

# ABDIMAS

Jurnal Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat  
<https://journal.unnes.ac.id/nju/index.php/abdimas/>

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## Equipping Teachers and Staff with General English Skills: A Community Service

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### Abstract

In today's globalized world, school teachers and staff need to equip themselves with English skills not only for the classroom but also for broader communication. This community service program aimed to improve their general English competence for daily interactions by involving teachers and administrative staff of a private elementary school in Salatiga. The program began with a needs analysis through interviews to identify their English language needs. Based on these findings, the materials were designed and delivered using learner-centered methods. The training was conducted over five sessions, each lasting about 100 minutes, and incorporated technology to enhance engagement. As a result of the training, the participants reported positive benefits for their daily activities at school.

**Keywords:** community service, need analysis, general English, learner-centered method

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### INTRODUCTION

With globalization, the demand for English as an international language and lingua franca continues to grow across various fields, including education. In addition to the need to use the language to support learning in the classroom, increasing international contacts both physically and virtually also requires teachers and staff to develop basic English for interaction. These general language skills will not only enhance the ability to use English for specific purposes but also increase the confidence of the user to be able to move to a higher level of language competence. Therefore, basic English training is a necessary foundation to build school staff's language capacity and gradually progress to higher English language proficiency.

Given the importance of general English and language awareness, it is essential for community service programs to provide training to those involved in education. In English as a foreign language (EFL) settings, many individuals lack confidence in speaking English, even when engaging in everyday conversations. According to Gan (2012) there are several factors that influence this, one of which is the lack of exposure to English, making it difficult to speak the language. Therefore, it is important to provide English training not just in single sessions, but continuously, as stated by Putri, et al (2023), so that the benefits received can be maximized.

The present community program was conducted at a private institution consisting of a kindergarten and elementary school in the city of Salatiga. This school has been established for a long time and has received an A accreditation. With this in mind, it is necessary to maintain this rating and improve services, especially in relation to the use of English in various aspects of school services from both teachers and education personnel. This community service program was preceded by a request from the school for English language training for both teachers and staff.

This community service program addressed the need for English for daily communication skills for teachers and staff outside the classroom, including for communicating with parties from outside the school using English both orally and in writing. However, most teachers and staff lacked basic English skills. Although there were several English teachers, they also did not have opportunities to practice general English functions in daily situations. With this in mind, there is a need for general English language training to enhance their ability to improve their basic education services to the community. The training, attended by 18 school personnels, was focused on speaking skills for general interaction, while also incorporating listening and reading skills relevant to daily communication. The materials were basic and designed for practical everyday use.

## METHOD

According to Basturkmen (2020), ESP course development consists of three stages: research on learner needs, investigation of specialist language use, and the design of course teaching and materials. In an earlier, widely cited framework, Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) identify key stages in ESP as “needs analysis, course (and syllabus) design, materials selection (and production), teaching and learning, and evaluation” (p.121). These steps are interdependent and may be overlapping. According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987) there are two types of evaluation. The first one is learner assessment, which, as in any language course, involves evaluating students' performances at strategic points in the course, for example, at the beginning or at the end of the course. The second is course evaluation, which assesses whether the course objectives are being met - whether the course, in other words, is doing what it was designed to do. This type of evaluation should be a feature of any kind of ELT course.

The method of implementing this community service program in the form of English language training began with a needs analysis. Conducting a needs analysis is essential before training to identify the needs and background of the participants (Ramani & Pushpanathan, 2015). This process allows for a deeper exploration of English language needs of all the parties involved at the school. It was also deemed necessary to consider the background of the training participants, namely teachers and staff, to determine appropriate materials and levels.

The needs analysis was conducted through interviews with two teachers, one of whom was the appointed supervisor of the program. Following this stage, the team designed training methods and materials that aligned with the participants' needs. The materials were developed according to their English levels and tailored to relevant topics. Once the materials were finalized, the training was scheduled in agreement with both the participants and instructors. The training consisted of five sessions, each lasting approximately 100 minutes. Recognizing that these training sessions alone would not be sufficient for developing their basic English skills, the instructors encouraged the participants to practice independently during day-to-day office hours. To enhance engagement, the training methods were designed to be interesting and varied. The final stage was evaluation, which according to Souliisa et al. (2022) refers to a process to assess the learning process and identify areas for improvements.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section will explain the steps implemented in the community service in more detail.

