

ENHANCING THE GRAMMAR PROFICIENCY OF INDONESIAN MIGRANT WORKERS IN MALAYSIA

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Abstrak

Dalam pengabdian masyarakat ini, masalah yang ditemukan di English Academy Bengkulu Malaysia (EABM) adalah rendahnya kualitas tata bahasa di kalangan pekerja migran Indonesia. Selain itu, aset yang dikembangkan untuk mengatasi masalah di atas adalah aset individu dalam bentuk instruktur karena instruktur memiliki peran penting dalam meningkatkan kualitas pembelajaran tata bahasa. Pengabdian masyarakat ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan kualitas pembelajaran tata bahasa di kalangan pekerja migran Indonesia dengan meningkatkan kompetensi instruktur. Metode yang digunakan dalam pengabdian masyarakat ini adalah ABCD (Asset-Based Community-Driven Development) dengan menggunakan dua tahap, yaitu: pertama, pemetaan aset dengan menggunakan pemetaan komunitas, dan kedua, seleksi aset dengan menggunakan skala low hanging fruit. Hasil dari pengabdian masyarakat ini adalah: (1) tahap persiapan yang meliputi penemuan masalah, pemetaan aset, penentuan aset, dan penentuan program pengabdian. (2) tahap pelaksanaan yang meliputi penguatan metodologi pembelajaran aktif bagi instruktur dan penggunaan lagu sebagai media pembelajaran. (3) tahap monitoring untuk menilai keberhasilan program, dengan keberhasilan yang ditandai dengan adanya peningkatan hasil belajar.

Kata kunci: *Pengabdian Masyarakat, Tata Bahasa, Pekerja Migran Indonesia.*

Abstract

In this community service, the problem at the English Academy Bengkulu Malaysia (EABM) was the low quality of grammar among Indonesian migrant workers. In addition, an asset developed to address the above problem was the individual asset in the form of instructors because instructors have a crucial role in improving the quality of grammar learning. This community service aimed to enhance the quality of grammar among Indonesian migrant workers by improving instructor competence. The method used in this community service was ABCD (Asset-Based Community-Driven Development) employing two stages, namely: first, asset mapping using community mapping, and second, asset selection using low hanging fruit scale. The results of this community service were: (1) the preparation stage which includes problem discovery, asset mapping, asset determination, and determination of community service programs. (2) the implementation stage which includes strengthening active learning methodologies for instructors and using songs as a learning medium. (3) the monitoring stage to assess the success of the program, with success indicated by improved grammar competence of participants during speaking sessions in the learning material preview.

Keywords: *Community Service, Grammar, Indonesian migrant workers.*



INTRODUCTION

PERMAI (Pertubuhan Masyarakat Indonesia) Penang is a non-governmental organization focused on empowering the Indonesian community in the northern region of Malaysia, including Penang Island, Kedah, and Perlis. As derived from its name, Permai Penang is a legally established organization whose members consist of Indonesians and some Malaysian residents living on Penang Island. The primary goal of PERMAI Penang is community empowerment in the areas of social, cultural, education, and training for Indonesian migrant workers.¹ The main target of this empowerment effort is Indonesian migrant workers employed in the industrial sector, as a significant portion of the Indonesian community in Penang is engaged in such employment. According to a report from the Indonesian Consulate General in Penang in 2020, Penang is a region in Malaysia that shares close geographical proximity to Indonesia, particularly Medan, and is economically attractive due to its industrial sector. Consequently, this has led to a significant number of Indonesian citizens residing and working in Penang.²

One of the program assets owned by Permai Penang is the English Academy Bengkulu Malaysia (EABM). EABM is an official institution under the auspices of Permai Penang that focuses on English language education for Indonesian migrant workers employed in Malaysia, specifically in the state of Penang. EABM was established in response to the challenges faced by Indonesian migrant workers abroad, particularly those working in the industrial sector, who lacked proficiency in the English language. According to a study by Maliki, the English language proficiency of Indonesian migrant workers is still inadequate, leading to difficulties in obtaining fair wages and a lack of competitiveness compared to foreign workers from other countries.³ This issue is also prevalent among Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia.

¹ Izzatul Iman Ayunda, "Sanggar Belajar PERMAI Penang: An Inclusive Community Learning Centre for Indonesian in Penang," *Iisma.Kemdikbud.Go.Id*, July 9, 2022, <https://iisma.kemdikbud.go.id/info/sanggar-belajar-permai-penang-an-inclusive-community-learning-centre-for-indonesian-in-penang/>.

