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# English teaching method training to improve the competency of kindergarten teachers

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#### **ABSTRACT**

The English Teaching Methods training program as a Community Service activity was carried out at one of the kindergarten schools, in Malang city. This training aims to improve the professionalism of kindergarten Teachers in teaching English materials. This activity consists of several stages namely preliminary study, material preparation, onsite training, and evaluation. The preliminary study, which involved discussion with presenters and school principals, was conducted to identify problems and assess teachers' needs. During the training process, teachers are equipped with theoretical frameworks, methodological examples, and English teaching materials specifically tailored for the effective instruction of young learners. Subsequently, the educators were allocated a period for discussion, during which they engaged in the development of inventive approaches and media. These outputs were subsequently delivered on the next day. The training instructors also offered feedback for every new method and media creation that was presented by the teachers. Upon the end of the training program, the participants offered testimonials and suggested ideas pertaining to the training. In addition, the lecturers offered instructional objects that can be utilized when teaching English in kindergarten.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Interest in Teaching English for Very Young Learners (TEVYL) has been steadily growing in recent years (Stakanova & Tolstikhina, 2014). Today, English lessons are offered in primary schools and even in pre-school education. ER IHS Kindergarten School is one of the Islamic and Psychology-based pre-school institutions, which provides an introduction to English language materials for early childhood and kindergarten age children in Malang city. The mission of the ER IHS Kindergarten school is to instill religious education from an early age, train Islamic attitudes and behavior, create activities that can provide opportunities for students to express themselves, and train students to be more independent. In order to carry out one of the missions of the ER IHS Kindergarten School, namely "creating activities"

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that can provide opportunities for students to express themselves", the school urgently needs training for teachers in order to become competent teachers.

One of the strategies in improving teacher competence is by attending training. Based on initial interviews with the Principal of ER IHS Kindergarten, the training needed is on English teaching methods for early childhood and kindergarten age children. Although English language materials for early childhood and kindergarten age children are still very basic and easy, teachers face the challenge of how to deliver / teach methods that are good and fun. The barriers experienced by ER IHS kindergarten teachers are in line with previous research by Masruroh et al. (2018) which showed that PAUD and kindergarten teachers complained about the lack of experience and knowledge about the methods and concepts of teaching English at an early age (English for Young Learner). In addition, early childhood education is a crucial education where the process of learning language acquisition occurs. Based on Chomsky's (1992) theory of language acquisition, learning a language or something new will be easier to teach at an early age or children. So that educators are required to provide appropriate and accurate basic learning. To reduce the occurrence of errors or language fossilization in English language learning at an early age, especially related to teaching techniques and strategies, this community service activity is important to do with the aim of providing early English language learning training for teachers at IHS ER Kindergarten.

Regarding English language teaching for early childhood, the way the material is delivered or the teaching method greatly affects the learning process of students as well as the surrounding conditions. In addition, in the learning process of early childhood, sufficient stimulus in accordance with the stages of development is very important to be a concern (Saodi et al., 2021). One of the efforts that can be made to ensure that the learning stimulus is effective and evenly distributed is to implement learning in small classes. Interaction and stimulation in small classes will create a better learning atmosphere because it builds a reciprocal relationship between communication, interaction and relationships between students and teachers (Rosarian & Dirgantoro, 2020). If there are fewer ELL (English Language Learner) children in a class, the practice of language or communication will be more effective (Premo et al., 2023). This proves that one of the factors for the effectiveness of teaching English is by making small classes. Uysal & Yavuz (2015) also concluded that children need hands-on activities to engage in independent learning. Hands-on activities supported by concrete materials will be a good learning medium for early childhood students because it is able to divert children's attention so that they do not get bored quickly. Early childhood has a high curiosity and will be more interested in media that gives them direct stimulus and can be felt with their senses so that the learning process becomes more effective (Swastyastu, 2020). Concrete materials help them understand and process meaning. For example, teachers provide a variety of activities including: (1) Physical activities such as walking, running, jumping, dancing, and climbing contribute positively to learning when coordinated with language; and (2) Fine motor activities such as drawing, coloring, painting, cutting, and pasting can also be done in classroom activities.

