

An effort to improve the quality of human resources through the english short course program for preschool teachers

Yuliana Mangendre¹, Sri Ayu Laaly²

¹Department of English Education, University of Muhammadiyah Luwuk, Indonesia

²Department of Early Childhood Education, University of Muhammadiyah Luwuk, Indonesia

Abstract

This training activity focuses on English language training for early childhood teachers in one of sub-districts in Banggai Regency. This study is aimed at increasing the awareness of the importance of introducing English to early childhood, increasing knowledge of English so that it can be taught to students and finding out learning models for early childhood. This service activity was carried out for 4 months from April to July 2023. According to the agreement with partners at the beginning of the meeting, the training time was held twice by using a face-to-face mode for a month, on Saturdays, to be precise in the first and third weeks. This activity ran smoothly from 10.00 am to 12.00 noon. The location for the training was in one of the Educational office in Luwuk Selatan District, Banggai Regency. The Community Service activity involved PAUD (*Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*/Early Childhood Education) teachers as the community service partners, consisting of 15 participants representing their respective schools. Training material regarding language components included vocabulary, pronunciation and spelling. The results of this activity showed that the participants were very enthusiastic about participating in the training. This also succeeded in increasing understanding and broadening partners' insights which was expected to be able to pass on to their respective students. It can be concluded from the results of the community activity that the current activity ran successfully. Based on the results of this research, it is recommended that in the future partners always update their knowledge of English through similar training activities and also be able to apply the knowledge gained to their respective students.

Keywords: *English Short Course Training; Early Childhood*

Corresponding author:

Yuliana Mangendre
Department of English Education
University of Muhammadiyah Luwuk
Jl. KH Ahmad Dahlan, Luwuk, Banggai, Central
Sulawesi
ymangendre@gmail.com

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INTRODUCTION

Education is the main key to preparing a competitive generation. Quality human resources will certainly be able to compete with other developed countries worldwide. For this reason, the Government applies the importance of foreign languages, especially English. English language instruction should commence at a young age, keeping in mind the growing diversity of contemporary needs (Putri, 2015).

English is very important and in several big cities, English lessons are already available at the Study Group (*Kelompok Belajar*/KB) and Kindergarten (*Taman Kanak-Kanak*/TK) levels. This is following the previous explanation that by mastering English, the future generations are prepared to compete with students from other countries.

Introduction to English should start from an early age considering the increasingly diverse demands of the times. Following the SLA, (second language acquisition) theory, language learning must start as early as possible because at an early age, children easily acquire or learn something new, especially learning language. Children at an early age have sharp memories through the process of listening, seeing and even dreaming (Besral, 2016) The earlier children learn a foreign language, the faster they will master it. This is because children's short and long-term memory abilities are better than adults. This period is very appropriate to provide stimuli appropriate for children to increase their potential (Umam, 2014).



Introduction to English for AUD (*Anak Usia Dini*/early childhood) is certainly not about language skills or abilities but about the language components. Language components include vocabulary, pronunciation, and spelling (Ma'mun, 2012). The development of speech and language in humans is most intensive during early childhood. Montessori (Susanto, 2011) stated that early childhood is a sensitive period. During this period, young children easily and quickly understand certain tasks. Vulnerable ages 0-6 years are also called the golden age, where the development that occurs in early childhood is very rapid. Therefore, the Golden Age is a period of intellectual development, personality, and social behavior so the stimulation at that time has a long-lasting impact on a child. A forum that is expected to be a place to meet children's needs as a whole is PAUD (*Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*/Early Childhood Education).

PAUD schools in South Luwuk sub-district consisted of 11 institutions consisting of 7 TK (Kindergarten) and 4 KB (Play Group) spread across several sub-districts/villages. South Luwuk itself is a sub-district which was the result of the expansion of the Luwuk sub-district since 2012. The center of government is in the Simpong sub-district. This sub-district is only approximately 3 kilometers to the south of the center of Luwuk City the capital of Banggai Regency. The following is data on PAUD schools spread across the South Luwuk sub-district.

