Improving Elementary School Teachers' English Competence: Challenges, Strategies, and Implementation of Communication-Based Learning

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Abstract. *The main goal of this community service program targets the enhancement of English language abilities among Pinrang Regency's elementary school teaching staff through training methods based on communication. Intensive one-week training under this program implements practice-focused training methods through storytelling sessions, role-play activities and digital media applications. The program conducts a competence evaluation for teachers before implementing training programs meant to enhance their speech proficiency and interactive English teaching techniques. The training data reveals higher English usage motivation and consciousness among teachers yet multiple learning execution obstacles persist. Three key challenges emerge from teachers' restricted language skills and insufficient social contact with the English language and their lack of practical experience with classroom interactive teaching methods. The utilization obstacles of technology along with lack of support within the professional community work as important factors which diminish the effectiveness of this training approach. A lasting solution is necessary to enhance the English teaching capabilities of elementary teachers according to the findings of this program. Follow-up sessions and mentoring along with developing a professional community need to support the delivery of effective teaching methods which start from short-term training. Bilingual pedagogy strategies enable teachers to implement English gradually during their lessons. Participation from different organizations would enable improved English teaching quality at elementary schools to operate at its best potential.*

Keywords: *Teacher Competence, English Learning, Elementary School, Communicative Method, Practice-Based Training*

INTRODUCTION

The educational landscape of Indonesia depends heavily on English after the government introduced the new curriculum that emphasizes global literacy development (RISET, 2022). The teaching of English at elementary school (SD) faces different challenges because teachers need better competence in their abilities to effectively use and teach the language. Numerous studies prove the existence of low English proficiency among Indonesian elementary teachers and their inadequate teaching methods ultimately affects classroom learning outcomes (Yulia, 2013; Panggabean, 2015). A major obstacle exists due to teacher deficiencies in linguistic abilities.

Because many elementary school teachers teaching English lack proper English education training-they continue to experience challenges with English grammar together with pronunciation as well as speaking and writing abilities (Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020). The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) shows that 65% of rural elementary school teachers achieve English proficiency lower than B1 which restricts their language understanding and independent production abilities (Tasnim, 2021).

Advance skills in English language teaching remain impeded by insufficient training opportunities that would otherwise lead to elevated educational quality in elementary schools (Meilana et al., 2024). Teachers participate in short training sessions which fail to create lasting positive changes in their educational practice (Richardson & Placier, 2001). The provided educational training in specific regions covers theoretical components exclusively with no applicable practical guidance for classroom usage (Holmberg, 2005).

Several instructors maintain traditional teaching techniques including vocabulary memorization without context and translation exercises due to this reason which proves less effective for developing communication proficiency among students (Dina, 2021). The inadequate availability of proper resources together with insufficient teaching materials work as obstacles for English education in elementary schools. Teachers must develop their own educational content from textbooks that do not meet student requirements or skill levels because the textbooks are not student-adapted (Wilson & Blednick, 2011). Many schools especially remote locations face limited capabilities to access technology and digital teaching resources which creates barriers for English learning integration (Rwodzi & De Jager, 2021).

English learning effectiveness depends on both teacher motivation levels and their confidence when teaching the subject (Rofii, 2023). English-speaking insecurity in front of students runs high among teachers who let concern about their errors pressure their confidence (GAN & Aeamtussana, 2024). The absence of school support for creating an English-learning ecosystem contributes to worsen this challenge (Indriana, 2024). This educational service initiative delivers one week of offline teaching sessions at schools to assist elementary teachers in their skill development. The program will train teachers to enhance linguistic skills and teach communication with existing resources to improve English instruction quality at primary school.

METHODS

The respective stages for program implementation follow Needs Analysis then move to Intensive Training followed by Evaluation and Follow-up.

Needs Analysis

The objective of this stage is to identify main obstacles educators encounter when instructing English to students (Rofii, 2023). The assessment of educational demands involves three main research tools including introductory research, face-to-face discussions and material content evaluation.