Broadly speaking, there are several problem formulations related to the condition of IHS ER kindergarten teachers that can be summarized as follows: (1) Teachers' knowledge of English materials suitable for early childhood is still limited; (2) Teachers' knowledge of appropriate and interesting English teaching methods for early childhood is still lacking; and (3) Teaching media for English lessons at school still needs to be developed. These problems are very important to discuss and solve because they are related to the smooth process of teaching and learning English in kindergarten schools. As we know, teachers are figures who are considered capable of providing changes to students, especially in

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increasing interest in learning (Leonard, 2016). The use of interesting and appropriate learning methods and media to be applied to pre-school students is also very important. This is closely related to the process of delivering the content of the material and also attracting students' attention to pay attention to the material presented (Amlia et.al 2021). Therefore, it can be concluded that training on English teaching methods in IHS ER kindergarten schools is needed. The English training was carried out by the UB Faculty of Agriculture English lecturer team as a form of community service. As the task of a lecturer, in addition to teaching and research, is to do community service. The community here can be interpreted as the campus community and the general public. In this case, PAUD and TK teachers are included in the general public. The training activities carried out by the FPUB English lecturer team have the main objective of equipping PAUD and kindergarten teachers in ER IHS with expertise in how to teach English for early childhood. Hopefully, this community service program can provide the following benefits: (1) Increased professional development of PAUD and TK teachers; (2) Increased knowledge of PAUD and TK teachers about English materials for early childhood; (3) Increased knowledge of PAUD and TK teachers on English teaching methods for early childhood; and (4) Development of teaching media for interesting English lessons.

#### 2. METHODS

# **Activity Plan**

This community service activity was carried out by four (4) English lecturers from Brawijaya University (UB) Malang. The location of the community service partner is the ER IHS Kindergarten school which is located at JI Ki Ageng Gribig, Malang city. The preparation and implementation period was carried out for approximately three (3) months, namely in May-July 2023. The participants who participated in this activity were all teachers and staff of the ER IHS Kindergarten school, both those who taught PAUD and TK, totaling 12 people.

To achieve the objectives of the activities that have been formulated, this training activity is carried out through several stages. The pre-training stage will focus more on analyzing the needs (needs analysis) of the training participants. so that the material provided is expected to be right on target. Then, the results of the needs analysis will become a reference in formulating materials that are in accordance with the needs and abilities of the participants. The training was conducted using the formulated materials. During the implementation process, monitoring activities are also carried out considering the importance of evaluation to determine whether the material needs to be readjusted. The Table 1 is the flow of preparation, implementation, and evaluation of community service activities.

Several questions related to teacher needs (Needs Analysis) were compiled into an online survey (Google form). The topics of the questions include: (1) Participant demographic info including gender and age; (2) Experience of learning English; (3) Obstacles when learning English independently; (4) Constraints when teaching English to kindergarten-aged children.

During the training, we applied several methods: (1) Lecture Method. The presenters explained some materials related to English learning methods and media for PAUD and kindergarten children. The duration of each speaker is 20 minutes; (2) Interactive Method. The presenters conducted a question-and-answer session with the participants for 15 minutes for each material; (3) Participatory Method. The trainees received tasks to be done in groups after receiving the materials. Then, participants presented their ideas for teaching methods and media in front of the forum.

**Table 1.** Stages of activity

Stages	Schedule	Activity	PIC
Preparation	May-June 2023	<ul> <li>Conducting internal coordination among English lecturers</li> <li>Observing the location of the service</li> <li>Conducting informal interviews between English lecturers and the Principal of ER IHS Kindergarten</li> <li>Distributing questionnaire links to analyze teacher needs (needs analysis)</li> <li>Conducting discussions and formulating training models related to the service material</li> </ul>	Presenters
Implementation	July 2023	<ul> <li>Presentation of material by the English lecturer team</li> <li>Question and answer session between presenters and participants</li> <li>Group Discussion</li> <li>Brainstorming</li> <li>Presentation of group discussion results by all participants</li> </ul>	Presenters Presenters & Participants Participants
		- Educational games	Presenters & Participants
Evaluation & Monitoring	July - August 2023	<ul> <li>Providing feedback on the results of the training participants' discussions</li> <li>Giving pre- and post-test as an evaluation of participants' understanding of the material</li> </ul>	Presenters
		<ul> <li>Conducting informal interviews related to testimonials after attending the training</li> </ul>	Presenters & Participants

## **Evaluation Plan**

To evaluate the level of active participation of participants during the training, we observed the attendance time, behavior, and activeness of participants, especially during the question-and-answer session. Specifically, to measure the participants' understanding, we used a pre-test question before the activity began and a post-test question after the activity ended. This test aims to determine understanding before and after receiving training materials. The questions written in the pre- and post-test questionnaires are: (1) What skills should teachers master to teach English to children; (2) When is the right time for children to start recognizing English as a foreign language; (3) What language skills should children receive first; (4) Which of the following English learning methods is less effective for preschool and kindergarten students; (5) The following are non-physical media that can be used when learning English, except; (6) The following are physical media that can be used when learning English, except.