² KJRI Penang, "Laporan Kinerja Konsulat Jenderal Republik Indonesia Penang 2020" (Penang: KJRI Penang, 2020), <https://kemlu.go.id/download/L1NoYXJlZCUyMERvY3VtZW50cy9MS2oIMjBLSlJlJTlWUGVvYW5nJTlWVEEIMjAyMDIwLnBkZg==>.

³ Musa Maliki et al., "Pelatihan Bahasa Inggris Pekerja Migran Indonesia Di Brunei Darussalam," *ABDI MOESTOPO: Jurnal Pengabdian Pada Masyarakat* 5, no. 1 (2022): 39–48.



According to data from the Penang State Statistics Department, labour wages in Penang are still categorized as low, averaging around 2,000 Ringgit for 12 hours of work.⁴ This aligns with the results of interviews with Indonesian migrant workers who revealed that their wages are still considered low compared to the cost of living in Penang.⁵

The primary activity of EABM is English language courses. In these courses, Indonesian migrant workers are trained to become proficient in English, with a particular emphasis on grammar and speaking skills. According to the manager of the English academy, grammar and speaking were chosen as the main focus for participants because these two aspects are the most practically needed English language skills for Indonesian migrant workers in performing their jobs in the industrial sector.⁶ Theoretically, grammar learning is crucial because, along with vocabulary, grammar structures words to form meaningful sentences that can be understood.⁷ Furthermore, according to Aflah, speaking proficiency is highly demanded in the workplace because one of the job requirements is having good English communication skills.⁸

However, during the teaching and learning activities at EABM, a problem was identified. Based on the observations conducted, it was found that some Indonesian migrant workers were struggling to absorb the grammar materials presented, as indicated by their difficulty in responding to questions from instructors during the lessons. The analysis from interviews with Indonesian migrant workers revealed several factors contributing to this issue. First, they did not understand what the instructors were conveying. Second, they grew bored with the teaching methods employed by the instructors, which mainly involved material presentation and assignments. Third, they felt less focused on their lessons due to fatigue resulting from attending classes at

⁴ Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia, "Laporan Sosioekonomi Negeri Pulau Pinang" (Putrajaya: Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia), accessed August 30, 2023, https://www.dosm.gov.my/v1/uploads/files/1_Articles_By_Themes/National%20Accounts/GDPbyState/2020/Laporan_Sosioekonomi_Pulau_Pinang_2019.pdf.

⁵ Ema Putri Tengkuh, dream masyarakat, July 7, 2023.

⁶ Agung Prihatin, aset EABM, July 8, 2023.

⁷ Bambang Suroso, "Grammar Dan Vocabulary Dalam Pembelajaran Reading," *Aktif* 11, no. 3 (2009).

⁸ Mita Nur Aflah and Eka Fajar Rahmani, "Analisa Kebutuhan (Need Analysis) Mata Kuliah Bahasa Inggris Untuk Mahasiswa Kejuruan," *Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa* 7, no. 1 (2018): 77–89.



EABM after a day of work. Furthermore, according to the EABM Permai manager's statement, the instructors at EABM are volunteers who do not have an educational background, which means they may not fully understand how to teach effectively as educators.⁹

From this point, the need for improving the quality of educational assets became apparent in this community engagement. The chosen program approach involves conducting guidance sessions for English Academy instructors by organizing collaborative teaching activities for Indonesian migrant workers. During these activities, instructors receive guidance and practical examples of how to make grammar teaching engaging. Thus, the target audience for this activity is the English academy instructors since educators play a pivotal role in the success of education as they are directly involved in curriculum development and implementation in the classroom.¹⁰

In this activity, educators were directed to implement English grammar teaching using active learning strategies and incorporated music as a teaching medium. According to Saleh as cited in Baharun, active learning was a strategy that required learners to actively engage in acquiring information and knowledge from various sources. This was done to encourage them to discuss and evaluate the material during the learning process in the classroom. In this way, learners had the opportunity to experience various learning situations, ultimately enhancing their skills. Additionally, this approach helped learners develop the ability to analyze and synthesize information, as well as formulate new ideas based on their analysis.¹¹ The implementation of active learning strategies was intended to ensure that Indonesian migrant workers actively engaged with the grammar learning process, enabling them to absorb the material more effectively. Furthermore, the use of music as a teaching medium was a strategy designed to instil happiness and enthusiasm in learners, stimulating them to approach their learning with greater zeal.¹²

⁹ Prihatin, aset EABM.

