

ENGAGING ORPHANAGE CHILDREN IN BASIC ENGLISH LEARNING THROUGH FUN ACTIVITIES: PANTI YAYASAN RUMAH CAHAYA BARU

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Abstract

Children living in orphanages often face various limitations, both in terms of facilities, individual attention, and affectionate emotional guidance. the lack of affectionate guidance because foster mothers who have to look after many other foster children sometimes do not have enough ability However, it cannot be denied that orphanage institutions must have done the maximum to help the development of their foster children. For this reason, the dedication must be carried out. This community service aims to encourage children in orphanages to continue learning English. This community service activity aims to fulfill the public relations course and help the new light house Foundation orphanage, by providing game-based communicative English training for children at the foundation. This community service also aims to help orphanage children communicate using English orally and in writing better. This service is carried out for orphanage children with a total of 15 participants and an age range of 6-13 years so that the play method is very suitable for them.

Keywords: *Orphanage children, English learning, Fun Learning, play-based method, Game-based learning.*

Introduction

Naturally, a child is nurtured and raised in a united family, where parents act as the primary caregivers and provide full guidance, love and support for the child's growth. But not all children have that opportunity. Some children have to be cared for outside of their original family, such as through orphanages, due to various situations, such as loss of parents or financial problems. (dalam & 2023, n.d.) Despite the benefits, childcare institutions in orphanages also pose risks to children's development. The limited number of caregivers compared to the number of children in care is a problem. This results in a lack of genuine guidance and individualized attention that each child should receive.

If there is an unbalanced ratio of caregivers to children, it is often difficult to meet the emotional and educational needs of the children, despite the orphanage's best efforts to care for and educate the children.(Ilham et al., 2023). Under these circumstances, orphanages are the perfect place for community service initiatives. It is hoped that the children living in the orphanage will receive additional support that helps them grow emotionally, socially, and academically with the participation of various parties, including educators and volunteers.

The Rumah Cahaya Baru Foundation orphanage is one of the institutions inhabited by children of various ages and backgrounds. Most of them lost their parents, while others live in orphanages due to the economic limitations of families who are unable to meet their living and educational needs. Based on these conditions, this community service is designed to provide support in the field of education, especially basic English learning packaged through fun learning methods that are fun and easy to understand. It is hoped that this activity can increase learning motivation and provide positive experiences for orphanage children.

Literature Review

English is an international language that is widely spoken in many countries, including Indonesia. English is taught as a compulsory subject from elementary school to college. If they want to have greater opportunities in the future, they need to be able to speak English well.(Ilham et al., 2023)The ability to speak English helps to get jobs and college education, both domestically and abroad. As a result, children's English learning is very important and needs special attention. In particular, children living in orphanages, starting from those who are children to adults, who experience various social problems.(Ilham et al., 2023)

English language learning for children in orphanages requires an approach that is appropriate to their psychological and social nature. Children in orphanages often face limited facilities, lack of individual attention, and lack of consistent emotional guidance, so learning strategies that are not only cognitive but also affective and social are needed

Previous research shows that the use of fun learning approaches, also known as playful learning, can increase students' interest, motivation and active engagement in the learning process (Ahmada et al., 2023)a et al., 202(Ramdan & Febianti, 2024)3; Fun learning typically uses songs, games, motor movements and visual activities to help children understand the material indirectly in a fun and familiar way.

The assumption that learning is difficult also contributes to the low desire of children to diligently learn so that causes inhibition of the development of children. Therefore, we try to implement learning activities that are fun so that children can be more interested in learning. A good strategy in learning is one of the ways that can improve children's ability and willingness to learn.

Methodology

The method of service activities that we carry out uses an educational and interactive approach that is tailored to the age, characteristics, and psychological and educational needs of children at the Rumah Cahaya Foundation orphanage. This activity is intended to be a fun and non-stressful learning atmosphere, and to foster the enthusiasm and self-confidence of children at the Rumah Cahaya Foundation orphanage. To carry out this activity, there are several teaching techniques that we use, including:

1. This learning through play method that we designed to help the children at Rumah Cahaya Foundation orphanage learn basic English through various fun and non-boring activities. Some of our methods include:

- a. Singing English songs such as If You're Happy and ABC Song to introduce vocabulary musically.
- b. Games such as word stacking, color guessing, and number blocks can help improve memory, logic, and comprehension of words, colors, and numbers in English.



Figure . 1 This learning through play method that we designed to help the children at Rumah Cahaya Foundation orphanage learn basic English through various fun and non-boring activities.

- c. Songs and brain exercises for children are meant to improve concentration, agility, and fun while learning.



Figure . 2 This learning through play method that we designed to help the children at Rumah Cahaya Foundation orphanage learn basic English through various fun and non-boring activities.

2. Participatory and Collaborative Methods

We designed this method to encourage the participation and cooperation of children in Rumah Cahaya Foundation orphanages both individually and in groups. Children at Rumah Cahaya Foundation orphanage are expected to participate directly in each session by answering questions, playing, and talking and discussing together. The aim is to increase the spirit of cooperation, improve social interaction, and increase confidence in communication, especially with new basic English vocabulary.



Figure . 3 Participatory and Collaborative Methods.

3. Visual and Motor Strengthening

The coloring and drawing process that we will carry out is expected to help introduce and strengthen the understanding of vocabulary related to colors, shapes, and objects. This activity also improves children's hand-eye coordination, fine motor skills, and imagination. In early childhood learning, incorporating visual aspects helps children remember images and colors.



Figure . 4 Visual and Motor Strengthening.