This community service activity was conducted in the school hall of ER IHS Kindergarten. Almost all the participants of the training reside in the school. During the training, the speaker also observed the participants' behavior such as taking notes on the material and listening carefully to the speaker's explanation. Participants' activeness in asking questions and responding to questions or materials presented in the training is also one of the variables of participants' seriousness. Each participant has a different background in English language ability, so it needs to be appreciated if they make a significant progress.

The final ability of the participants is certainly different. At least, the presenters made sure that each participant gained new knowledge about English. It can be concluded that the variables to measure the participants' seriousness in the training are by observing their attendance, activeness, and the final ability of the participants that have been obtained from the training.

#### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

# **Needs Analysis**

This training activity on English teaching methods began with analyzing the needs of teachers (participants). The Table 2 are the results of the needs analysis.

**Table 2.** The result of needs analysis

Table 2. The	result of fleeds affalysis	
Gender	Male	0%
Geridei	Female	
	>20 years old	16.7%
A = 0	20 – 25 years old	58.3%
Age	25 – 30 years old	8.3%
	>30 years old	16.7%
First time participants learned English	Kindergarten	41.7%
Kindergarten	Primary School	58.3%
	Speaking	25%
Language skill preferred by participants	Listening	33.3%
Language skill preferred by participants	Reading	33.3%
	Writing	8.3%
	Speaking	83.3%
Materials that participants want when teaching	Listening	8.3%
English to kindergarten children	Reading	8.3%
	Writing	0.1%
	Children's interest in English	16.7%
Obstacles when teaching English to	Teaching Materials	8.3%
kindergarteners	Teaching Methods	41.6%
	Preparation time before teaching	33.3%

Based on the table above, it can be concluded that all participants/teachers are female with an average age of around 20 to 25 years old. The participants have been learning English for quite a long time, namely since kindergarten and elementary school. The English language skills that participants are most interested in are Listening and Reading skills. When they were in kindergarten, most of the teachers really wanted to teach Speaking. However, while teaching English in IHS ER kindergartens, the teachers encountered several obstacles, namely about appropriate teaching methods and preparation time before teaching English. After knowing the needs of the teachers, the presenters discussed and compiled the materials that needed to be delivered during the training. The materials that have been compiled are: (1) Encouraging teachers in learning English independently; (2) Teaching English for Very Young Learners (TEVYL); (3) English teaching methods for pre-school and kindergarten students; and (4) Appropriate media to teach English for pre-school and kindergarten students.

### **Training Activity**

#### Pre-test

Before providing the training materials, the presenters provided a pre-test containing several questions to identify participants' initial knowledge of teaching methods. The pre-test link is in the form of a Google form with multiple-choice questions. The results of the pre-test are in Figure 1.



Figure 1. The result of pre-test

The Figure 1 shows the distribution of the participants' pre-test scores. The pre-test results showed that the participants had an average score of 50. The highest score was 75 and the lowest score was 15.

#### **Material delivery**

At this stage, all presenters presented some materials and opened a question-and-answer session for participants. Training materials can be accessed by participants in the form of soft file handouts because all materials are in the form of PowerPoint (PPT). The presentation was conducted in an interactive manner where participants could directly ask questions in the middle of the presentation. Each speaker presented the material for approximately 20 minutes. The question-and-answer session was held every time 1 material was presented. In addition, participants were also facilitated with block notes and stationery so that participants could record important things during the presentation of the material.

The following materials were presented during the training: (1) Encouraging teachers in learning English independently. This material contains how to learn English independently so that teachers are motivated to improve their English skills. Then, the teachers were also given suggestions on what to improve when learning English independently; (2) Teaching English for Very Young Learners (TEVYL). This material contains the definition of English for Very Young Learners (EVYL) and English for young learners (EYL). This material is very useful for teachers because it is related to the selection of appropriate materials to be taught to kindergarten students; (3) English teaching methods for pre-school and kindergarten students. This material contains various methods and techniques of teaching English that are suitable for pre-school students. The presenters also provide examples (modeling) on how to apply a teaching method in front of the class; (4) Appropriate media to teach English for pre-school and kindergarten. This material contains types of learning media that can be used and utilized during the teaching and

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learning process in kindergarten schools. The speaker also provides examples (modeling) on how to apply learning media / teaching aids in front of the class.

