

Increasing Interest in English at SDN 040537 Rawang School

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Abstract

Elementary school children generally have the desire to improve their English language skills by learning through vocabulary, singing, etc. The Community Service Institute (LP2M) Santo Thomas Catholic University, North Sumatra acts as a partner in implementing this program. One part of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education is community service, which includes teaching, research and useful programs. Teaching English is considered important because English is one of the foreign language subjects that must be mastered in today's global world. English is included in the language of instruction most commonly used by the public, however for elementary school (SD) children, especially those aged 6-12 years, it is very permissible to use methods that attract their attention. The method that researchers use in this community service is the observation method. Observation is a technique that can be carried out accompanied by recording the condition or behavior of the target object.

Keywords

Elementary school children; English language skills; Vocabulary learning

Introduction

Teaching English is considered important because English is one of the foreign language subjects that must be mastered in today's world of education. English is part of the language of instruction most commonly used by the public. Especially for elementary school (SD) children aged 6-12 years, it is very permissible to use methods that attract their attention. The use of learning media can be an effective solution, but learning media is not always possible for teachers in the classroom, because sometimes teachers have difficulty understanding how to use this method, and there is a lack of supporting resources in the classroom such as a lack of projectors, etc.

One way to make students skilled in English is to invite students to be involved in every lesson. English as an international language is not strange if it is used in teachers' speech when teaching in class. The introduction of English from an early age has been implemented in many schools.

By inviting students to be active in class activities such as reading stories in English, listening to children's songs and understanding the meaning of basic words in English.

Teachers can also help students improve their English language skills by teaching students to be committed to themselves. Commitment is very necessary in anything, including the learning process. Start by making yourself confident that you are able to learn English to a certain level or until you are proficient in speaking the language.

In essence, you need to write down or create a goal that you will achieve in the future. Goals are very important so that you are focused in learning English. Therefore, in the context of this community service, we have developed a program aimed at increasing interest in English among elementary school children. This program is a form of positive contribution from the author to elementary school children in Aek Popo Village and can provide a positive relationship for the community with the Santo Thomas Catholic University, North Sumatra.

Methodology

Community service is a form of real contribution from students in helping and empowering the community, with the aim of improving the welfare and quality of life of the community. The subjects of service in this program are students, teachers, and the community around SDN 040537 Rawang. The author's main focus in community service is to improve the English language skills of participants, especially elementary school children. This includes enhancing skills in reading, writing, listening, and speaking in English.

This activity aims to provide benefits to the lives of students at SDN 040537 Rawang, both in the educational aspect, adding new interests and insights, as well as in the students' daily lives. Apart from improving English language skills, this activity also aims to increase the author's social awareness of the surrounding environment. The author also builds communication with the surrounding environment to understand the background of residents and their daily lives. By establishing a good relationship between local residents and the author, the process of community service activities can run smoothly.

The involvement of assisted subjects in the community planning and organizing process is very important for the success of this program. Some of the involvement of assisted subjects includes teachers as guides to students who carry out community service at SDN 040537 Rawang, students as implementing objects in community service activities carried out by students at Santo Thomas Catholic University, and the community as providers of housing for students who carry out community service.

To achieve the expected goals, we use observational research methods or strategies. The observations we made involved directly observing the physical condition of the school and the teaching and learning activities.

Findings

Activities carried out in this community service include teaching in the form of singing an English song, reading a text from someone's personal experience in English, inviting students to recite the story to help with their pronunciation, reflecting on the content of the story they read, and encouraging students to remember the vocabulary in the story. This community service activity was conducted from Friday, June 7 to Saturday, June 8, 2024. Below are the details of the lessons taught at SDN 040537 Rawang, Brand District, Karo Regency:

On Friday, June 7, 2024, the opening activities began at 07.30 with students, teachers, and coaches holding gymnastics together on the school field. The teacher introduced the trainer to the students and explained the background and purpose of the activity. This was followed by a joint prayer and the singing of a national song led by the students. The trainer then entered class 4a and class 3a according to the directions given by the SDN 040537 teacher.



