

GIVING FREE ENGLISH LESSONS AND VOCABULARY MODULES: LEARNING BEYOND THE CLASSROOM WALLS THROUGH A COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM

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Abstract

The community service aims at providing free English lessons and English vocabulary learning modules to grade 3 and 4 students in one learning community in Duren Sawit East Jakarta through a six-week teaching program that is integrated with one subject offered in the Master Program of Applied English Linguistics at Atma Jaya Catholic University of Indonesia. Ten master students became the voluntary teachers (together with other volunteers). The program is a continuation of a similar program held from January to June 2019 by the first author (da Silva, 2020). The student-teachers used a variety of learning approaches and methods that are predicted to suit the students' needs. They identified that different groups of students required different approaches, materials, and activities in order to learn English enjoyably. It is suggested that future teacher volunteers use the ready-made modules as a basis of their teaching and continually adjust them based on the students' needs. Another recommendation is the scaffolding-based learning method and the sustenance of the English program that appreciates the cultural, social and linguistic assets students brought to the class.

Keywords: English vocabulary learning, primary school students, volunteer, community service

Abstrak

Kegiatan pengabdian masyarakat ini bertujuan memberikan pengajaran Bahasa Inggris dan modul pembelajaran kosakata Bahasa Inggris gratis kepada murid kelas 3 dan 4 sekolah dasar di sebuah komunitas belajar yang berlokasi di Duren Sawit Jakarta Timur melalui program mengajar selama enam minggu yang diintegrasikan dengan satu mata kuliah yang diberikan di Program Studi Magister Linguistik Terapan Bahasa Inggris Universitas Katolik Indonesia Atma Jaya. Sebanyak sepuluh mahasiswa berpartisipasi sebagai sukarelawan pengajar (bersama dengan para sukarelawan lain). Program ini merupakan kelanjutan dari program serupa yang dilaksanakan oleh penulis pertama pada periode Januari sampai dengan Juni 2019 (da Silva, 2020). Para mahasiswa pengajar ini menggunakan beberapa pendekatan dan metode mengajar berdasarkan prediksi mereka atas kebutuhan belajar para siswa. Para mahasiswa pengajar mengamati bahwa kelompok siswa yang satu memiliki kebutuhan belajar yang berbeda dengan kelompok siswa lain. Karena itu dibutuhkan pendekatan, materi dan aktivitas belajar yang berbeda untuk tiap kelompok agar mereka dapat pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris menjadi pengalaman yang menyenangkan. Direkomendasikan agar para sukarelawan pengajar berikutnya menggunakan modul pembelajaran yang telah dibuat yang penggunaannya disesuaikan dengan kebutuhan siswa. Selain itu, disarankan agar program ini tetap dilanjutkan dengan didasarkan pada metode *scaffolding* dan pandangan bahwa masing-masing siswa memiliki aset kultural, sosial dan linguistik yang berguna dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris.

Kata kunci: Pemelajaran kosakata bahasa Inggris, siswa SD, sukarelawan, pengabdian kepada masyarakat

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INTRODUCTION

Ever since it was regulated in the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture No.79 Year 2014 about the 2013 Local Content (Permendikbud Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia Nomor 79 Tahun 2014 tentang Muatan Lokal 2013, English has been a non-obligatory subject in Indonesian primary schools. One of the effects of the policy is the less or very limited exposure to English among Indonesian young children despite the importance of English mastery to survive in the globalizing world. For many affluent Indonesians, however, that may not significantly affect their children who can join big English courses, have private English tutors, use English at home with their parents, travel to the English-speaking countries regularly, or enjoy the English movies, songs, videos from the internet. Unfortunately, the policy may give negative effects to those who come from the low-income families, who have very limited access to commercial private courses or internet connection.

The limited exposure to English of those young students and its direct effects have raised some concerns from English teachers in Indonesia. It is doubted that Indonesian students will have the English ability that can be one important asset to compete in the global world and to participate in the development of the country (Madya, 2002). Fortunately, many who share the same concern, especially for the children who cannot afford the commercial English courses or access to English sources, have established free voluntarily learning centers sporadically. Some are funded by private companies, others by education concerned individuals, and many others by various communities. One of the voluntary-based learning centers is Bimbel Mita, which is located in Duren Sawit, East Jakarta, where the first author has taught English voluntarily (as part of her community service) since January 2019 (da Silva, 2020). Bimbel Mita was founded to give free English and Math lessons to primary and junior high school students from the low-economy level families.

A number of voluntary teachers have helped teaching in Bimbel Mita, some have taught for years. They come from wide ranges of ages and educational backgrounds. They have taught voluntarily and committed to give qualified free Math and English lessons. Most of the time the volunteers are available, but there are times when some are absent on the same day. When that happens, the coordinator usually takes charge. In other words, Bimbel Mita needs to hold a stable teaching program with sufficient number of teachers, with the availability of substitute teachers.

