

**LEVEL UP AND TUNE IN: ENGAGING YOUNG LEARNERS
THROUGH VOCABULARY SONGS AND INTERACTIVE GAMES**

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Abstract

This community service study investigates the challenges of low student participation, limited vocabulary mastery, and lack of confidence among learners at Safira English Course in Situbondo. Preliminary observations indicate that conventional instructional practices, primarily based on memorization and repetitive exercises, have not effectively fostered communicative competence or active engagement. To address these issues, an innovative pedagogical intervention integrating vocabulary songs and game-based learning was implemented. The program was conducted through systematic stages, including needs analysis, instructional design, classroom implementation, and continuous evaluation over two weeks. The intervention combined auditory and kinesthetic learning through song-based repetition and interactive activities such as *Fastest Finger* and *Snake Word*. The findings reveal a marked improvement in students' engagement, vocabulary retention, and speaking confidence. Learners demonstrated increased participation, better recall of lexical items, and greater willingness to communicate in English. These results suggest that multimodal and student-centered approaches significantly enhance the effectiveness of English language instruction. It is concluded that the integration of songs and educational games provides a sustainable and impactful strategy for improving learning outcomes in non-formal EFL contexts.

Keywords: game-based learning, student engagement, vocabulary mastery

INTRODUCTION

In the context of English language learning, student engagement, confidence, and vocabulary mastery are widely recognized as key factors influencing successful language acquisition. Recent studies emphasize that active engagement significantly contributes to learners' language development, as higher levels of participation are closely associated with improved proficiency (Wang et al., 2024). In addition, vocabulary knowledge serves as a fundamental component of communicative competence, since limited vocabulary restricts learners' ability to express ideas effectively and to comprehend learning materials (Mburu et al., 2025). Furthermore, self-confidence plays an essential role in shaping learners' willingness to participate in language activities, as it directly affects their ability to engage and develop throughout the learning process (Laoli, 2025). These interconnected factors

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indicate that an effective English learning environment should not only focus on the delivery of materials but also foster active participation, strengthen vocabulary mastery, and build learners' confidence.

Safira English Course is an English language training institution in Situbondo that focuses on teaching students at the elementary to intermediate levels. The learning program implemented includes practice exercises, vocabulary memorization, and the delivery of materials on grammar, reading, and speaking, all conducted regularly, six days a week. However, based on preliminary observations, it was found that some students demonstrate low participation, lack of confidence, and limited vocabulary mastery. This condition affects students' ability to understand the material and to communicate actively in English.

These issues are in line with findings in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, where vocabulary remains one of the main challenges for students. Recent studies show that many EFL learners still experience difficulties in building vocabulary, which directly impacts their limited ability to communicate effectively (Nurfadilah et al., 2025). Low vocabulary mastery not only hinders comprehension of the material but also reduces students' learning motivation and classroom participation. In addition, learning methods that are still centered on memorization and practice exercises tend to be less effective in creating engaging and interactive learning experiences. This aligns with Chuane and Xiangjun, (2025), research indicating that vocabulary learning in traditional classrooms is often constrained by limited time and conventional approaches, leading to increased demotivation among EFL students.

Several previous studies have shown that the use of songs and educational games can be an effective solution to improve vocabulary learning. A study by Butar and Katemba (2023), found that students have positive perceptions of using songs in vocabulary learning because they help learners remember words through engaging lyrics and context. Similarly, Karim et al. (2022), stated that songs play a role in improving vocabulary mastery and contextual understanding of meaning.

Furthermore, research by Fauzi (2022), revealed that the combination of songs and games significantly improved students' vocabulary skills compared to before the implementation of the method. This finding is supported by a study by Meisuri et al., (2025), which states that interactive learning based on songs and games can enhance student participation, confidence, and pronunciation skills. More broadly, a literature review by Sitompul et al., (2025), emphasizes that integrating songs and games in English language learning can increase student engagement through a multimodal approach that combines visual, auditory, and kinesthetic aspects.

Based on the partner's condition and supported by previous research findings, there is a need for innovative learning strategies that can actively enhance student engagement. Therefore, this community service activity focuses on the

implementation of vocabulary songs and educational games as instructional strategies to improve students' learning interest, vocabulary mastery, and confidence at the Safira English Course.

PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

Based on observations at the Safira English Course, several priority issues were identified that affect the effectiveness of English language learning. The main problem lies in students' low vocabulary mastery, which leads to difficulties in understanding the material and limitations in actively communicating in English. In addition, students' levels of participation and confidence in learning activities are still relatively low, particularly in speaking activities. Another equally important issue is the use of learning methods that still rely on memorization and practice exercises, which are less effective in creating an interactive and engaging learning environment. This is in line with findings that traditional learning methods, such as memorization, tend to be less effective in maintaining engagement and learning retention among EFL students (Nurfadilah et al., 2025).

These issues indicate that the primary need of the partner institution is to improve the quality of learning services by adopting more innovative, interactive, and student-centered approaches. Therefore, this community service activity aims to enhance students' learning interest, vocabulary mastery, and active participation in English learning. The main focus of the activity is to strengthen vocabulary skills as the foundation of language proficiency while also building students' confidence in using English communicatively.

As a solution, this activity implements a learning approach based on Vocabulary Songs and educational games (game-based learning). The use of songs in learning is designed to help students remember vocabulary through repetition, rhythm, and enjoyable contexts, thereby improving memory retention and student engagement. Meanwhile, educational games such as *Fastest Finger*, *Snake Word*, and digital-based games (ESL games) are used to encourage active student participation through interaction, competition, and collaboration. This approach is expected to create a more dynamic and enjoyable learning atmosphere.

The expected outcomes of this activity include improved students' vocabulary mastery, increased activeness and confidence in learning, and the creation of a more interactive and effective learning environment at Safira English Course.

METHOD

This community service activity was carried out through several systematic stages designed to address the partner's problems, namely low vocabulary mastery, participation, and student confidence in English learning at the Safira English Course. These stages include preparation, implementation, evaluation, and follow-up. The team of this community service consisted of two students majoring in

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English, and the students who were the participants of the program were those joining the Kids Program in the English course.

In the preparation stage, the service team conducted an initial observation to identify the learning conditions, student characteristics, and the partner's needs. This activity was followed by coordination with the institution to develop the program plan, determine the implementation schedule, and design learning materials and media. The prepared media included Vocabulary Songs, flashcards, an English Mini Book, and educational game tools such as *Fastest Finger*, *Snake Word*, and digital-based games (ESL games).

The implementation stage was carried out over approximately two weeks through the integration of innovative learning methods into classroom activities. The learning activities included the delivery of English materials, vocabulary exercises, the application of Vocabulary Songs, and the use of educational games. Task distribution within the team was conducted collaboratively, where team members acted as learning facilitators, media managers, and activity evaluators. Meanwhile, the partner played an active role in providing learning facilities, assisting the implementation process, and helping manage the classroom to ensure that activities ran smoothly and met students' needs.

The evaluation stage was conducted continuously during and after the implementation of the activities. Evaluation was carried out through direct observation of student participation, levels of engagement, and students' ability to understand and use vocabulary. In addition, joint reflection between the service team and the partner was conducted to assess the effectiveness of the implemented methods and to identify challenges encountered during the activities.

To ensure program sustainability, the service team provided support in the form of developed learning media, such as the English Mini Book and Vocabulary Song reference videos, which can be used independently by the institution. Additionally, the partner was given guidance on the continuous implementation of song- and game-based learning methods. With a monitoring mechanism through periodic evaluations conducted by the institution, it is expected that this program can continue to be developed and provide a long-term impact on improving the quality of English learning at Safira English Course.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this community service activity indicate a significant improvement in students' participation, vocabulary mastery, and confidence at the Safira English Course. Before the implementation of Vocabulary Song-based learning and educational games, most students tended to be passive, less enthusiastic in participating, and experienced difficulties in remembering and using English vocabulary. However, after the implementation of these methods, noticeable changes were observed, with students becoming more actively involved

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in learning activities, more confident in speaking, and showing improvement in vocabulary mastery.