Activities	Purpose	Instruments
Initial survey of teacher competency levels based on the CEFR	Identify the teacher's language proficiency level before training	CEFR diagnostic test
Interviews and group discussions	Exploring the main obstacles in teaching English in elementary school	Semi-structured interviews
Analysis of syllabus and teaching materials used in schools	Assess the suitability of materials to student needs and teacher skills	Content documentation and analysis

One-Week Intensive Training

This training lasts for one week with daily sessions of 5–6 hours. Each session is divided into three main focuses: improving language competence, teaching strategies, and the use of technology in learning.

Training Sessions	Activities	Method
Session 1: Improving Teachers' Language Competence	Practice speaking, listening, reading, and writing in a teaching context	Communication-based, hands-on workshops
	Classroom situation simulation in English	Role-playing dan micro-teaching
Session 2: English Teaching Strategies	The application of storytelling, games, and songs in learning	Group discussions, teaching demonstrations
	Classroom management techniques in English teaching	Case studies and field practices
Session 3: Utilization of Digital Resources	Use of English learning apps	Technology-based training, digital media exploration
	Utilization of videos, digital storybooks, and interactive media	Hands-on training

Evaluation and Follow-up

After the training, an evaluation was carried out to assess the impact of the program on teacher skills (Bahar, 2004). In addition, participants are provided with follow-up support to ensure the implementation of training results in the classroom.

Activities	Purpose	Instruments
English proficiency test after training	Assess teacher skill improvement based on CEFR standards	Tes post-training CEFR
Observation and assessment of micro-teaching	Evaluate the application of the learned teaching methods	Teaching practice assessment rubric
Collecting feedback through interviews and questionnaires	Identify the successes and obstacles to training implementation	Questionnaires, reflective interviews
Advanced mentoring through online discussion groups	Provide additional guidance and share experiences between teachers	Online discussion forums, periodic consultations

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The elementary school teacher English competency improvement program in Pinrang Regency reveals important lessons about how to carry out English instruction at this grade level (Maming & Sudarmanto, 2023). Elementary school instructors display increased awareness combined with motivation toward English classroom use but several barriers continue to exist based on inadequate language abilities along with insufficient resources and persistent traditional textbook-based methods.

Analysis of Teacher Initial Competencies

Most participants exhibited beginning level competence (A1 on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) scale along with several participants reaching elementary level (A2 CEFR level). Most instructional staff demonstrated basic understanding of vocabulary alongside straightforward text reading capabilities though they struggled with producing complex structures while speaking English naturally. The majority of teachers reported during initial interviews that their English usage was minimal throughout their

everyday activities and in teaching contexts because they primarily read book instructions (Barkhuizen, 1998).

Figure 1. Survey Implementation

Multiple key obstacles affect teachers' poor level of English proficiency. The insufficient vocabulary and grammar makes-teachers experience anxiety in using English during public speech activities (Fadhilah, 2022). The scarcity of English interaction is the primary reason behind teachers' deficient language fluency. The majority of teaching staff who work and spend their time in environments dominated by Indonesian and Bugis and Makassar languages state they lack opportunities to practice English. The teaching approach at this institution revolves mainly around textbook content since teachers tend to deliver lessons from books while limiting variation in teaching methods and student-teacher oral exchanges. Several teachers face barriers in using technology-based learning media because they lack experience with applications and digital resources in their educational practice (Widyawati & Sukadari, 2023).

Training Implementation and Challenges Faced

The training period of one week provided students with an interactive learning environment through direct practice (Susilawaty et al., 2024). Educators in the introductory section learned about multiple communicative teaching techniques which included storytelling, games, songs and role-play for enhancing student participation in English learning. Through various communication-based activities such as group discussions and simple presentations teachers gain practice opportunities for English speaking skills (Hasib, 2024).

Figure 2. Documentation Opening of activities

The training revealed multiple obstacles when most instructors displayed willingness toward this newly adopted method. The principal challenge during implementation occurred because teachers faced difficulties keeping their lessons conducted exclusively in English.

Educators frequently switched to Indonesian and regional dialects when they struggled to form English language statements for concept explanation. Educators deemed storytelling methods alongside games as attractive but encountered difficulties applying these approaches successfully since their students displayed minimal English proficiency. The training demonstrated several digital resources suitable for educational material development to teachers (Yeni, 2022). Some teachers resist the use of online learning applications because they lack experience with teaching through technology. Teachers reported their biggest challenges as limited digital capabilities and inadequate school internet connectivity together with insufficient devices.