Figure 1. First Day Documentation

In Class 4a, the core activities began with the trainer greeting the students and inviting them to pray before starting the lesson. The trainer invited the students to sing "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" and to participate in reciting the recount text entitled "Trip to the Mountain," correcting any wrong English pronunciation. The trainer then guided the students to draw conclusions from the story. For the closing activities in Class 4a, the trainer provided vocabulary from the recount text to increase their English vocabulary and asked the students to memorize the vocabulary, giving rewards for their achievements.

In Class 3a, the core activities began with the trainer introducing himself. The trainer invited the students to read the book "Thematic theme 9" about means of transportation and their uses. He explained the uses of different means of transportation and how to differentiate them according to their uses, showing pictures of all the means of transportation that had been studied. The closing activities included the trainer giving practice questions to the students.

On Saturday, June 8, 2024, the opening activities began at 07.30 with students, teachers, and coaches holding gymnastics together on the school field. Coaches then entered Class 5a according to the directions given by the Principal. The trainer opened the activity by praying and singing a national song led by two students. The trainer asked the students to introduce themselves one by one and share their hobbies.



Figure 2. Students' Activities

In the core activities, the trainer began by explaining material related to tolerance, culture, and language. The trainer asked the students to come forward one by one to sing regional songs and provided a picture matching problem for the students. For the closing activities, the trainer invited students to play a brain teaser game, concluded the activity by saying thank you, and asked the students to pray.

Discussion

From the perspective of the target audience, this teaching initiative is highly strategic for the students of SDN 040537 Rawang. The students at SDN 040537 Rawang have a limited understanding of basic English vocabulary due to the minimal use of English in their village environment, Aek Popo. This initiative aims to engage students in improving their English speaking skills through songs, story texts, and English vocabulary. This activity aligns with the objectives of the independent curriculum, which focuses on holistic and contextual learning for students. Organized by higher education institutions as part of community service, this initiative aims to empower the community by enhancing the students' abilities and contributing to their intellectual development. Therefore, the presence of our team in Aek Popo Village, Merek District, Karo Regency, is highly beneficial for teachers, parents, and the surrounding community.

Several factors motivate us to conduct community service activities at SDN 040537 Rawang. Firstly, introducing English to primary school students is crucial so that they can recognize and develop an interest in the language. Secondly, we aim to cultivate an interest in learning English not only in school but also by encouraging students to apply the vocabulary they have learned in their family, friends, and community environments. Thirdly, we continue the practice of community service previously carried out by our alumni. Lastly, the acceptance of the community and educators at SDN 040537, along with the children's ability to learn, greatly supports our efforts.

Teaching English poses challenges because some students struggle to understand Indonesian, some are not yet proficient in reading and writing, and trainers must follow the given lesson roster. As a result, some activities and objectives of the community service have been delayed.

After conducting the activities as outlined in our Community Service Report titled "Increasing Interest in English at SDN 040537 Rawang, Merek District, Karo Regency," several evaluations were made. Students have learned to pronounce, listen to, and write in English effectively. The children at SDN 040537 are motivated to learn new vocabulary, read in English, and sing English songs. Additionally, the students show great enthusiasm for learning and playing in the classroom.

Conclusion

The community service conducted at SDN 040537 Rawang has yielded significant positive outcomes. By strategically targeting the students, who initially had limited exposure to English, the program effectively engaged them in learning basic vocabulary and improving their speaking skills through interactive methods such as songs and story texts. This approach aligns with the objectives of the independent curriculum, aiming for holistic and contextual student learning.

The involvement of higher education institutions in this community service has proven beneficial, not only for the students but also for the teachers, parents, and the broader community of Aek Popo Village. The motivation behind this initiative stemmed from the importance of early English exposure, the desire to encourage learning beyond the classroom, and the continuation of successful past practices. The supportive response from the community and educators at SDN 040537 further facilitated the program's success.

Despite facing challenges such as language barriers and scheduling constraints, the community service achieved its primary objectives. Students have shown marked improvements in their English pronunciation, listening, and writing skills. Their enthusiasm for learning new vocabulary and engaging with English reading and songs demonstrates the program's effectiveness. The positive impact of this initiative underscores the importance of such community service activities in fostering educational development and enriching the lives of young learners.

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