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Teaching English through Fun Learning Activities: A Service Program for Village Youths in Pantai Labu Deliserdang

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A B S T R A C T

This community service program aimed to improve English language skills among village youths in Pantai Labu, Deliserdang, through the implementation of fun and interactive learning activities. Recognizing the limited access to formal English instruction in rural areas, the program focused on fostering a positive, engaging, and learner-friendly environment that emphasized communication over memorization. A thematic curriculum was developed, incorporating games, songs, role-plays, group projects, and creative tasks designed to introduce basic vocabulary and conversational skills. Conducted over four weeks, the program involved university student facilitators who acted as both educators and motivators. Results indicated noticeable improvements in learners' vocabulary, confidence, motivation, and willingness to use English in daily interactions. Additionally, the program enhanced social collaboration and received strong support from the local community. While challenges such as time constraints and mixed ability levels were encountered, the outcomes suggest that fun learning approaches can effectively support language development in underserved communities. This initiative demonstrates the transformative potential of learner-centered, culturally sensitive education and offers a sustainable model for future outreach efforts.

INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly globalized world, the ability to communicate in English has become an essential skill that opens up numerous educational, professional, and social opportunities. English, being the most widely spoken international language, serves as a vital tool for cross-cultural communication, access to global knowledge, and participation in the digital economy. However, in many rural areas across Indonesia, including the village of Pantai Labu in Deliserdang Regency, the opportunity to learn and practice English remains limited. These limitations are often due to a lack of resources, qualified teachers, engaging learning environments, and effective instructional strategies that cater to the unique needs of village youths.

In response to these challenges, community service programs initiated by higher education institutions and volunteer groups have emerged as powerful platforms to support educational development in underserved areas. One of the most promising approaches in such initiatives is the integration of **fun learning activities** into English language teaching. Unlike traditional methods that rely heavily on rote memorization and passive learning, fun learning emphasizes active participation, creativity, and enjoyment, which can significantly enhance motivation, retention, and confidence among young learners.

The village of Pantai Labu presents a unique opportunity for the implementation of such a service program. Located near the coast of Deliserdang, this village is home to a vibrant yet underserved youth population, many of whom have limited access to quality English education. The daily lives of these youths are often centered around local traditions, fishing, farming, and informal labor, leaving little room for structured language learning. Recognizing this gap, the service program was designed not only to introduce English in an accessible and interactive way but also to inspire a lifelong interest in language learning and global awareness.

This community-based program aims to bridge the educational gap by delivering English lessons through enjoyable, meaningful activities such as language games, songs, storytelling, role-playing, and creative projects. These activities are carefully tailored to suit the learners' age, cultural background, and existing language skills, ensuring that the content is both relatable and effective. Furthermore, the program encourages collaboration among university students, local educators, and community members, fostering a spirit of mutual learning and empowerment.

This paper outlines the design, implementation, and impact of the English service program in Pantai Labu. It highlights the pedagogical framework underlying the use of fun learning strategies, explores the challenges and successes encountered during fieldwork, and provides insights into how similar initiatives can be adapted and sustained in other rural settings. Ultimately, this initiative seeks to contribute to the broader mission of educational equity by making English learning an engaging and transformative experience for all learners, regardless of their geographical or socioeconomic background.

METHOD

This service program adopted a qualitative, community-based approach with an emphasis on participatory learning, collaboration, and cultural relevance. The core objective was to introduce English language skills to the youths of Pantai Labu through engaging, enjoyable, and meaningful activities that moved beyond traditional, textbook-centered instruction. The method employed in this program was carefully designed to promote a positive learning experience, build learners' confidence, and foster a genuine interest in the English language.

The first phase of the program involved extensive planning and preparation. Prior to implementation, the organizing team conducted a **preliminary needs assessment** to better understand the educational context and language needs of the community. This process included informal interviews with village leaders,

parents, local educators, and the youths themselves. The aim was to gauge the participants' prior exposure to English, their attitudes toward the language, and their preferred learning styles. The findings from this assessment revealed a strong enthusiasm for learning English but also highlighted a lack of access to resources, limited teaching staff, and minimal exposure to interactive language instruction.

Based on this initial understanding, the team designed a **thematic and activity-based curriculum** that focused on foundational English vocabulary and simple conversational expressions. The curriculum was organized into weekly themes such as “My Family,” “My Daily Routine,” “Animals and Nature,” “Food and Drinks,” and “Places Around Me.” Each theme was selected for its relevance to the everyday lives of the participants, allowing learners to connect new language concepts with their lived experiences. These themes served as the framework for planning a variety of fun learning activities.

