

Empowering Primary School Teachers and Staff through English for School Context Training: A Community Service Initiative

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Abstrak

Program Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat (PkM) dalam bentuk pelatihan kepada guru yang bertujuan untuk mempersiapkan guru dan staf dalam kemampuan komunikasi bahasa Inggris. Penguasaan bahasa Inggris merupakan hal penting bagi tenaga pendidik dan staf untuk menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang kondusif, mengakses sumber pembelajaran global serta mendukung perkembangan profesional. Di SD Virgo Maria 2 Bawen, para guru dan staf diberi pelatihan dalam menggunakan bahasa Inggris dalam interaksi sehari-hari. Program ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan keterampilan komunikasi dan kepercayaan diri partisipan dalam berbicara melalui pelatihan yang terstruktur dan terarah. Hasil menunjukkan sebuah peningkatan yang signifikan dalam hal kepercayaan diri, tata bahasa, kosakata dan penggunaan bahasa fungsional dalam konteks sehari-hari. Pada akhirnya, Program Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat (PkM) memberikan pelatihan bahasa Inggris yang praktis dan kontekstual secara efektif, meningkatkan kemampuan komunikasi tenaga pendidik dan staf sekolah, serta menekankan pentingnya penjadwalan yang fleksibel dan pengajaran yang dibedakan untuk program di masa mendatang.

Kata kunci: Pelatihan bahasa Inggris, pengabdian kepada masyarakat, kompetensi komunikasi, guru sekolah dasar, konteks sekolah

Abstract

A This Community Service (PkM) program provided English communication training designed to equip teachers and staff with the necessary language skills. English proficiency is crucial for educators and staff in creating a conducive learning environment, accessing global educational resources, and supporting professional development. At SD Virgo Maria 2 Bawen, teachers and staff received training on using English in daily interactions. The program aimed to enhance participants' communication skills and speaking confidence through structured, targeted training. Results demonstrated significant improvements in confidence, grammar, vocabulary, and the use of functional language in everyday contexts. Ultimately, the program effectively delivered practical, context-relevant English training and improved the communication abilities of educators and school staff, while highlighting the importance of flexible scheduling and differentiated instruction for future programs.

Keywords: English training, community service, communication competence, primary school teachers, school context

1. INTRODUCTION

Mastery of English communication skills has become one of the key competencies for educators and educational staff in the era of globalization. This is in line with the research conducted by Saputra et al. [1], who stated that English is important for all segments of society because it is a skill needed to keep pace with an increasingly advanced world. In the context of elementary education, this skill not only supports the learning process but also expands access to learning resources, facilitates teachers' professional development, and enables interaction with various stakeholders in an educational environment that is becoming increasingly open on a global

scale. However, in many elementary schools in Indonesia—particularly those without specialized English programs—the English communication skills of teachers and staff remain limited to a basic level and have not been optimally integrated into daily interactions within the school environment.

Virgo Maria 2 Elementary School in Bawen is one of the elementary schools committed to improving the quality of its educational services, including enhancing the English communication skills of its teachers and staff. The school has great potential to foster a more communicative school environment that is open to the use of English in daily interactions. Based on initial communication with school officials, there is a need to improve practical English skills that can be used in everyday situations within the school environment, such as greeting students and coworkers, giving directions, asking for permission, conveying simple instructions, and engaging in casual conversation in a professional context. Based on the results of a needs analysis conducted jointly with Virgo Maria 2 Elementary School in Bawen, several priority issues have been identified as the focus of this community service activity.

Most teachers and school staff have a basic knowledge of English, but are not yet accustomed to actively using the language in daily interactions within the school environment. As a result, the use of English remains very limited and has not yet become part of the school's communication culture. This situation closely mirrors the findings of a study conducted by Nursyahida et al. [2]. Their study, which examined the challenges students face in using English, showed that students encounter several difficulties in learning English, such as understanding course material, remembering grammar rules, mastering vocabulary, distinguishing between spelling and pronunciation, and lacking confidence when speaking English. This occurs due to the lack of opportunities for students to practice communication in real-life situations.