### ***Needs analysis***

The needs analysis conducted with the two English teachers served as the foundation for designing the English training program. The two-hour interview covered topics such as the perceived purpose of training, the participants' number and educational backgrounds, and situations where English would be used. The discussions emphasized the need for beginner-level material, reflecting the participants' limited proficiency in English. The teachers stressed the importance of a practical and activity-based approach to ensure participants could immediately apply their learning in real-life situations. This preference is consistent with the principles of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), which focus on developing language skills directly relevant to learners' professional or situational contexts (Aliya, 2024).

In ESP, needs analysis is a critical component that ensures the relevance and effectiveness of language instruction. It involves identifying specific linguistic and communicative requirements based on the learners' roles and the environments in which they operate (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). In this regard, the present program's needs analysis identified several key areas of English usage necessary for teachers and staff to perform their routine duties more effectively. These included greetings, making and responding to requests, describing locations, giving directions, expressing opinions and feelings, and language awareness in social media. These areas reflect the dual focus of ESP: addressing immediate communication needs and preparing learners for broader linguistic challenges in their specific fields. By focusing on practical topics and everyday scenarios, the training directly supported the participants' professional and social communication.

The use of needs analysis in this program aligns well with established ESP methodologies. Mohamed et al. (2024) assert that ESP requires a thorough understanding of what learners need to achieve in their specific contexts. The process not only identifies the skills and knowledge gaps but also highlights the teaching approaches that will most effectively address these needs. In this case, the analysis informed the program structure, which included five sessions, each dedicated to a specific topic.

The appropriateness of this approach lies in its alignment with the core principles of needs analysis in ESP. By focusing on practical outcomes, the program addressed challenges such as low confidence and

limited exposure to English, which are common barriers in similar contexts (Masdianti et al., 2024). Moreover, the integration of relevant content ensured that participants could see the immediate utility of their learning, which is a central goal of ESP. As Hutchinson and Waters (1987) assert, effective needs analysis not only informs the content of instruction but also motivates learners by demonstrating the connection between their learning and real-world applications.

In conclusion, the findings from the needs analysis underscore its critical role in ESP program design. The analysis allowed for a targeted approach, ensuring that the training met the specific linguistic and communicative demands of the participants. By focusing on practical, context-driven language instruction, the program supported both immediate skill acquisition and the development of participants' confidence in using English. This alignment between the needs analysis, ESP principles, and the training outcomes demonstrates the program's efforts to effectively address the unique needs of the learners.

### ***Course Design***

Based on the results of the needs analysis, the course design focused on several key areas of general English usage necessary for teachers and staff to perform their daily duties more effectively. These included:

#### ***1. Greetings***

Creating a welcoming atmosphere and managing daily interactions with colleagues, students, and visitors necessitates proper greetings. Examples include formal and informal salutations, such as "Good morning," "Hello," and "Hi." Understanding the pragmatic nuances of greeting expressions is vital for establishing rapport and setting a positive tone in the workplace.

#### ***2. Making and Responding to Requests***

Facilitating classroom management and administrative tasks often requires making and responding to requests effectively. Phrases like "Can you please..." or "I need..." demonstrate politeness and professionalism. Additionally, knowing how to respond appropriately—e.g., "Of course" or "Sure thing"—enhances communication and fosters cooperation.

#### ***3. Describing Locations***

Assisting others within the school premises demands descriptive abilities. Teachers and staff need to describe rooms, corridors, classrooms, and facilities accurately using phrases like "the room is located on the second floor" or "you'll find the library next door."

#### ***4. Giving Directions***

Navigating oneself and others around the school requires giving clear directions. Using cardinal directions ("turn left") along with landmarks ("near the cafeteria") ensures that individuals reach their destinations without confusion.

#### ***5. Expressing Opinions and Feelings***

Participating in discussions and fostering better communication necessitate expressing opinions and feelings constructively. Phrases like "I agree/disagree because..." or "That makes me happy/unhappy" encourage active participation and empathy.

### ***Material Selection***

Material development is a dynamic process that aims to produce effective teaching resources that promote meaningful learning experiences. A variety of elements must be carefully taken into consideration when developing materials for language instruction in order to ensure effectiveness and relevance to the needs of the learners. Aligned with Basturkmen's idea, this step must be based on careful learners' needs assessment and identification of the specialist language use.