# **Assignments**

This stage aims to evaluate the participants' knowledge after receiving the material. The participants were divided into groups. Each group consisted of 3 to 4 people. The speaker provided different materials for each group. The materials that must be delivered by the participants are: Shape and Color, Parts of Body, and Fruits and Numbers. Furthermore, the participants were given a long discussion time to find the appropriate teaching methods and media for the given material.

# Group presentation and feedback provision

At this stage, each group is given 20 minutes to present the results of the discussion and demonstrate some of the teaching methods and media that have been made in front of the forum. They practiced how to teach according to the material that had been given. The teaching materials include shapes and color, parts of body, fruits, and numbers. After that, each group will listen to feedback from the speaker regarding pronunciation, implementation of teaching methods, and teaching media innovation. Figure 2 is a documentation of one of the groups presenting the results of the discussion.

Everyone in the group is strongly encouraged to actively participate in explaining all the results of the discussion well. Groups that can describe the results of the discussion well, are able to demonstrate interesting teaching methods, and show good use of media are given a special award from the speaker. This can motivate participants to further improve their English teaching skills even better in the future.

# **Educational games**

At this stage, participants were invited to participate in several educational games which could be applied to students at school later. The educational games include: (1) Whispering games. Whispering game is a game that requires full concentration. The way to play is, participants are divided into groups. Each group contains 4 people. Participants line up to the back and are spaced about 1.5 meters per person. The backmost participant takes a paper containing a simple English sentence. When the game starts, the backmost participant whispers the sentence to the participant in front of him. Then, the next participant whispers the same sentence to the participant in front of him, continuing the chain until the front participant hears the whispered sentence. The group that can say the sentence quickly, correctly, and precisely is the winner; (2) Finding shapes and colors. The finding shapes and colors game is perfect for children because it combines audio, visual and kinesthetic skills. The way to play is, participants gather with their respective groups (the division of groups is still the same during the whispering game). Around the hall, various colorful papers in the shape of a square, rectangle, diamond, heart, circle, and star have been placed. When the speaker said "Find 2 rectangles!", the participants had to find and pick up 2 rectangles. Each group must get at least 2 rectangles and collect them in a box. At the end of the game, the presenter counted the number of shapes collected in each group's box. The group that gets the most shapes is the winner.

#### **Post-test**

This stage is one of the final stages of the training activities. The presenters provided a post-test containing several questions to determine the participants' understanding of the material that had been

shared. The post-test link is in the form of a Google form with multiple-choice questions. The results of the post-test are in Figure 4.





**Figure 2.** Group presentation **Figure 3.** Games participation



Figure 4. The result of post-test

The figure 4 shows the distribution of the participants' post-test scores. The post-test results show that the participants got an average score of 73. The highest score was 90 and the lowest score was 45. In addition, 7 out of 10 participants scored above 70.

# Closing

The final stage of this training is the provision of souvenirs in the form of educational props that can be utilized by IHS kindergarten schools for English language learning. Certificates were also distributed to all participants at the closing ceremony as a form of appreciation for participating in a series of training activities very well and enthusiastically.

#### **Discussion**

Language development is one of the developments that children must achieve and should not escape the attention of educators and parents. According to Novitasari et al. (2023), children's language development is divided into several periods, pre-linguistic period (0-1 years) and linguistic period (1-5 years). Training activities in the framework of community service to pre-school teachers are quite important and appropriate activities to prepare teachers to equip students who are already

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in the linguistic period. In addition, during this training, it was seen that the participants were quite attentive to the presentation delivered by the speaker. The participants also actively asked questions during the presentation. Participants asked about media and strategies that can be done to teach preschool children, what media are interesting to use. There were also participants who asked about the "sandwiching" technique and how to apply the technique. The participants showed enthusiasm regarding the material presented as they asked questions and gave feedback to each other. This activity shows that the teacher has indirectly considered applying the happy playing and educating method which can make students feel happy in participating in class learning (Na'imah, 2022).