¹⁰ Rikha Rahmiyati Dhani, "Peran Guru Dalam Pengembangan Kurikulum," *Jurnal Serunai Administrasi Pendidikan* 9, no. 1 (2020): 45–50.

¹¹ Hasan Baharun, "Penerapan Pembelajaran Active Learning Untuk Meningkatkan Hasil Belajar Siswa Di Madrasah," *PEDAGOGIK: Jurnal Pendidikan* 1, no. 1 (2015).

¹² Cristie Febriyona, Tri Supartini, and Like Pangemanan, "Metode Pembelajaran Dengan Media Lagu Untuk Meningkatkan Minat Belajar Firman Tuhan," *Jurnal Jaffray* 17, no. 1 (2019): 123–40.



Thus, both of these methods were intended to address the issues faced by Indonesian migrant workers through the enhancement of educators' professionalism. Through the use of active learning strategies, Indonesian migrant workers could actively engage in the learning process, allowing instructors to gauge their comprehension levels and adjust the material accordingly. Meanwhile, the use of music as a teaching medium was aimed at capturing the interest of the migrant workers in the learning activities and also serving as a means of relaxation for them after a day of work.

METHOD

This community engagement utilized the ABCD (Asset-Based Community Development) method. According to Irawan as cited in Rosyida, community engagement programs using the ABCD method prioritize the management of assets and potentials within a community.¹³ According to Setyawan, the ABCD method is an effort to ensure that the community development process recognizes the vital role of individuals with all their potential and assets, with the goal of allowing these potentials to develop in line with individuals' capabilities. The ABCD approach is used to enhance the quality of human life by emphasizing a development concept that places humans as the primary drivers.¹⁴

In the context of community engagement with the ABCD technique, assets serve as the foundation for initiating community service activities. These assets do not necessarily have to be material; they can encompass everything possessed by a community.¹⁵ Similarly, Permai Penang follows the same approach. In the discovery of assets, several methods can be applied, one of which is community mapping. Based on the community mapping technique, the assets owned by Permai Penang can be categorized into three types: physical assets, social assets, and individual assets.

¹³ Fatia Ainur Rosyida and Ahmadi Ahmadi, "Inovasi Produk Puding Durian Untuk Meningkatkan Income Perkapita Masyarakat Desa Gambiran, Tulungagung," *InEJ: Indonesian Engagement Journal* 3, no. 1 (2022).

¹⁴ Herry Setyawan Wawan et al., *Asset Based Community Development (ABCD)* (Samarinda: PT. Gaptak Media Pustaka, 2022). 1

¹⁵ Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat IAIN Ponorogo, *Pedoman Kuliah Pengabdian Masyarakat Tahun 2023* (IAIN Ponorogo Press, 2023). 84



From the physical asset's perspective, Permai Penang possesses two distinct spaces. The first is the Learning Centre Permai, a room situated in the Bukit Jambul complex, Penang. This room serves as the primary location for activities organized by PERMAI, including EABM, Sanggar Bimbingan Permai, Al-Qur'an Academy, as well as various indoor events hosted by Permai. The second physical asset is the Permai administrative office located on Kuantan Road, Georgetown. Additionally, Permai also owns two vehicles to accommodate its members' transportation needs. Within the learning center room, there are supporting assets for the learning activities, such as a small library, a projector, and standard classroom facilities.¹⁶

From a social asset's perspective, Permai has several programs that are regularly conducted. Some of these programs include Sanggar Bimbingan Permai for school-aged Indonesian migrant children, Al-Qur'an Academy for Muslim women seeking to deepen their knowledge of the Quran, and English Academy Bengkulu Malaysia (EABM) for Indonesian Migrant Workers looking to enhance their English language skills.¹⁷

From the individual assets, Permai has three fronts formed by members of the Indonesian community with the appropriate skills, namely: the Humanitarian Front consisting of individuals with strong social science skills. They are tasked with providing legal assistance to Indonesian migrant workers who encounter legal issues in Malaysia and helping the repatriation of Indonesian Migrant Workers with document-related challenges. The second is the Educational Front, consisting of volunteers willing to assist in Permai's educational programs, including Sanggar Bimbingan, EABM, and Al-Qur'an Academy. The third is the Entrepreneurial Front, composed of entrepreneurs and experienced business professionals.¹⁸

From these three assets, the community engagement proceeded with the selection of priority programs using the priority scale technique or 'low-hanging fruit.' The priority scale is an approach to identify opportunities chosen for realization by leveraging the potential within the community itself.¹⁹ The determination of assets to

¹⁶ Prihatin, aset EABM.