The Bimbel does not have their own teaching or learning modules. The teachers usually use the students' textbooks, buy their own textbook or use other materials from the internet or other sources. With the presence of curriculum for Math at the primary and junior high school levels and English for junior high school level, both teachers and students can have standardized materials from the above-mentioned learning sources. However, with the unavailability of curriculum for English subject at the primary level, the teaching and learning needs some guidelines, which is not available until this community service program was conducted. The present community service program intends to fill in the two gaps above.

PROCEDURE

Realizing an urgent need for a constant teaching and learning program at Bimbel Mita and to spread the social responsibility awareness movement, the first author integrated her community service program and one course (Approaches to English Language Learning) she taught at the Master Program of Applied English Linguistics in Atma Jaya Catholic University of Indonesia since August 2019. For that purpose, she designed the subject course outline that combined the master students' learning in the classroom with voluntary teaching at Bimbel Mita. At the Bimbel she was responsible to manage the English classes for the third and fourth graders, that were then divided into 4 groups: 3-A, 3-B, 4-A, and 4-B to match with the number of the voluntary student-teachers group. The number 3 and 4 referred to the elementary school levels, while the letters A and B indicated the period of students joining Bimbel Mita. Group B students joined Bimbel Mita earlier than group A.

Each of the master students (who were divided into four groups) were required to give individual teaching sessions for two times (with the teaching preparation, as well). Hence, each group had 6 teaching sessions during the first half of the semester. In addition to that, they were assigned to write reflective journals about one aspect of their teaching practices. Furthermore, responding to the need of Bimbel Mita, they had to create vocabulary learning modules with an essay describing the theoretical framework for the module writing at the end of the semester. The reflective journals would be used to assist them designing the lesson plans and modules in accordance to the students' level of English knowledge. Previous research found that doing and writing a reflection has assisted teachers to develop their pedagogical knowledge, explore teaching strategies, sharpen their classroom management skills and be self-critical in order to professionally develop themselves (Lan & Wang, 2013; Walsh, 2015). The first author monitored the students' teaching sessions and continued her own teaching session until December 2019. Only one out of the ten students were able to continue the teaching sessions until January 2020.

Several topics were taught during the period, with one topic for two sessions. The topics included, among others, alphabets, colors, shapes (2D and 3D), fruits and vegetables, tastes, public places, and careers. The teaching methods used were explanation of the topic in Indonesian language, which was mixed with English or in English language which was translated into Indonesian. Students were then asked to do activities related to the topics which included listening to the tutors' explanation, miming, answering oral questions, doing oral and written practices in worksheets, e.g., listening to songs and singing together, filling in the blanks, matching objects with the names, identifying names of objects, word searching, completing cross-word puzzles, counting, and doing simple grammar exercises (guided by the tutors). Some of the teaching learning tools prepared by the student-teachers included, among others, anagrams, flashcards, hands-on activities, realia, stickers, arts and crafts tools, and various games.

The general procedure of each lesson would usually began with the greetings, which was followed by some warming up activities that would involve simple but engaging games and stimuli-providers, an introduction of the materials of the day starting from the more basic language skills such as pronunciation/speaking (in being able to pronounce the specific words), to vocabulary (being able to recall the specific words), and to writing (being able to write the specific words). The introduction was

followed with some exercises. The sessions were ended with an evaluation of the lessons. When there was some spare time, students were asked to do activities related to art, such as drawing or coloring.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

During the entire community-service programs, the first author observed that student-teachers used a combination of teaching approaches in the teaching sessions. They were what Kumaravidevelu (2006) refers to as the post-method teachers. Though the main focus of their teaching is the English high-frequency vocabulary, they also used Behavioral Approach, Sociocultural Approach (Vygotsky, 1986), and Natural Approach (Krashen & Terrell, 1995). For instance, the grammar-translation method was adopted in combination with total physical response (TPR). Indonesian language was mostly used because the young students do not have a huge repertoire of English. Translation was also employed when instruction or explanation was given in English. Translation was viewed as a way to invite students' participation and to ensure their comprehension of the materials. For low lever beginners of English, translation has been proved to have and develop positive views towards the English learning despite their lack of vocabulary knowledge (Lee, 2018). The student-teachers also valued the students as capable individuals bringing their social, linguistic and cultural aspects from home (Colombo, Tigert & Leider, 2019). The summary of the teaching sessions is presented in the next paragraphs.

Group 3-A student-teachers taught vocabulary related to colors, shapes, fruits, and vegetables (see Picture 1). They also introduced the English alphabets to the students. The lessons that were taught focused more on vocabulary and still relied on repetition. Group 3-B student-teachers also started with more or less the same themes but had more complex activities and exercises. The tutors for these group adopted multimodal teaching (Kaminski, 2019) in which there was a variety of modes used for teaching the vocabulary related to the themes, e.g., movements, sounds, songs, images, texts. They provided assorted teaching tools to exemplify the teaching materials and arouse students' interest, e.g., real and toy fruits and vegetables, watercolor paint, drawing sheets, coloring sheets, cooking ingredients, top hat, song player, and children videos. Pictures, texts and realia were mostly used by the teachers of these groups, but not songs. Factually, research has found that songs could enhance the learning of vocabulary among young learners (Coyle & Gracia, 2014). It would be good to have songs to open or end every session for the future.