Figure 1. *Fastest Finger* game implementation



Figure 2. *Snake Word* game implementation

The increase in student participation was evident from their involvement in various classroom activities, particularly during Vocabulary Song sessions and educational games. Students showed high enthusiasm, participated voluntarily, and were able to follow instructions better than before. This improvement can be clearly observed in Figure 1 and Figure 2, where students actively engage in the *Fastest Finger* and *Snake Word* games. In the *Fastest Finger* activity, students responded quickly in identifying vocabulary based on visual prompts, indicating improved vocabulary recall and spontaneous language use. Meanwhile, in the *Snake Word* activity, students demonstrated their ability to connect vocabulary sequentially under time pressure, reflecting enhanced cognitive processing and vocabulary retention.





Figure 3. Vocabulary song activity.

In addition, the use of songs as a learning medium proved effective in helping students remember vocabulary through repetition patterns and engaging rhythms. This had a positive impact on students' retention of the vocabulary they had learned. This improvement can be observed in Figure 3, where students actively participate in the Vocabulary Song activity by singing and repeating vocabulary engagingly. The activity encouraged students to memorize words more easily while also improving their pronunciation and confidence in using English.



Figure 4. Poster for "Make a Description" game.



Figure 5. English minibook.

The effectiveness of instructional media is further supported by the learning products developed during the activity, such as the *English Mini Book* and the poster for the *Make a Description* game, as shown in Figures 4 and 5. These media provided visual and contextual support that facilitated students' understanding and independent learning of vocabulary. The *English Mini Book* enabled students to

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review vocabulary thematically, while the poster encouraged students to practice descriptive speaking in a structured yet engaging way.

In terms of confidence, students demonstrated positive development, especially in speaking activities. Students who were previously passive began to confidently try pronouncing new vocabulary, answering questions, and participating in communication-based games. A more interactive and enjoyable learning environment provided students with the opportunity to learn without pressure, thereby increasing their comfort and willingness to use English.

The findings of this activity are consistent with previous research showing that song-based and game-based learning have a positive impact on vocabulary mastery and student engagement. A study by Butar and Katemba, (2023,) found that the use of songs can enhance vocabulary retention through enjoyable and memorable contexts. This aligns with the findings of this activity, where students found it easier to remember vocabulary through Vocabulary Songs. Similarly, Karim et al., (2022), emphasized that songs help students understand vocabulary meaning contextually, as reflected in students' ability to use vocabulary in classroom activities.

Furthermore, research by Fauzi (2022), showed that the combination of songs and educational games can significantly improve students' vocabulary skills. This finding is reinforced in this activity, where the integration of both methods not only improved vocabulary mastery but also encouraged active student participation. Meisuri et al., (2025), also stated that interactive approaches based on songs and games can enhance students' confidence in learning English, as seen in the increased willingness of students to speak during the activities.

In addition, the results of this activity are aligned with the study by Sitompul et al., (2025), which highlights that a multimodal approach combining auditory and kinesthetic elements can enhance student engagement in language learning. In this context, the use of songs (auditory) and games (kinesthetic) created a more varied and engaging learning experience, effectively addressing the issues of low participation and motivation among students.

However, several limitations were encountered during the implementation of this activity, such as time constraints and differences in students' ability levels within a single class. These factors affected the optimal application of the methods across all students. Therefore, further development is needed in terms of time management and the adaptation of teaching methods based on students' proficiency levels.

Overall, this community service activity has made a positive contribution to improving the quality of English learning at Safira English Course. The results indicate that the implementation of innovative and interactive learning methods can serve as an effective solution to address challenges in English language learning, particularly in improving vocabulary mastery, participation, and student

confidence. For future development, it is recommended that this method be applied continuously and combined with more varied learning media to achieve more optimal results.

CONCLUSIONS

The community service activity conducted at LKP Safira English Course demonstrates that integrating vocabulary song and educational games can effectively enhance students' vocabulary mastery, participation, and confidence in learning English. The use of interactive and enjoyable learning methods creates a more engaging classroom environment and addresses the limitations of conventional teaching practices. These findings highlight the importance of adopting innovative, student-centered approaches in language learning. It is recommended that such methods be implemented continuously and adapted to students' needs to ensure sustainable improvement in learning outcomes.

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