¹⁷ Prihatin.

¹⁸ Prihatin.

¹⁹ Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat IAIN Ponorogo, *Pedoman Kuliab Pengabdian Masyarakat Tahun 2023*.



be developed in this community engagement was carried out through the following steps:

1. Mapping assets using community mapping techniques.
2. Identifying the dreams and aspirations of the community, with the selected dream being the desire of Indonesian migrant workers to master English language skills for effective communication in the workplace.
3. Identifying the assets possessed by the community for development, which in this context are EABM instructors and learners consisting of Indonesian migrant workers.
4. Convincing the core community group to implement the program, which had been approved by the instructors and EABM manager.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The program carried out in the community engagement with the aim of improving the grammar quality of Indonesian migrant workers consisted of collaborative teaching activities with the English Academy Bengkulu Malaysia, conducted in three phases: preparation, implementation, and monitoring.

1. Preparation Phase

The initial step in the implementation of the community engagement was to observe how the English Academy was conducted. The EABM activities focused on the learners' output, specifically their mastery of grammar and speaking skills. Through this activity, it was found that some learners had a low comprehension level, indicated by their difficulty in answering questions from the instructor when working on grammar exercises after the material was presented. It was observed that during the material presentation, instructors were still following a teacher-centered approach with lecture-style teaching. According to Kenia, teaching with a teacher-centered method has the potential to reduce students' interest in learning, resulting in a lack of understanding of the material presented by the teacher.²⁰ This was supported by the statements of three interviewed learners. The three sources provided different explanations for the difficulties they faced. The first source mentioned that the difficulty arose from not understanding the material because they did not have a strong

²⁰ Asep Dudi Suhardini, "Peningkatan Pemahaman Siswa Terhadap Mata Pelajaran Akidah Akhlak Melalui Metode Index Card Match," *Jurnal Riset Pendidikan Agama Islam*, 2022, 87–94.

foundation in English from their earlier schooling. The second and third sources stated that their lack of focus on the topics given was due to exhaustion after work.²¹

From this phenomenon, it can be concluded that there is a need for learning that actively involves learners so that it can adapt to their abilities and engage them in the learning process to prevent boredom. Active learning strategies and the use of music were chosen because they meet these criteria. According to Lailah as cited in Kurniawan, the active learning strategy is considered effective in engaging students in the lesson because in this strategy, students are actively involved in utilizing their potential to achieve the learning objectives.²² In this activity, the type of active learning applied involves active discussions between instructors and learners. The strategy of using songs as a teaching tool was also implemented as a solution to increase the learners' interest in the lessons and reduce their stress levels. According to Manurung, using songs as a medium for English language learning is not only enjoyable but also highly effective because songs are rich in linguistic elements.²³

2. Implementation Phase

The mentoring activity, which took the form of collaborative teaching with EABM instructors, was conducted on Saturday, July 8, 2023, at the Learning Centre Permai, Bukit Jambul, Penang. Prior to the activity, there was a briefing with the instructors aimed at introducing the active learning teaching method and the use of songs as a teaching tool, as well as coordinating learning activities. During this session,



²¹ Tengkuh, dream masyarakat.

²² Machful Indra Kurniawan, "Meningkatkan Hasil Belajar Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan Melalui Strategi Active Learning," *PEDAGOGIA: Jurnal Pendidikan* 6, no. 1 (2017): 124–32.

²³ Sulastris Manurung and Dewi Yana, "LEARNING ENGLISH USING SONGS FOR ELEMENTARY STUDENTS AT KAVLING SEROJA," *MINDA BAHARU* 2, no. 2 (2018): 132–42.

instructors were also encouraged to shift their teaching focus more towards the learners by using active learning methods, including discussion techniques.