The program's core strategy revolved around the use of **interactive and joyful activities** to foster language acquisition. Activities included games like word bingo, matching cards, and charades; creative tasks such as drawing and labeling, making simple posters, and group storytelling; and performance-based exercises like role-plays, singing English songs, and short drama performances. These activities were intentionally chosen to minimize anxiety, increase motivation, and provide ample opportunities for verbal expression. Each session was facilitated by a group of university students majoring in English education, who acted as both teachers and learning companions. Their role was not only to deliver the content but also to create a warm, welcoming environment that encouraged active participation from all learners.

The program was implemented over a period of four weeks, with sessions held once a week for approximately two to three hours. Each session followed a consistent structure to provide a sense of routine and clarity. It began with an energizing warm-up—usually a short game or a song—to stimulate interest and focus. This was followed by the introduction of new vocabulary and expressions using visual aids, flashcards, and real-life objects to facilitate comprehension. The main portion of the session was devoted to the key learning activities, which involved group work, peer interaction, and hands-on experiences. Sessions concluded with a brief reflection period, during which participants shared what they had learned or enjoyed most, and facilitators recorded observations to inform the next meeting.

Throughout the implementation, **continuous observation and informal assessment** were conducted to monitor learners' progress and engagement. Facilitators took note of student participation, language use, pronunciation, and enthusiasm. In addition, feedback was collected through casual conversations with participants and their parents. Simple oral quizzes, vocabulary games, and short presentations were used to assess comprehension and reinforce learning, though no formal testing was employed to maintain a relaxed, low-pressure environment.

At the conclusion of the program, a celebratory event was organized in which the students showcased their learning through performances and presentations. This

final gathering served as both a summative activity and a motivational tool, giving learners a sense of accomplishment and pride in their newfound skills.

Overall, the method employed in this service program was rooted in the belief that language learning should be an enjoyable, social, and meaningful experience. By combining educational theory with practical, on-the-ground engagement, the program aimed not only to teach English but also to inspire confidence, curiosity, and a love of learning among the village youths of Pantai Labu.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of the English service program through fun learning activities in Pantai Labu Deliserdang produced a variety of valuable results, both in terms of language acquisition and the holistic development of the participating youths. While the program was relatively short in duration—spanning only four weeks—it created a meaningful and memorable experience that left a noticeable impact on the learners, facilitators, and the broader community. The results were observed not only through linguistic improvements but also through emotional, social, and behavioral changes among the students.

At the outset of the program, many participants appeared shy, unsure, and hesitant to speak or interact in English. This initial reluctance was largely attributed to the lack of exposure to the language and a learning culture that, until then, had been dominated by rigid, teacher-centered approaches. However, as the sessions unfolded, the atmosphere gradually transformed. The use of fun, interactive methods—such as language games, songs, role-plays, storytelling, drawing, and group activities—helped create a lively, inclusive, and non-threatening environment that encouraged students to participate without fear of making mistakes.

One of the most significant outcomes was the **increase in vocabulary acquisition and basic conversational ability**. By the end of the fourth session, many of the students had begun to recognize and use essential English words and phrases related to familiar themes such as greetings, family members, animals, colors, numbers, and daily routines. During group presentations and interactive games, students demonstrated their ability to respond to questions, introduce themselves, and describe simple concepts using the words and phrases they had learned. Although their pronunciation and grammar were still developing, the confidence with which they spoke was a clear indication of progress.

Another prominent result was the **positive shift in learner motivation and enthusiasm**. Students who were initially passive began to take initiative in classroom tasks, raise their hands to answer questions, and engage more openly with the facilitators. The incorporation of games and songs proved especially effective in capturing their interest. For instance, English songs with repetitive lyrics allowed students to absorb new vocabulary through rhythm and melody, making the learning process enjoyable and memorable. The excitement generated by group competitions and creative activities further fueled their eagerness to attend each session. Some students even expressed a desire for the program to continue beyond

the planned schedule, which served as a strong testament to the impact of the fun learning approach.

Equally important was the **growth in social interaction and collaboration** among the participants. The program emphasized teamwork, and students were frequently grouped together to complete tasks or prepare short performances. These interactions fostered cooperation, leadership, and peer learning. It was common to observe older or more confident students helping their peers with pronunciation or instructions, while quieter students gradually became more vocal in group settings. The process not only enhanced language learning but also contributed to the development of interpersonal skills, empathy, and self-esteem among the children.

