



Education for All: Implementing Fun English Learning in Non-Formal Settings

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Abstract

The "Education for All" (EFA) initiative underscores the right to equitable quality education, yet children from low-income backgrounds often face barriers to acquiring global skills like English. This community service project aimed to implement and evaluate a *Fun English Learning* program at "Kelompok Belajar Anak Bangsa Mandiri," a non-formal educational setting in Banjarmasin, over six months. The program sought to create an enjoyable learning atmosphere and develop the basic English capacity of underprivileged children. Employing a qualitative descriptive method, the project integrated the SAVI (Somatic, Auditory, Visual, Intellectual) framework and the PAKEM (Participatory, Active, Creative, Effective, Joyful) model through thematic lessons, games, songs, and visual aids. Results demonstrated high levels of student enthusiasm, active participation, and significant improvement in foundational vocabulary and communication confidence. The findings indicate that a pedagogy of joy and engagement is not a luxury but a necessity for effective learning in marginalized contexts. The project concludes that community-based, non-formal education programs utilizing *Fun English Learning* approaches are a viable and powerful strategy to bridge the educational equity gap, fulfilling the promise of Education for All by ensuring no child is left behind in acquiring essential 21st-century skills.

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INTRODUCTION

The principle of "Education for All" (EFA), a global movement led by UNESCO, champions the right of every child to quality education without discrimination (UNESCO, 2015). This foundational principle is echoed in Indonesia's constitution, which guarantees every citizen the right to education (Undang-Undang Dasar 1945, Pasal 31 Ayat 1). However, the reality in many developing nations reveals a persistent gap between policy and practice, particularly for children from economically disadvantaged families (Darling-Hammond, 2024). In today's increasingly interconnected and knowledge-driven global economy, the imperative for quality education extends to mastering global languages. English proficiency has transcended being a mere academic subject to become a critical 21st-century skill. It serves as the dominant lingua franca for international diplomacy, scientific research, and the digital ecosystem (Crystal, 2023). Viewed through the lens of the Capability Approach (Sen, 1999), English proficiency is not a luxury but a vital "capability" and a "linguistic passport" that enhances a child's freedom to pursue future opportunities, access global information, and participate fully in society (Pillar, 2023).

Unfortunately, access to quality English Language Teaching (ELT) remains profoundly unequal, creating a significant socio-educational divide. Children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds often face systemic barriers, such as the high cost of private courses and learning resources, which exacerbate the educational and digital divide (Suherdi et al., 2020; Zein et al., 2020). This inequity creates a vicious, self-perpetuating cycle where poverty limits access to English education, and the lack of English proficiency, in turn, constrains future economic opportunities, thereby widening existing social inequalities (Darling-Hammond, 2024).

To address these systemic gaps, non-formal and community-based education frameworks (Rogers, 2014) have emerged as crucial bridges, providing flexible, learner-centric, and context-specific support for marginalized learners. The "Kelompok Belajar Anak Bangsa Mandiri" in Banjarmasin is one such grassroots initiative, established to support underprivileged children who risk being left behind by the formal system. However, a severe shortage of volunteer teachers, particularly for English, hindered its ability to deliver consistent language lessons. In direct response, a six-month service project was initiated to provide a structured, sustainable, and enjoyable English learning program. This initiative directly aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) and the global pursuit of inclusive education (UNESCO, 2015; United Nations, 2015), effectively translating macro-level EFA goals into tangible capabilities for disadvantaged youth.

The project sought to explore how a "Fun English Learning" model could be implemented in a resource-limited setting. The significance of this approach extends beyond vocabulary acquisition; it prioritizes pedagogical joy and engagement to dismantle psychological barriers associated with learning a foreign language, which is essential for fostering long-term motivation and success (Dörnyei, 2019). The pedagogical core of this intervention synthesizes the PAKEM model (Participatory, Active, Creative, Effective, Joyful) (Rusman, 2010) and the SAVI framework (Somatic, Auditory, Visual, Intellectual) (Meier, 2002). By ensuring that learning is a holistic, multi-sensory experience, this synergy cultivates what Dweck (2015) identifies as a "growth mindset" towards language acquisition. Furthermore, employing games, songs, and interactive student-centered methodologies creates a low-anxiety environment (Pinter, 2017). This approach effectively lowers the learners' Affective Filter (Krashen, 1982)—a psychological barrier comprising anxiety and self-consciousness—allowing for more efficient processing of comprehensible input and making language acquisition more natural (Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2023).

Ultimately, this project demonstrates that effective education in underprivileged communities is not solely dependent on high-tech resources but on pedagogically sound, empathetic teaching (West, 2023). By proving that a joyful curriculum is both feasible and highly effective, this article details the implementation and outcomes of the project, providing a replicable framework for other community learning centers. It argues that by prioritizing student-centered approaches, non-formal education can play a transformative role in making quality English education accessible to all, thereby operationalizing the EFA framework at the grassroots level.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to meticulously document and analyze the implementation process and outcomes of the *Fun English Learning* program. The research was conducted over a six-month period at the "Kelompok Belajar Anak Bangsa Mandiri" in Banjarmasin, a community-based learning group established to support children from economically

disadvantaged backgrounds. The participants consisted of 20 elementary school children, ranging from grades 1 to 6, who were regular members of the group. This specific demographic was chosen as they represent a segment of the population often excluded from supplemental educational opportunities, such as private English tutoring, thereby aligning the study with the principles of educational equity (Darling-Hammond, 2024).

