techniques and program management. Training methods include lectures, discussions, and practice simulations.

- **Student Mentoring**: Over four months, tutors will conduct weekly interactive sessions with students, engaging them in activities such as storytelling, guided reading, comic creation, and library visits. Tutors will receive continuous guidance to address challenges. A monthly assessment will track students' progress in reading skills based on comprehension, reading goals, and reading behavior.

3. Evaluation and Sustainability

At the end of the program, an evaluation session will review its impact on students' literacy development. Feedback from the school will be used to refine future initiatives, and responsibility for the program will be transferred to the school for continued implementation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of Fun English at SDN 6 Tambak Ukir (FeaST) has yielded significant improvements in students' English vocabulary acquisition, reading comprehension, and overall engagement in language learning. Before the program began, students demonstrated limited exposure to English words, with most struggling to recognize and pronounce even basic vocabulary. The absence of structured English learning at the school, coupled with the lack of English-specialized teachers and learning resources, had contributed to low confidence among students when attempting to use English. However, after four months of structured tutoring sessions, a noticeable improvement was observed in students' word recognition, pronunciation, and ability to construct simple English phrases.

One of the most effective strategies used in FeaST was the incorporation of interactive and engaging learning activities. Traditional methods of rote memorization were replaced with storytelling, guided reading, comic creation, and hands-on activities that encouraged students to actively participate in learning. These activities not only helped students grasp new vocabulary more easily but also enhanced their enthusiasm and motivation (Anisa, Harmilawati, and Sabaruddin, 2023; Nurfitriani et al., 2020; Otta, 2023). Tutors observed that students who were initially hesitant to speak in English became more confident in reading aloud and responding to simple questions. The use of games and competitions, such as spelling bees and vocabulary challenges, further motivated students to engage with the language in a fun and non-intimidating environment (Malau, Sinaga, and Hutahaean, 2024; Nurpitasari and Mayasari, 2018; Rohmawati, 2015).

The Student Worksheets (LKS) and visual learning aids such as flashcards and posters also played a crucial role in reinforcing learning. These materials provided structured guidance, allowing students to track their progress and engage in independent learning outside of tutor-led sessions. The inclusion of colorful images, word-matching exercises, and fill-in-the-blank activities made learning more interactive and accessible, particularly for young learners who benefit from

visual and kinesthetic learning styles. Tutors noted that students retained vocabulary more effectively when they could associate words with images and real-life contexts.

Another important outcome of the program was the increased participation and involvement of school teachers. At the beginning of FeaST, many teachers faced difficulties in assisting students with English due to their lack of familiarity with the language and teaching methodologies. However, through collaboration with tutors, teachers gradually developed an understanding of effective teaching strategies and began incorporating simple English activities into their regular lessons. This involvement ensures that students continue to receive ongoing support even after the program officially ends. By equipping teachers with basic language teaching skills, FeaST has contributed to the sustainability of English learning at SDN 6 Tambak Ukir.

Despite these positive results, the program also faced several challenges, particularly in terms of student consistency, accessibility, and varying levels of English proficiency. Due to the school's remote location, some students experienced difficulty attending every session, which affected their progress compared to their peers. Tutors also identified a significant gap in learning ability among students, with some requiring more intensive support to catch up. While the interactive teaching approach helped bridge this gap to some extent, additional strategies such as small-group tutoring and individualized support may be needed to ensure that all students progress at a similar pace.

Another challenge was maintaining long-term engagement after the program's conclusion. While FeaST successfully introduced students to fundamental English vocabulary and reading skills, the risk of skill regression remains if there is no continued reinforcement. To address this, integrating English-based activities into the regular school curriculum is necessary. Encouraging teachers to use English in daily classroom interactions, providing students with access to English books and learning materials, and organizing monthly language activities can help sustain the progress made through FeaST.

Additionally, an important aspect of the evaluation process was the monthly progress assessment based on three indicators: Processes of Comprehension, Purposes for Reading, and Reading Behaviors and Attitudes, following the PIRLS framework. This assessment provided valuable insights into students' improvement in understanding texts, their motivations for reading, and their overall attitude towards English learning. Data from these assessments indicated that students developed a more positive perception of English learning, with many expressing excitement about reading English materials and participating in language activities. This shift in attitude is a crucial step toward building long-term language competency.

Figure 1. Fun English at SDN 6 Tambak Ukir (FeaST) in Action

Figure 2. Teaching Sessions in the FeaST Program at SDN 6 Tambak Ukir

CONCLUSIONS

The FeaST program has effectively improved students' English vocabulary, engagement, and teacher involvement at SDN 6 Tambak Ukir. Despite challenges like attendance issues and varying proficiency levels, students showed progress in word recognition and reading skills. Teachers also gained new strategies to sustain

learning after the program. To ensure long-term impact, English activities should be integrated into daily lessons, and students should have continued access to learning materials. Strengthening teacher training and regular language activities will further support students in developing confidence and competency in English, making learning more sustainable in the future.

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