The activity began by playing a song through the available sound system and inviting the learners who had arrived to sing along while waiting for all the learners to gather. This activity aimed to boost the learners' spirits and prepare them mentally for the teaching and learning activities. According to Sari, the use of songs as a medium can inspire new interests and motivations, provide the necessary encouragement for active learning, and even have significant psychological effects on students.²⁴

The teaching and learning activity then began with greetings, prayer, and introductions. After that, the activity continued by implementing the active learning method, specifically using a group discussion approach. In this phase, instructors were directed to conduct a kind of group discussion aimed at reviewing the material that had been taught. Some topics, such as introductions and the simple present tense, were revisited through speaking activities, simultaneously practicing the grammar that had been taught. This activity lasted for 15 minutes.

The activity continued with the core activity, which was the delivery of the lesson. The topic taught during the community engagement was 'prepositions.' In this core activity, instructors, along with the volunteers, presented the material using the



active learning method, which involved discussions with the learners. The material was presented through a PowerPoint presentation, which was explained alternately by the volunteers and instructors. In these explanations, the learners were guided through the learning process with questions and direct practice after the examples of prepositions were explained. According to Meyers and Jones as cited in Zainiyati, active learning

²⁴ Indah Sari and Fitri Ayu, "Pemanfaatan Media Lagu Dalam Peningkatan Kosakata Bahasa Inggris," *ABDIMAS MANDIRI-Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat* 1, no. 1 (2021): 16–20.

strategies encompass four activities experienced by learners, namely: (1) speaking and listening, (2) writing, (3) reading, and (4) reflection.²⁵ In broad terms, the speaking and listening activities were conducted by reviewing the activities at the beginning of the lesson and during the core activity, where learners were asked to explain the meaning and provide examples of prepositions in their own words. The writing activity took place during and after the material was presented when learners took notes in their own language, as the presentation only listed the key points of prepositions along with examples. Reading activities were indirectly carried out by learners when they read the material in the presentation and the reference books. Unfortunately, the reflection activity was not conducted due to time constraints and other evaluation activities.

Next, the following activity was evaluation. In this evaluation activity, songs were used as material with the aim of rekindling the learners' motivation for learning. The song chosen for this activity was 'Shake It Off,' considering three factors: (1) the number of prepositions contained in the song, (2) the lyrics did not significantly violate grammar rules, (3) the song had a cheerful tone. In its implementation, the song was played through the available sound system, and the learners were asked to take notes of the lyrics containing prepositions. From this activity, the following results were obtained:

No.	Name	Grammar Discovered
1	Putri	5
2	Desi	9
3	Septi	7
4	Mita	4
5	Febi	7
6	Nafisa	4
7	Irna	5
8	Isnawati	8
9	Agus	8
10	Niwati	9

²⁵ Husniyatus Salamah Zainiyati, "Model Dan Strategi Pembelajaran Aktif: Teori Dan Praktek Dalam Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam" (Putra Media Nusantara & IAIN Press, 2010).



From the table above, it can be concluded that the learning outcomes of Indonesian migrant workers still need improvement. Out of the 13 prepositions in the song, on average, the workers were able to identify 6.6 prepositions, with the lowest score being 4 and the highest being 9.

3. Monitoring Phase

The monitoring phase of this program was carried out on July 23, with the aim of ensuring the achievement of the program's objectives, which is to improve the grammar proficiency of Indonesian migrant workers through the enhancement of EABM instructors' professionalism in teaching and learning activities. The observation activity yielded the following results:

1. The instructors conducted teaching activities similar to those during the collaborative teaching, which involved reviewing the lesson using discussion techniques and practicing speaking while paying attention to the provided grammar rules.
2. The learners were encouraged to use proper grammar through speaking practice during the review session.
3. The delivery of the material began to involve the learners more by applying active learning strategies, as indicated by the presence of discussion sessions after the instructors posed triggering questions and before explaining the learning material.
4. The instructors once again used songs as a teaching medium during the intermission session, both before the start of the lesson while waiting for the learners and during the evaluation session.

CONCLUSION

The community engagement using the ABCD method resulted in a collaborative teaching program with EABM aimed at enhancing the professionalism of instructors in teaching grammar to Indonesian migrant workers through English language teaching assistance using active learning methods and the use of song-based learning media. This engagement was designed to address the challenges of teaching grammar to Indonesian migrant workers due to their limited comprehension skills, monotonous teaching techniques, and the learners' lack of readiness for education. From the activities, the results obtained are as follows: (1) The instructor have carried



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