Implementation in Micro-Teaching

The training program integrates a micro-teaching session which lets teachers put their learned methods into practice through simulated classroom activities. Teachers need to conduct teaching sessions through English while utilizing all learning techniques taught at the training event. Results from observations demonstrated that multiple teachers grew more comfortable using English when teaching their students mostly while giving straightforward instructions and reading narrations.

Figure 3. Training Implementation

Teachers continue to encounter multiple difficulties during their practical teaching experiences. English language consistency becomes a barrier for linguistic consistency during learning sessions (Pearson et al., 2013). Learning outcomes become internalized through instructor use of English in first parts of sessions but instructors shift to Indonesian or regional languages for detailed explanations. The implementation of interactive teaching methods presents barriers for teachers when trying to maintain student discipline. Academic members observed their students needed extended time to shift to storytelling and game-based learning due to unfamiliarity with these techniques. The basic educational materials suitable for this region's elementary students constitute another difficult aspect teachers must address. The textbooks available lack interactive features because they maintain their conventional text-based format. The teaching staff requires creative judgment to modify their instructional resources though many teachers lack confidence in developing fun educational materials for their students.

Evaluation and Feedback from Teachers

An easy assessment was implemented following the training program to determine changes in teacher understanding as well as skills in English. Test outcomes indicated limited progress in vocabulary interpretation capability and speaking confidence but these gains remained insignificant. From the interviews and group discussions, the majority of teachers stated that they felt more confident in trying to use English in the classroom, although they still needed more intensive practice to improve their speaking skills.

Figure 4. Teacher feedback sessions

The training methods including storytelling and songs in learning received positive evaluation from some participants. The trainers reported that their students' limited English abilities stopped them from adopting the new teaching methods in their classrooms. The instructors wanted more extensive training together with continued mentoring because they needed additional practice with these new approaches.

Follow-up and Sustainability of the Program

Online mentoring sessions with the purpose of helping teachers apply new skills were implemented to maintain program sustainability. The participation rate in these mentoring sessions remained low since educators encountered several challenges including their heavy workloads and limited use of technology because some participants lacked necessary devices to participate remotely (Fitriadi et al., 2025). Every component of this program needs future improvement through implementing essential follow-up measures to enhance it: (1) More continuous training, It is recommended that the training does not only take place in one week but is carried out gradually with advanced sessions that allow teachers to apply their skills gradually; (2) Assistance in the form of mentoring, lecturers or facilitators can provide individual guidance for teachers who face difficulties in applying the methods that have been learned; (3) The development of teaching materials that are more suitable, teachers need resources that are more flexible and can be used in diverse classroom conditions.

Elementary school teachers located in Pinrang Regency encounter multiple barriers to English language competency improvement which include linguistic features along with pedagogical needs and technological constraints and broader policy frameworks. Teachers face major challenges due to their restricted English communication abilities which particularly affect their ability to speak and build proper sentences. Research indicates speaking ability is regarded as the most difficult aspect to learn English as a foreign language especially among teachers who seldom encounter it in their regular activities (Gebhard, 2006). Teachers' limited interaction with English in their social life causes this condition to worsen due to the critical role of target language exposure throughout language acquisition (Tanveer, 2007). The language abilities of speakers will grow more effectively with continuous comprehensible input according to Krashen's (1982) input hypothesis theory yet Pinrang's social space and educational input in English are scarce.

Competence development for teachers faces substantial challenges from both language-related barriers as well as educational difficulties (Aizawa et al., 2023). Teachers experience challenges in classroom implementation because the training provides different communication-based teaching methods including storytelling and games. Pursuant to Garton & Copland (2019) research findings teachers at the elementary level commonly face English barriers because they mainly employ textbook drilling methods instead of interactive teaching approaches. Learning approaches which have always been seen in schools focus on vocabulary memorization and translation while students lack practical English communication opportunities (Akbari, 2015). According to Harmer (2015) the integration of language learning interactive strategies needs to include elements that ease students into motivated speaking situations. Student motivation

remains a problem in elementary school education of rural areas since students experience minimal English exposure outside educational facilities (Mlay, 2010).