The **role of the facilitators**—university students majoring in English education—was also crucial to the program's success. Their youthful energy, friendly demeanor, and ability to relate to the learners helped bridge the gap between formal instruction and informal engagement. They acted not just as teachers, but as role models and motivators. Their presence made the learning environment feel more dynamic and interactive, encouraging learners to view English not as a difficult school subject but as a fun and useful tool for communication.

Beyond the classroom, the program also received strong **support and appreciation from the local community**. Village leaders, parents, and caregivers expressed gratitude for the initiative, noting that their children had shown increased enthusiasm for learning and often practiced English at home. This level of community involvement played a vital role in reinforcing the students' motivation and validating their efforts. Parents were pleased to see their children engaged in educational activities during their free time, particularly during school breaks or weekends when formal schooling was limited.

Nevertheless, the program was not without its challenges. One of the main limitations was the **short time frame**, which restricted the depth and scope of content that could be delivered. While the foundational elements of English were successfully introduced, more advanced topics and sustained practice would require a longer-term commitment. Additionally, some sessions faced **logistical hurdles**, such as managing large groups in outdoor spaces, limited access to teaching materials, and variations in student attendance. The facilitators had to remain flexible and adaptive, often modifying lesson plans on the spot to accommodate the actual conditions and needs of the learners.

Another challenge was the **diversity in student ability levels**. The participants ranged in age and prior knowledge, which made it difficult to maintain a consistent pace. Some students were quick to grasp the material, while others needed more time and individual support. This highlighted the importance of differentiated instruction and the need for ongoing training for facilitators in managing mixed-ability classrooms effectively.

Despite these challenges, the overall outcomes of the program were overwhelmingly positive. The initiative successfully demonstrated that English learning can be both effective and enjoyable when delivered through fun, meaningful, and student-

centered activities. It underscored the importance of creating a learning environment where students feel safe to explore, make mistakes, and express themselves. It also revealed the powerful role that educational outreach programs can play in supporting rural communities, especially when they are designed with empathy, creativity, and cultural sensitivity.

In a broader context, this program contributes to the growing body of evidence supporting the use of **non-traditional teaching methods in language education**, particularly in underserved areas. It affirms that with the right approach and community involvement, even limited resources can lead to significant educational outcomes. For future sustainability, the establishment of partnerships with local schools or the training of local volunteers to continue similar activities could further enhance the long-term benefits of this initiative.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of the English language service program in Pantai Labu Deliserdang has shown that education, when delivered creatively and with heart, can reach far beyond the boundaries of the classroom. This initiative, though limited in time and resources, provided an inspiring example of how fun learning activities can play a transformative role in language education—especially in rural settings where access to formal, high-quality English instruction remains limited.

By embracing a learner-centered approach and utilizing interactive, enjoyable methods such as games, storytelling, music, and group collaboration, the program was able to cultivate a sense of enthusiasm, curiosity, and confidence among the village youths. Participants who initially lacked the confidence or exposure to English began to actively engage with the language, applying new vocabulary and simple expressions in real-life contexts. Their progress, although modest in linguistic terms, represented a significant step toward breaking the psychological barrier that often hinders language learning—namely, the fear of making mistakes or not being good enough.

Furthermore, the program brought broader developmental benefits. It nurtured social skills, teamwork, and leadership among students, fostered connections between learners and their community, and built a bridge between academic institutions and local realities. The presence of university facilitators not only made the learning process more engaging for the students but also offered a valuable service-learning experience for the facilitators themselves, enriching their understanding of grassroots education and community empowerment.

The support and appreciation shown by parents and local leaders reinforced the idea that educational programs grounded in empathy, collaboration, and relevance to daily life are more likely to succeed and leave a lasting impression. These kinds of initiatives show that education does not have to be rigid or formal to be effective. In fact, by making learning fun and interactive, we tap into the natural curiosity

and energy of young people—especially those in rural areas who may otherwise be left behind by conventional educational systems.

However, this program also revealed areas for growth and improvement. The short duration posed challenges in ensuring long-term retention of language skills, and the diversity of learners' abilities called for more adaptive, differentiated teaching methods. For future initiatives, extending the program's duration, involving local teachers for sustainability, and providing additional learning materials could enhance its impact. Moreover, establishing ongoing partnerships between universities and rural communities could help institutionalize such service programs, turning them into recurring opportunities for mutual learning and growth.

In conclusion, this project demonstrated that teaching English through fun learning activities is not only feasible but highly beneficial in rural contexts like Pantai Labu. It succeeded in making English approachable, engaging, and enjoyable for the students, while simultaneously building bridges of understanding and support between educators, learners, and the community. As we continue to explore ways to improve language education in Indonesia and beyond, such grassroots programs remind us that the most effective learning often begins with joy, creativity, and human connection.

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