Another indicator of success is that the participants completed their group assignments very well and compactly. The group assignment given was to practice how to teach according to the material that had been delivered. During the presentation of the discussion results, each group brought learning media to support their teaching presentation. For example, the group that was assigned the material about parts of the body made their own teaching media made of cardboard with pictures of body parts. The results of the assignment by bringing media showed that the participants understood the training material and understood the importance of learning media for pre-school children. This is in line with the results of community service carried out by Lestari (2022) related to English Teaching Training for Children for Kindergarten and PAUD Educators. From the results of these activities, it was found that teachers have a positive perception of the importance of English language skills in the scope of early childhood education as an asset to teach and make innovative and effective lesson plans after attending the training.

Making innovations in learning methods and media is very important for early childhood language development, especially ages 5-6 years. The results of previous research state that learning media has a significant impact on children's language development. The importance of innovating learning methods and media is also proven through community service activities by Romala et al. (2023) with the theme English Language Training for Early Childhood with Fun English. In this activity, the speaker used digital and printed media to stimulate children to speak in English while creating a comfortable atmosphere for children to be creative through the Fun English method. The results of the activity also showed an increase in all domains of assessment (cognitive, affective, and psychomotor) in early childhood, such as willing to listen to others when speaking, dare to start a simple English conversation, and ask questions with correct grammar. In addition, with the use of animated videos followed by the show and tell method, the language development of children aged 5-6 years was shown to improve (Afifah et al., 2023). The storytelling method using digital media has also been shown to improve early childhood language skills. Hardiyana & Yati (2021) state that children pay more attention to fairy tales with everyday life themes than about fables or legends.

The main supporting factor in this community service activity is obtained from institutions that have provided full support for the implementation of this training. The entire school of ER IHS Kindergarten, both the principal and all teachers, is also a very important supporting factor. The cooperation and communication between the English lecturer team and the IHS ER Kindergarten school were very well established so that the entire series of training activities went well. In terms of preparing this training activity, there is at least one inhibiting factor that becomes an obstacle. These obstacles include determining the date, day and time of implementation because each teacher and also the presenters have different activities. Nevertheless, this community service activity brings benefits to ER IHS Kindergarten in the form of increasing the capacity of Human Resources and developing knowledge in delivering more interesting material for students at the school. In addition, the positive impact resulting from this activity is that young teachers at ER IHS Kindergarten become more confident in making presentations and are more creative in utilizing objects around the school to convey material about Shapes and Color, Parts of Body, and Fruits and Numbers.

#### 4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the description above, it can be concluded that community service activities have tried to provide solutions to several problems that exist in the ER IHS kindergarten partners/schools. The common problem that arises is the teachers' lack of knowledge of the types of English learning methods and media for pre-school children. Overall, the training activities in the framework of community service activities have run smoothly. This can be proven by the active participation of the participants in following the implementation of the training and working on group assignments very well. They also expressed that the material presented was very easy to understand, useful and applicable to classroom teaching. In addition, the games provided made the participants excited to follow it and inspired to apply it in the classroom. This community service activity was carried out in two consecutive days. The first day contained presentations from the training presenters, and the second day contained group task presentations and games. During the two days, the teachers as trainees showed great enthusiasm during the training and also in working on the group assignments given. In addition to focusing on the training, the teachers were also willing to share their experiences teaching children in the classroom so that not only the material was conveyed but also unique experiences in the classroom of early childhood students. The duration of community service implementation for two days is considered sufficient, not too short and not too long because too long a duration can make participants tired and bored.

This community service program certainly still has limitations, namely in terms of selecting community service partners as target participants and also training materials. The selected location still focuses on one (1) PAUD and kindergarten school institution, namely ER IHS Kindergarten on JI Ki Ageng Gribig, Malang. The materials presented also still have to be updated and adjusted to the needs of the school. One of them is the provision of material about the types of games that can be used in the classroom; Games that function as ice breaking and games that function as delivery of subject matter. Games are believed to help students in understanding a lesson and the material can be delivered in a fun way. Then, for the next servant, it is recommended to provide training in a wider scope, for example gathering several PAUD or TK teachers in a village / sub-district / city in one training. Furthermore, it is suggested that the next community service team create materials on learning methods and media for the teaching and learning process of other languages, such as local languages or Arabic. This is because some PAUDs and kindergartens may not only introduce English. For example, at ER IHS Kindergarten which is the location of the current community service, there is Javanese language material and Arabic. Another suggestion is that the next Abdimas team can target pre-school students as the target of community service participants. This will certainly have a significant impact because it is directly applied to children.

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