The training gives participants access to numerous digital tools which serve to enhance their English teaching practice. Organizations face important technological barriers mainly due to teachers who lack experience using applications and online resources for educational purposes. Lai (2013) demonstrates technology can boost language learning success but dependency on teacher readiness remains the key success factor for the technology's effective implementation. The study conducted by Orwenjo & Erastus (2018) reveals rural areas encounter two major obstacles for language learning technology adoption namely inadequate infrastructure coupled with insufficient digital proficiency of teaching staff. All schools in Pinrang Regency lack sufficient internet connectivity and many staff members continue to adopt traditional educational practices over digital-based methods. The education training raised teacher sensitivity towards English proficiency yet their classroom application skills remained insufficient.

Narzillayevna (2024) establishes that teachers acquire their confidence for using English directly from their acquisition experiences of the language. Those teachers who learned English poorly tend to demonstrate lower confidence while instructing the language which leads to diminished student learning results. The study by Ipek (2016) reveals teachers generally demonstrate self-doubt which leads to their avoidance of speaking the foreign language before their students. Professional community support reaches limited levels in Pinrang Regency because teachers infrequently have opportunities to exchange experiences or learn from their senior colleagues or mentors. Policy implementation faces a major problem because there is insufficient leadership support for teacher quality development. The training sessions deliver temporary benefits for teachers but they believe that the training periods remain insufficient to develop complete skill mastery.

Villani (2002) found in their research that beneficial teacher training requires follow-up mentoring together with ongoing sessions for support. Professional learning communities (PLC) proposed by Dana & Yendol-Hoppey (2009) present a suitable answer through which teachers can learn continuously by sharing ideas with their peer practitioners. The development of professional communities remains inadequate throughout Pinrang Regency thus most teachers find themselves reliant on their individual teaching skills when handling English classes. The findings indicate that rural elementary school teachers need an extensive method to enhance their English competency particularly in Pinrang Regency. The long-term impact of short-term training depends heavily on how well the program continues and on what extent different groups such as schools and government agencies and professional communities will support it.

According to Hudson (2013) teachers need mentoring alongside professional reflection to develop their English teaching confidence. Stroud (2002) highlighted bilingual pedagogy as a practical solution which permits teachers to keep using their mother tongue actively within their English language classroom instruction. A needs-based training system aimed at sustainability represents the most achievable solution to address teaching issues. The proposed training initiative needs to build linguistic competencies while offering education support along with technological assistance and professional community backing. The training design must take into account local conditions which include monitoring both logistical obstacles and difficulties that arise from interactive approach implementation. Through a holistic training process elementary school teacher will gain both confidence and teaching effectiveness which should lead to improved quality of elementary language education within Pinrang Regency

CONCLUSION

The English language competency improvement program for elementary school teachers in Pinrang Regency demonstrated key obstacles that instructor teams face while teaching English in rural communities. Educational training points to a rise in teachers' English usage familiarity together with their want to incorporate English but hindering obstacles stem from language limitations and educational methods alongside resource availability constraints. The majority of

teachers demonstrate limited English proficiency with particular weaknesses in speaking and the creation of effective sentences for communication. The educational field still heavily depends on textbook-centered memorization practices although teachers need to implement methods like storytelling and role-play but encounter multiple barriers in implementation. Educators struggle to use the communication-focused teaching system within the classroom setting since their students display poor English expression abilities and lack confidence with the language.

Learning technology benefits from limited digital usage in education because teachers lack the required digital skills and have restricted access to technology. The continuous enhancement of teacher competency encounters significant resistance due to missing professional backing and nonexistent sophisticated educational programs. A thorough strategy needs to be developed to enhance English language proficiency for rural elementary school teachers. The first training must then persist through continual mentoring together with professional learning communities. A bilingual pedagogy-based method provides teachers with a solution to implement English instruction in their classrooms at a stable pace. Multiple institutions including the government and educational bodies assist the effort to make elementary English teaching both lasting and effective.

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