Currently, the school does not have a structured and ongoing English language training program for teachers and staff. According to Lumbantobing et al. [3], English training is necessary to improve staff members' English proficiency. However, to achieve this goal, there is currently no training curriculum available that meets the school's specific needs—one that specifically assesses participants' initial proficiency levels as a foundation for developing appropriate training materials. This issue is also compounded by the limited availability of learning resources relevant to the school's context.

Given the crucial role of English in the school's development, the school requested English training for its teachers and staff. In addition, English communication could serve as a strong selling point for the school to attract the interest of prospective students (and parents), and proficiency in the language will help teachers and staff advance their professional development. The school will also gain greater access to a wide range of learning resources available globally. The first step was for the school to improve the English communication skills of its teachers and staff to meet the need to communicate with many students who are quite fluent in the language, due to their exposure to social media on their devices. Some also took additional courses in the language.

The objective of the first stage of the training was to familiarize the teachers to the language, as the regular meetings during the training made the teachers and staff practice speaking using English. Various language functions that the teachers and staff could use in their

daily communication were re-introduced. And hence, they would become more confident to speak in English among them, and with the students. Hence, this program is expected to have a positive impact on improving the English communication skills of teachers and school staff. In the long term, these improved communication skills can help foster a more communicative school environment, enhance the professionalism of educators, and expand access to a wider range of global and international learning resources.

2. METHODS

2.1 Participants

The participants of this community service program were 19 people consisting of teachers and administrative staff of SD Virgo Maria Bawen. They had different roles and English abilities.

This program was designed for both groups because English communication is important not only in the classroom but also in daily school services and interactions.

2.2 Training materials

The material focuses on practical English expressions that participants can use in their daily activities at school. Topics covered include greetings and self-introductions, discussing favorite weather, expressing feelings, engaging in small talk and using polite expressions, describing daily activities, and talking about hobbies. These topics were chosen because they reflect common communication situations faced by teachers and administrative staff.

2.3 Training procedures

There were some steps in the training procedures. They needed *analysis, course design, training implementation, workshop, and evaluation*. They are all described in more detail in the following paragraphs.

2.3.1 Need Analysis

In the context of English for Specific Purposes, needs analysis is a key factor and also the first step to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of the course design. It involves identifying specific linguistic and communicative needs based on the participants' roles and the context they were in [4].

The result of the needs analysis was the participants already have the basic English communication skills. They need to practice the skills regularly, as Listyani [5] mentioned, as an important aspect to improve the ability to communicate in English, and the continuity of the program, whether using online or offline platforms. The success of the program depends also on the commitment of the participants and facilitators, as well as a well-coordinated schedule.

2.3.2 Designing the course

Based on the needs analysis, some topics were identified, such as greetings, introducing oneself, requesting and giving permission, expressing location and giving directions, expressing feelings and opinions, small talk and courtesy, daily activities. Those topics the communication needs in daily interaction in a school context, whether between students and teachers, among teachers and staff, or even with parents. The result of the needs analysis is similar to the need analysis done by Widiningrum et al. [6] which mentions that the course design focuses on several areas of general English language that is used by teachers and staff in daily communication at school.

2.3.3 The Training

Based on the needs analysis, this community program was designed in the form of an English training program with the aim to improve participants' ability to communicate in English in the school context. This program consisted of a series of training sessions and followed by a workshop at the end of the program. In each session, participants practiced more

on the language used after the explanation from the instructor.

During the training, participants practiced using the expressions taught in the session through pair work, group discussions, and role play. These activities can make them apply the language in a real school situation and also build confidence in using English [7]. At the end of the training program, participants worked in groups to perform a mini drama using the expressions learned in the training.

2.3.4 Workshop

At the closing of the training program, a workshop was conducted. It provided an opportunity for participants to practice these expressions based on real school situations. The team prepared some situations for the participants to act it out with their groups. Besides the prepared guidelines, the assessment rubrics were also available to evaluate participants' performance. At the end of the performance, feedback was given to the participants.

Throughout the training session and the workshop, the participants participated actively in the discussions and role plays. Both teachers and administrative staff created a good collaborative learning environment where they support each other to gain confidence in school context daily communication using English. This program answered the needs to improve teachers and staff in using English expressions in everyday school activities.