These PAUD schools were quite adequate in terms of facilities because the locations of the school were close to the city center but this contrasted with the human resources they had. The existing human resources were still below average because based on data, it was found that only 10% of human resources had bachelor's degree qualifications (PAUD graduates) while the remaining 90% were high school graduates and equivalent. The PAUD school curriculum in the South Luwuk sub-district did not yet include English language lessons as a form of initial introduction to children. In fact, at this level, children need knowledge of English, therefore, they could compete with other children in other big cities. Not having an English education background and having never attended English language training or anything similar were some of the causes that many teachers feel less competent and not confident in teaching English.

Therefore, Efforts to improve the quality of human resources are considered important to be carried out in the form of a training program or English short course training. This study aims to help PAUD teachers in the South Luwuk sub-district to have basic knowledge of English so that this knowledge can be applied to their students later. Furthermore, is also hoped that the students will like English lessons from an early age and also to equip them to face the current era of millennials today. As long as the long-term goal of this program is to contribute to a change in mindset so that in the future schools can re-design the "Curriculum Revitalization" curriculum by including English as a mandatory content that is important to introduce to children from an early age. With expectations that young learners grow and develop into adult learners, they already have the provisions and knowledge of a foreign language, especially English (El-Sulukiyyah et al., 2019).

METHODS

The English Short Course Training activity was carried out for 4 months from April to July 2021 with 8 effective days. According to the agreement with the partners at the beginning of the meeting, the training time was held twice a month in a face-to-face teaching mode, that was on Saturdays to be precise in the first and third weeks. This activity ran smoothly from 10.00 am to 12.00 noon. The training activity was carried out in an office of the South Luwuk sub-district Education Coordinator (known formerly as the UPT of the South Luwuk Sub-district Education, Youth, and Sports Service). This Partnership program activity implemented a method that could overcome the problems faced by the partner groups. In this Community Service (*Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat*/PKM), the implementation of the method involved 3 stages, namely: Preparation stage, Implementation stage and Post-training stage.

Preparation Stage

The preparation stage was divided into 2 sub-activities, namely (a) Coordinating with the South Luwuk District Education Coordinator, and outreach to School Principals and target partners, namely PAUD teachers. This aims to ensure that stakeholders and all components have a unified perception of the

importance of English and the need to introduce English to early childhood so that in the end all parties could provide full support for this PKM program. (b) Carrying out analysis of problems faced by partners. The lack of knowledge of English and having never attended English language training or similar was the main problem and was a priority for the service team.

Implementation Stage

The English short course program was held for approximately 4 months from April to July 2021 with 8 face-to-face meetings. It is located at Jalan Tuna no 2, Maahas Village, South Luwuk District, Banggai Regency. Considering that the activities were taking place in pandemic conditions, the training participants were limited to a small number of 15 people, adapting to the limited space (because they had to maintain distance) while still following health protocols, namely 3M maintaining distance, wearing masks and washing hands before entering the training room. The training participants were representatives or delegates from each PAUD school (KB and TK) in the South Luwuk sub-district who had the motivation and interest to learn English. The method for implementing this activity was short course training with a combination of theory and practice. Before taking part in the training, partners took a pre-test to find out the prior knowledge that each participant had. As in the series at the beginning of the activity, where all participants were required to take a pre-test to determine the participants' initial abilities, at the end of the training partners also took a post-test to determine whether there had been an increase in English knowledge. The forms of pre-test and post-test questions can be seen on the attachment page.