Group 4-A student-teachers also adopted multimodal learning (Grapin, 2019) that emphasized the integration of images, gestures, movements, music, and film as the media for teaching and learning. The tutors also integrated four main language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing and considered the young learners' characteristics in designing the lessons. Therefore, varied teaching techniques were used, e.g., games, coloring activities, and watching videos. With regard to the teaching tools, in addition to providing vocabulary worksheets, they also brought real cooking ingredients and food and videos played in their laptops. They taught some grammatical aspects inductively. Thornbury (1999) proposed that learners at first study the example and then from the examples they derive their rule formulation themselves. Students have to be introduced to the grammar rules by experiencing using the language first (Nunan,

1991). Group 4-B tutors provided the students with the same learning themes as group 4-A. However, the students in the former group were given more complex materials (see Picture 2).



Picture 1.

One student-teacher in Group 3B was teaching vocabulary related to shape



Picture 2.

Students in Group 4B were learning about words related to professions

As previously mentioned, the student-teachers also created English modules for each level (see Picture 3 for an example). Each module fitted 20 meetings and had 7-10 topics to discuss. The module adapted integrated learning, in which one unit covered

listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills as well as vocabulary and grammar. The modules also provided some teaching aids such as flashcards, songs, games, and written exercises. At the end of this module, the tutors also provided final assessments. Prior to the module making, the first author emphasized the issue of materials authenticity, which includes acknowledgment to the sources used (Clavel-Arroitia Fuster-Márquez, 2014). The student-teachers were given freedom to be creative as long as they adjust the content to their students' English knowledge and interest. The criteria of assessing the modules (which were shared in the first lecture) were layout, content, theoretical framework, accuracy, and mechanics. It was expected that the module making process incorporated the reflection of the teaching sessions and the topics they learned in the semester. The hardcopies of the four modules were given to the Bimbel organizer in January 2020.



Picture 3. Cover and table of contents of Module 3A

Making the module was quite challenging for the tutors. Not only because it was the first time for most of them, but they also had to find, discuss and match one's ideas with the others' in quite a limited time. In addition, creating meaningful and interesting modules for that can be interesting and arousing the young learners' motivation to learn English was not simple. A lot of reading, reflection and discussion with team members were required. Overall, the modules that the student-teachers made were attractive and enjoyable. They provided clear instruction (one module gave both English and Indonesian instruction) a lot of pictures, big-font size letters, sufficient spaces between sections, adequate exercises with answer keys, and glossaries. It may be a great idea to develop the modules into textbooks in the future.

In general, the teaching sessions ran well despite of the various background of the student-teachers (see Table 1). Half of the student-teachers were English teachers. The other half were entrepreneurs or full-time student. However, the various background did not hinder them from creating standard lesson plans, giving interesting teaching sessions with various techniques and getting acquainted with the students they barely

knew and adjusting themselves well with the venue and the senior tutors in Bimbel Mita. As a matter of fact, they were warmly welcome and highly appreciated by the tutors, organizers and founders of the Bimbel. One organizer admitted that after the presence of these ten student-teachers, there were visits and donation from several parties. Some new volunteers also came to help teaching at the Bimbel.

Table 1.
Student-teachers educational, professional and nationality backgrounds

No	Initials	Education background (Bachelor)	Profession	Nationality
1	AA	Psychology	Entrepreneur	Indonesian
2	AP	English Education	Artist	Indonesian
3	FV	English Education	Entrepreneur	Indonesian
4	GP	English Education	English teacher	Indonesian
5	HR	Economics Education	Research assistant	Indonesian
6	HK	Spanish and English Translation	Full-time student	Korean
7	MV	Economy	Accounting teacher	Indonesian
8	MP	English literature	English teacher	Indonesian
9	SM	English Education	English teacher	Indonesian
10	YY	English Literature	English teacher	Indonesian

CONCLUSIONS

Learning from the teaching sessions, we conclude that not only every group has different learning needs, but also every student, which is why future tutors may need to examine the specific needs of their students before teaching. The modules will serve as a guideline for future tutors to teach English and evaluate their learning. A variety of learning approaches need to be implemented and Indonesian should be used to learn English. To improve the quality of Bimbel Mita, it is important that the organizers pay more attention to the learning circumstances. The spaces may be too small for all the students. Because the classrooms are not separated by any partitions, it was usually noisy and may distract the students' concentration. The high absenteeism of some students was quite problematic because tutors had to explain the old materials twice while they had planned to teach new materials to the students. Perhaps the organizer may find a way to discipline the students to come regularly to Bimbel Mita, for instance by giving some rewards or consult the matter with the parents.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to thank Atma Jaya Catholic University of Indonesia who has funded the community service program in the year of 2019.

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