2.3.5 Evaluation

An evaluation was conducted at the end of the program. Evaluating a program is necessary to ensure their effectiveness and efficiency in gaining the expected outcomes [8]. It also provides feedback on the materials and also the teaching method. The results from the evaluation can be used to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the training program. Below are the steps in the training program:

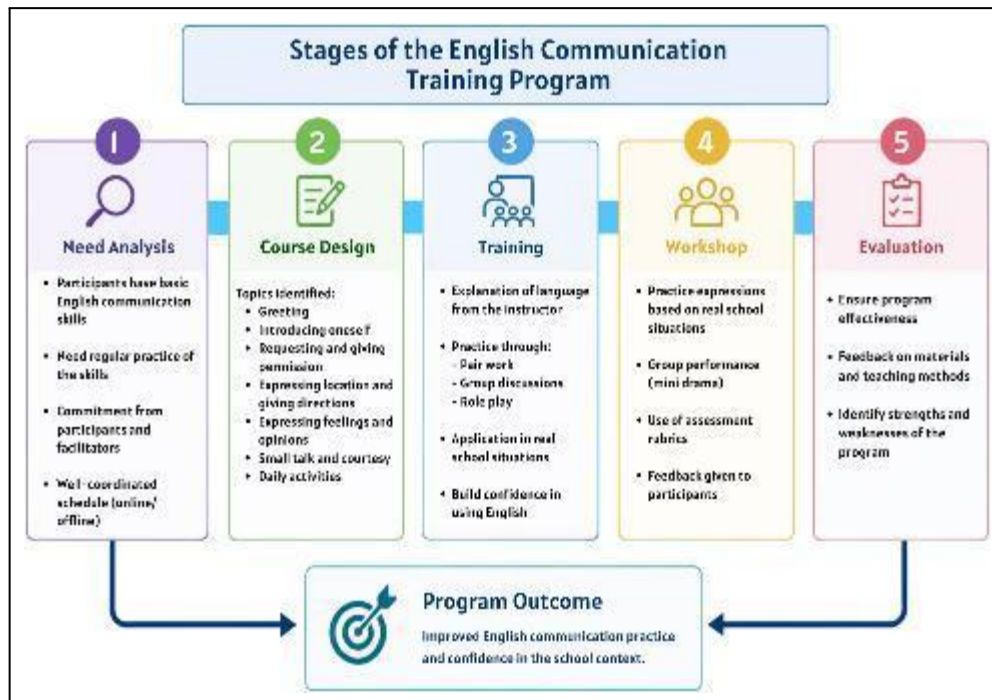


Figure 1. The Stages of the English Communication Training Program.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Description of Activities

There were some activities conducted during the community service. Each session began with language input on the target grammar, vocabulary, or speaking functions, followed by guided practice and communicative activities. Here, the lecturers gave explanations for the teachers under training. This “lecture” not only covers grammatical points, but also other skills like speaking functions or vocabulary.

There were fourteen teachers and administrative staff altogether. In order to make the teaching-learning process go on more smoothly, the participants were divided into two classes. In every class, there were seven participants. With this small number of participants for every class, the learning situation became comfortable and conducive.

2. Ways to begin and end small talk.
A. To start conversations, try using phrases like:
In the workplace
• How was your weekend? • How's your day / week going so far? • How are things with you?
At social or networking events
• What brings you here today? • Have you been here / to one of these events before? • How do you know ... (name of person/client)?
Casual encounters
• Lovely weather today, isn't it? • Have you had a busy day / morning so far? • I love your jacket / coat / hat – where did you get it?

Figure 2. Explanations on Small Talk

Besides language input, there was another session called discussion. In this activity, the teacher and admin staff participants did some exercises. They worked in small groups of two or three. The exercises were based on the language focus delivered by the lecturers. Figure 3 shows an example of an exercise on feelings and adjectives, while Figure 4 shows a group of teachers discussing the materials with a student tutor.

Group 1

1. I'm thirsty.	a. I don't have any food in my house.
2. I'm sick.	b. I have a new house.
1. I'm thirsty.	a. I don't have any food in my house.
3. I'm hungry.	c. I miss my cat.
4. I'm happy.	d. I don't have any water
5. I'm sad.	e. I have the flu.