The development of teaching materials aligns with methodological principles that emphasize practical application in language teaching. As highlighted in the literature on materials development, particularly by Tomlinson (2011), effective materials should be grounded in specific methodological principles that focus on authentic language use and learner engagement. For instance, materials should expose learners to language in authentic contexts, allowing them to engage with real-world scenarios. Encouraging genuine communication through meaningful tasks fosters interaction among learners, which is essential for language acquisition. Additionally, providing opportunities for learners to receive feedback on their performance enhances their learning process, enabling them to refine their skills effectively. Furthermore, materials should be designed to ensure a logical progression of skills while maintaining coherence across lessons. It involves structuring lessons so that each builds upon the previous one, gradually increasing complexity with necessary scaffolding, for instance by integrating essential vocabulary. By adhering to these methodological principles during material development, educators can create resources that not

only meet the identified needs but also promote effective language learning experiences. This principled approach ensures that materials are not only relevant but also pedagogically sound, ultimately leading to improved outcomes for learners.

### ***Teaching and Learning***

The training sessions were designed with a learner-centered approach, focusing on making participants active contributors to their learning process. This method emphasizes the involvement of learners by addressing their needs, preferences, and experiences, allowing them to build their skills in a meaningful way (Brown, 2001). In this context, the participants—teachers and school staff—were given opportunities to practice English in ways that aligned with their professional responsibilities and daily interactions.

The five-session program addressed topics identified through the needs analysis, including greetings, making requests and permissions, giving directions, expressing opinions and feelings, and raising awareness of language use on social media. These topics were selected to ensure relevance and practicality, helping participants connect the material to their work environment. Activities were crafted to be interactive, engaging, and accessible, reflecting the principles of a learner-centered classroom, which prioritizes participation, collaboration, and real-world application (Shah & Basnyat, 2024).

In the session on greetings, participants practiced formal and informal exchanges through role-plays and dialogue readings. Realistic scenarios, such as greeting an international teacher or welcoming visitors, allowed participants to experiment with the language in a supportive environment. Another example is, when practicing giving directions, the learners were asked to explain how to get to particular places within the school or around the city. Additionally, the learners were also given fill-in-the-blank exercises to encourage them to apply key phrases in new contexts, promoting active involvement and retention. According to Moore (2024), activities that simulate authentic communication are essential for learner-centered approaches because they give participants a chance to use language in ways that mirror real-life situations.

The session on making requests and giving permissions incorporated a variety of activities designed to encourage interaction and practical use. Wordwall games were used to match key phrases like “Could I...?” or “May I...?” with appropriate responses, creating a fun and competitive atmosphere. Role-playing tasks allowed participants to practice these phrases in realistic school-based scenarios, such as asking for leave or requesting classroom resources. Small group activities ensured that participants could practice collaboratively, a hallmark of learner-centered classrooms that focus on cooperation and peer learning (Ramos, 2024).



Fig. 1. Participants presented their conversation about making requests and giving permission.

In the session on expressing locations and giving directions, participants worked with tools like Mentimeter and Wordwall to connect prepositions of place to specific school locations. Activities included describing the locations of classrooms, offices, and other common areas. Using visual aids and interactive games ensured that participants with diverse learning styles could engage with the material. Research shows that such multimodal learning approaches cater to different preferences, improving both comprehension and engagement (Pan, 2024).

Expressing opinions and feelings was another key focus of the training. The session began with a light-hearted activity using the "Wheel of Names" to introduce relatable topics such as teaching preferences or favorite school events. Paired debates allowed participants to practice constructing sentences with phrases like “I think...” or “In my opinion...” in a conversational setting. Role-playing scenarios were also used to provide a supportive environment for participants to express themselves. These activities aligned with learner-centered practices by allowing participants to actively engage in meaningful communication

while building their confidence.



Fig. 2. Participants expressed their opinions on the topics displayed on the wheel of names.

Throughout the training, the learner-centered approach guided the selection and execution of activities. By using tools like Mentimeter, Wordwall, and interactive games, the training catered to different learning styles and created a dynamic classroom environment. Activities such as role-playing, group discussions, and collaborative tasks placed participants at the center of the learning process, encouraging them to take ownership of their progress.