4. Using Audio-Visual Media

We take children to watch fairy tales in English to enhance their learning experience. Audio-visual media like this really helps children understand vocabulary, pronunciation and the context in which words are used in sentences. Engaging visual stories help children understand the storyline and naturally acquire new vocabulary.

Findings

The community service activity entitled “Engaging Orphanage Children in Basic English Learning through Fun Activities” was successfully carried out on July 16-17, 2025 at the Rumah Cahaya Baru Foundation Orphanage, Medan. With a total of 15 mixed students who live in the Rumah Cahaya Foundation orphanage as participants. The activity took place according to the schedule that had been designed and received a good response from the

orphanage and the children participating in the activity. There are also some results from this service activity as follows.

1. Increased Children's Excitement and interest

The children's enthusiasm increased significantly during the activity. The children were eager and curious about the activities from the very beginning. They actively participated in every session, including the singing activities and educational games. They were very interested in activities such as singing If You're Happy, ABC Song, and word stacking games. Even children who initially looked shy eventually began to speak up, smile, and interact with their friends and the people helping them. This enthusiasm shows that fun learning methods can foster children's enthusiasm for learning, self-confidence, and active involvement during the learning process.



Figure . 5 Visual and Motor Strengthening.

2. Basic Understanding of English

The song and game-based method helps the children of Rumah Cahaya Foundation orphanage begin to understand basic English vocabulary. All materials, including the alphabet, numbers, and colors, are delivered gradually and contextually. It appears that the children have the ability to repeat the vocabulary that has been taught, both individually and in small groups. Some children can easily name words such as “red”, “blue”, “two”, “A”, and “B.” Thematic songs are useful for improving their memory of the sounds and meanings of words. The results of this activity, which lasted only two days, show that interactive and visual learning can give positive results in a relatively short time, especially in terms of basic English comprehension. The children even enjoyed repeating ABC every time.



Figure . 6 Basic Understanding of English.

3.Social and Motor Skill Development

The development of children's social and motor skills is strongly influenced by physical and creative activities such as coloring, drawing, and word building (Ahmada et al., 2023). They learn how to hold stationery correctly, choose colors, and complete tasks independently and in groups although sometimes the children of the Rumah Cahaya Foundation orphanage sometimes have difficulties both in using stationery and also in English pronunciation. Their ability to communicate, help each other, and share roles is also influenced by playing and learning together. Team games showed beneficial interactions, such as talking, taking turns, and supporting each other. This shows that this service activity develops children's cognitive skills in addition to improving their character and social skills. During group learning we also asked them to create creative and interesting group chants using English, to hone their thinking skills and creativity.

4. Positive Response from the Orphanage

The management of the orphanage appreciated and gave a positive response to the activities that had been carried out. This activity provides a new atmosphere that is very fun for the children, according to them. The administrators said that the learning approach used in this activity is different from the daily learning approach because it combines elements of entertainment, interaction and play. Even after the activity was over, the children remained cheerful, active and engaged. The center hopes that similar activities can be conducted again in the future with different themes and materials. Respondents indicated that this service activity is not only beneficial for the children but also helps with the non-formal education goals at this Rumah Cahaya Foundation orphanage.



Figure . 7 Positive Response from the Orphanage.

Discussion

This community service activity at the Rumah Cahaya Foundation Home shows that an activity-based learning approach (fun learning) is very effective in increasing children's interest and engagement, especially young learners. Children aged six to twelve have short attention spans, need visual and motion stimulation, and are passionate about games and music. Therefore, conventional approaches, which are too monotonous and only focus on speech or memorization, are not effective here. (*View of Teaching New Vocabulary to Elementary School Children at The Orphanage to Increase Their Interest and Insight in English Lessons*, n.d.). However, it has been proven that learning that incorporates elements of play, music, visuals and social interaction is better able to meet their overall learning needs.

These activities affect children's affective and social traits in addition to their cognitive aspects. Positive emotional connections arise when children and facilitators and others interact. (Ramdan & Febianti, 2024) Children feel valued, cared for, and have the freedom to speak without worrying about being wrong. These conditions are crucial for the psychological growth of children in orphanages, who often need a safe and supportive environment to grow properly. In addition to learning English, this activity teaches them social values such as cooperating, listening, waiting their turn, and respecting others. These values are very important in everyday life.

In addition, the results of this activity show that English learning for young children should be centered on fun language experiences rather than quick achievements or mastery of complex grammatical structures. Children can learn language through songs and games subconsciously, which can eventually form a strong language foundation. The attitudinal changes and increased interest in learning seen from this activity, even though it only lasted two days, shows that this activity is worth expanding both in terms of duration and variety of methods.

Finally, the assistance of the orphanage administrators was also crucial to the success of this initiative. The positive responses and the desire to conduct similar activities in the future show that this community service is not just a short-term program; it can also be a model for long-term cooperation between educational institutions and the community in improving the literacy and welfare of children, especially those from marginalized environments. This is in line with the purpose of community service as a tangible form of contribution and academics in solving social problems in an inclusive and humanist manner.

Conclusion

The community service activity themed “Engaging Orphanage Children in Basic English Learning through Fun Activities” which was held at the Rumah Cahaya Baru Foundation Orphanage on July 16-17, 2025 was successfully implemented and had a positive impact. The children showed improvement in their enthusiasm for learning, mastery of basic vocabulary, social and motor skills, and mastery of educational songs and games.

Children who are considered young learners from marginalized groups show remarkable progress in confidence, engagement in activities, and comprehension of English words. Informal learning methods that focus on creative activities have been shown to be more effective than conventional approaches that tend to be monotonous in delivering foreign language materials to young children.

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