Group 2

1. I'm angry.	a. I have an exam tomorrow.
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2. I'm bored.	b. I left my phone on the bus.
3. I'm tired.	c. I watched a horror film.
4. I'm afraid.	d. I didn't sleep last night.
5. I'm sad.	e. I don't have anything to do.

Figure 3. Materials on “Feelings and Adjectives”



Figure 4. Group Discussion.

All the teachers and administrative staff seemed enthusiastic and full of spirit. The last activity was role-playing. In every module, there were role plays that the participants had to perform. They still worked with the same team members as they had previously. They were also permitted to find new partners for the role play; however, all the participants seemed to have the same partners.



Figure 5. One Group Doing Role Play

Figure 5 above showed that all other participants looked at the role play attentively. They listened to their colleagues doing the role play. After the role play, feedback was given. This strengthened the participants' insights of English. Corrective feedback was given, which was the most common form of feedback for language learners [9].

3.2 Participants' Responses

All the participants seemed very happy during the training. They were full of spirit and very enthusiastic about learning English. Some teachers even stated that their confidence in speaking English grew. This can be seen from their reflections that they submitted at the end of every session. Their opinions can be seen in Excerpts 1 & 2.

Excerpt 1:

I am really glad to learn English with tutors from UKSW. This is a great experience for me. In future, I will be more confident to speak English. (Teacher B, Reflection, 15/4/2026)

Excerpt 2:

I am very happy to learn English, since I last learned English when I was in SHS. I really want to be able to speak English and understand the meanings of sentences in English. I want to know the meanings of conversation in English. I want to know more, and I want to be able to speak English. (Teacher U, Reflection, 15/4/2026)

3.3 Observed Improvements

Overall, the participants' confidence got better. They were becoming more and more confident in speaking English. Besides that, their grammar also got better and so did their vocabulary and understanding of speaking functions. They started to have more various diction in their conversation. Teacher X, for example, stated, "I'm glad to learn new vocabulary today" in her reflection, 15 April 2026. In line with Teacher X, Teacher Z also admitted this, "It's fun learning English. I learned how to introduce myself in a better and friendlier way" (Teacher Z's Reflection, 15/4/2026).

3.4 Challenges Encountered

Overall, from all the training sessions, there is one striking challenge that tutors encountered. That is, different proficiency levels of the participants. Out of 14 participants, only seven or about 50% were active and had good mastery of English. During the group work, when they prepared their role-plays, all participants with various capabilities mingled together. It means that participants with good mastery of English could help their colleagues who were still learning. Based on our observations, the participants were willing to help one another during the role play as well as during the exercises.

The positive side of a heterogeneous group is that advanced students have a chance to mentor their peer students. All group members can interact more to help each other to understand the concepts taught by the teacher [10]. This fact is strengthened by Maitzen (1997) in Svensson [11]. Maitzen argued that "We should look on diversity not as something negative or even neutral, but as something positive and valuable" (1997, p. 294, in Svensson, 2017).

The second problem is related to time. Some teachers encountered time-related problems. On average, one or two teachers arrived late to the training sessions. The main reason was because they had to handle extracurricular activities for the students. Time-related problems might lead to tiredness in learning. Teacher X2, for example, stated, "Today I'm very tired, I had to help my student find his shoe" (Teacher X2's statement, Reflection, 29/5/2026). Another teacher, Teacher Y2, also stated a similar thing, "I am very tired today because I had a lot of work to do, and I was very busy" (Teacher Y2, Reflection 29/5/2026). All this became an obstacle for the teachers to come on time to the training sessions.

4. CONCLUSION

Overall, the program has successfully addressed the teachers' and staff's need to use English expressions in everyday school communication. Through training sessions, discussions, role plays, and a workshop, the participants developed greater confidence in speaking English.

Improvements were also observed in their grammar, vocabulary, understanding of speaking functions, and use of varied diction. The collaborative activities also created a supportive learning environment where participants could help one another.

However, the program faced two main challenges. First, participants had different levels of English proficiency, which made some activities more challenging for less proficient participants. Second, teachers' busy schedules and responsibilities, particularly extracurricular activities, sometimes caused them to arrive late and feel tired during the training.

For future programs, the training schedule should be adjusted to better accommodate teachers' school responsibilities. In addition, activities could be adapted to different proficiency levels so that all participants can participate and benefit from the program.

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