As Pan (2024) explains, learner-centered teaching shifts the focus from the teacher to the learners, making them active participants who engage with the material in ways that are meaningful to them. This approach not only builds language skills but also promotes confidence and independence in using the language. By emphasizing practical application and interaction, the training sessions successfully supported participants in developing their English skills in a way that was directly applicable to their roles and responsibilities.

## ***Evaluation***

The feedback collected from participants in the training sessions indicates that the program was well-received, with participants providing positive responses about its content and delivery. They described the training as “good” and “interesting,” reflecting its success in meeting their expectations and engaging them throughout the sessions. This positive reception highlights the effectiveness of the learner-centered approach, which emphasizes active participation and considers learners' needs and experiences as the foundation of the instructional process (Brown, 2001; Weimer, 2013).

Participants particularly appreciated that the training materials were aligned with their requests and structured in an engaging way. As one participant (P4) noted, “the learning materials were in line with what we had requested and were packaged with activities that were not boring.” However, one participant suggested more variety in material delivery. One aspect we captured through our reflection was, while our activities in a session were variative, variations of structures and activities across sessions could be improved.

This also underscores the importance of designing more diverse learning experiences to accommodate different learning preferences (Tomlinson, 2011). By incorporating multimedia tools, real-life examples, and authentic materials, future training sessions can enhance learner engagement and satisfaction even further.

All the participants praised the teaching techniques, describing them as effective and engaging. The instructors created a safe space for the participants to practice English. One instructor mentioned encouraging them to embrace mistakes as part of growth in language learning. Additionally, the use of interactive activities, role-playing, and group discussions allowed learners to actively practice language skills in realistic contexts. These techniques are crucial in a learner-centered approach, which promotes deeper learning by encouraging learners to construct knowledge through meaningful interaction (Nunan, 1988). One participant (P4) remarked “I certainly gained knowledge about English, its usage, and pronunciation.” This feedback highlights the program’s success in addressing essential areas of language development, including grammar, usage, and pronunciation.

Despite these successes, some participants encountered challenges during the training. While two participants reported no difficulties, three others identified issues such as limited vocabulary mastery and slow response times in discussions. One participant (P2) stated, “I lack mastery over English vocabulary,

but this training program is good [for me]." Vocabulary limitations are a common challenge among learners at beginner and intermediate proficiency levels, as these gaps can hinder communication and fluency (Nation, 2013).

To overcome these challenges, participants mentioned several strategies, including expanding vocabulary through online resources such as Google. One participant (P2) suggested "[increasing] English vocabulary by learning from Google." Digital tools such as language apps, online dictionaries, and video tutorials can offer access to vocabulary in diverse contexts and provide opportunities for self-directed learning (Godwin-Jones, 2018). Instructors' efforts to foster engagement in learning activities and to practice without fear of mistakes was also highlighted as an important strategy for overcoming these challenges. As Dörnyei (2003) suggests, creating a supportive and positive learning environment can boost learners' motivation and confidence, enabling them to take risks and improve their skills.

The feedback suggests that the training successfully met participants' immediate needs, particularly in improving their pronunciation and practical language use. However, the identified challenges highlight areas for further improvement. To address these, future sessions could integrate more diverse teaching materials, such as interactive multimedia resources, authentic texts, and gamified learning activities, to maintain engagement and cater to varied learning styles (Reinders & Benson, 2017). Additionally, a stronger emphasis on vocabulary building through explicit instruction and self-directed learning strategies could help participants overcome their difficulties in this area.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the training program effectively addressed the participants' expectations and enhanced their language skills, particularly in practical communication and pronunciation. The positive feedback on teaching methods and content indicates that the learner-centered approach was instrumental in achieving these outcomes.

The alignment of the program with principles of needs analysis and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) further highlights its value as a model for similar initiatives in other contexts. By tailoring content to meet learners' specific requirements and employing innovative teaching strategies, the program bridged skill gaps and empowered participants to succeed in both professional and social interactions.

To build on this success, future sessions could benefit from incorporating more diverse materials, encouraging vocabulary expansion, and fostering active participation over a longer period. Continuous feedback from participants will also help ensure the program remains responsive to their evolving needs. These adjustments will strengthen the program's impact, ensuring its sustainability and long-term effectiveness for learners.

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