Post-Training Stage

At the Post-Training stage, an evaluation of the training program that had been implemented was carried out in the form of questions and answers regarding the satisfaction of several participants to find out the response to this activity. If there are things that are considered lacking and need to be improved, they will be followed up in the form of coordination.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This activity was started with an opening ceremony which was attended by the Head of the PAUD Division, namely Drs. Lajibir, M.Pd. In his speech, he appreciated this training activity considering the importance of introducing English from an early age. After the opening event was finished, it was continued with a pre-test for the training participants to measure the participants' initial knowledge. The pre-test results showed that the participants' understanding of English was below average. Thus, they needed training to improve the participants' understanding and English skills.



Figure 1. The atmosphere during the training activity process

The results of this educational activity showed that the activity was successful. This was evident from the first meeting until the eighth meeting that no significant obstacles were found. Participants took part in each material actively and on average were very participative. The material discussed was also

material for beginners or beginner level so that participants could follow it well. There was only one discussion that was a little difficult for the participants, namely the Self Introduction; this was because it was related to the participants' speaking skills. This material was presented at the seventh meeting as closing material specifically for the core material, namely about English language training. Furthermore, the last meeting or the eighth meeting was closed with additional material, namely the AUD learning model by a member service member, namely Mrs. Sri Ayu Laaly, S.Pd., M.Pd. Since all the participants were Kindergarten/PAUD teachers, they were enthusiastic about following the material presented. The following table 4.1 shows the material discussed during 8 face-to-face meetings.

Table 1. Topics in Teaching Materials Discussed During The Meeting

Meeting	Material	Implementation Time
-	<i>Opening and Pre-Test</i>	April
I	Self-Introduction	April
II	Numbers	April
III	Animals	May
IV	Fruits and Vegetables	May
V	Colour	June
VI	Days of the Week	June
VII	Parts of Body	July
VIII	*AUD Learning Model	July
-	<i>Closing and Post-Test</i>	July

At the end of the activity, a post-test was carried out to see how far the English language skills of PAUD teachers had improved after receiving training. The results obtained are as follows: (1) the training participants consisting of Kindergarten and PAUD teachers in the South Luwuk sub-district were very enthusiastic about participating in all series of training activities, they understood the teaching material presented, as seen from the results of the training and practice. The teachers showed an increase in understanding and mastery of the material, (2) an increase in their interest in learning English which could be seen from their activeness in practicing, and asking questions, as well as the presence of a relatively constant number of participants, namely 15 participants (3) Delivery of the material when the service provides The material in this training class was in a more semi-formal mode, that was, very relaxed, adapted to the place and participants faced (4) The training participants were also motivated by the existence of additional material about the AUD learning model that could be practiced when teaching English or other subjects to their students. Considering that learning models were very diverse and needed to be adapted to the character of the students they were facing. (5) There was the main thing in the final activity of community service, namely evaluation. The evaluation aimed to measure the success of training activities and to determine responses and assessments from participants regarding training activities that have been carried out.



Figure 2. Participant Members



In this training activity, there was also an evaluation stage, which was intended to see the level of success of the training activity. This also aimed to determine the participants' success in understanding the material provided, and also to see the suitability of the material to the abilities of the activity participants, the suitability of the material to the needs of the training participants, the effectiveness of the activity process, as well as a means of reflection for the service participants

CONCLUSION

English training activities are part of the service team's efforts to socialize the importance of introducing English to early childhood. The achievement of this activity is that the partner's level of English knowledge, including Vocabulary, Pronunciation, and Spelling, has increased significantly so that the partner can transfer the knowledge gained to their respective students. Furthermore, it is hoped that teachers will always take part in similar training activities to broaden their knowledge of English.

Limitations and Future Direction

The description of this activity is a part of the community service carried out throughout 2023. Therefore, this article is limited to presenting data on the implementation of an English short course program for preschool teachers in Luwuk Selatan District, Banggai Regency. The description of activities presented in this article is expected to contribute specifically to the preschool teachers and English teachers who teach young learners in general.

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Statement and Declarations

The photo of the activities presented in the figures and all content have been permitted by the Preschool teacher of Luwuk Selatan District, Banggai Regency to be published in this article.

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