The instructional design was strategically grounded in two complementary pedagogical frameworks to create a holistic and engaging learning experience. First, the SAVI model (Somatic, Auditory, Visual, Intellectual) was utilized to ensure learning was a multi-sensory process, engaging the whole child through movement, sound, imagery, and critical thinking (Meier, 2002). This was paired with the PAKEM model (Participatory, Active, Creative, Effective, and Joyful), which provided a structured philosophy for fostering a student-centered learning environment that shifted the dynamic from teacher-led instruction to active knowledge construction (Rusman, 2010). The intervention itself comprised 11 structured weekly sessions, each lasting 60-90 minutes, covering essential vocabulary themes like Introductions, Professions, and Transportation. The methodology was operationalized through a variety of interactive techniques: vocabulary was reinforced through games like X/O and puzzles; pronunciation and memorization were aided by songs and chants (e.g., "Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes" for body parts); understanding was scaffolded with custom-made flashcards and worksheets; and confidence was built via interactive practices such as group drilling and writing answers on a whiteboard. To capture the program's impact, data was triangulated through direct observation of student engagement, qualitative analysis of completed worksheets, and photographic documentation of the learning activities, providing a rich, multi-faceted dataset for analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

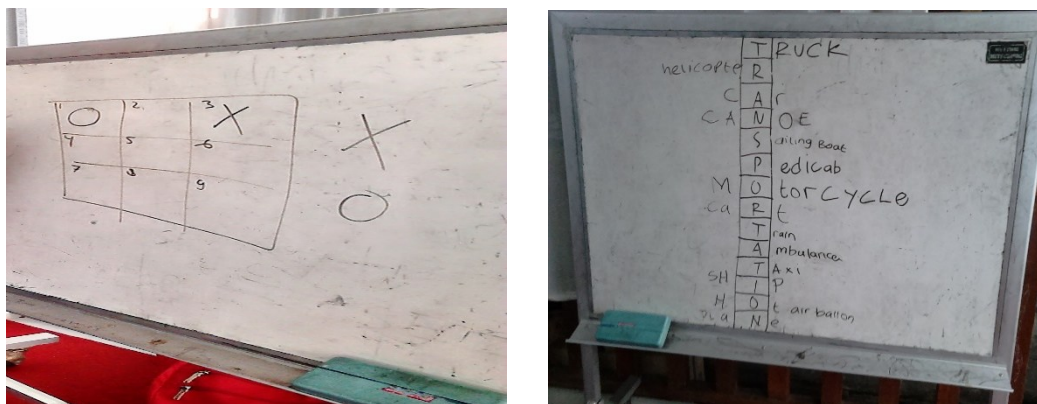
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of the *Fun English Learning* program at Kelompok Belajar Anak Bangsa Mandiri followed a structured yet flexible sequence of steps designed to maximize engagement and learning. Each session typically commenced with an energetic opening using auditory and somatic activities, such as singing a related English song like "Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes" to introduce the day's theme, effectively capturing the children's attention and lowering their affective filter (Pinter, 2017). This was followed by the core vocabulary presentation, where instructors used vivid visual aids like custom-made flashcards and worksheets to introduce new words, allowing students to visually and auditorily process terms related to professions, animals, or transportation.

The crucial practice and internalization phase then engaged students in participatory and creative games, such as X/O puzzles and word searches, which transformed vocabulary review into a stimulating challenge. Finally, the session culminated in an interactive production stage, where children were encouraged to actively use the language by writing answers on the whiteboard and participating in "repeat after me" drilling exercises, fostering a supportive environment for them to produce the target language confidently. This multi-stage approach, cycling through SAVI components, ensured that learning was not a passive reception of information but an active, joyful, and holistic experience that built foundational English capacity through consistent and varied reinforcement.



Figure 1. The use of Flash Card and Worksheet



Picture 2. Playing Games X O and Puzzle about Transportations

Fostering Engagement and Foundational Skills

The program yielded a significant and observable enhancement in student engagement and motivation, which was fundamental to its success. Participants displayed sustained enthusiasm and active involvement throughout the six-month intervention, a direct outcome of the deliberately crafted pedagogical environment. Direct observations consistently documented a "cheerful and interactive learning atmosphere" where children were not merely passive recipients but eager contributors—volunteering answers, immersing themselves in collaborative games, and initiating interactions with the volunteer teachers without hesitation. This carefully fostered, low-anxiety environment was instrumental in lowering what Krashen (1982) termed the "affective filter," a psychological barrier comprising anxiety, self-consciousness, and lack of motivation that can block comprehensible input from being acquired. By prioritizing joy and participation, the program created a psychologically safe space where students felt empowered to take linguistic risks, such as attempting new pronunciations or guessing vocabulary meanings, without the typical fear of making mistakes or facing judgment (Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2023). This aligns with contemporary research in positive psychology, which underscores that positive emotions broaden students' scope of attention and build enduring personal resources, including resilience and a willingness to engage, which are crucial for long-term language learning success (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2022). The observable reduction in anxiety and increase in voluntary participation, therefore, was not merely a

pleasant side effect but a core pedagogical achievement that directly facilitated the acquisition process by allowing learners to be more cognitively and emotionally open to the target language.



Figure 3. Students' Enthusiasm in Joining the Learning Activities

Developing Basic English Capacity

The program was highly effective in developing the participants' basic English capacity, demonstrating that a pedagogy of joy can yield substantial concrete learning outcomes. Students successfully acquired and retained foundational vocabulary across a range of practical themes, from everyday objects to professions and transportation. This acquisition was not merely passive recognition but active utilization, evidenced by their increasing accuracy in completing illustrated worksheets, swift identification of items on flashcards, and the confident application of simple expressions for self-introduction and describing their immediate environment. The pedagogical strategies were crucial to this success; the use of collaborative games and activities, for instance, transformed vocabulary practice from a rote memorization task into a socially embedded and meaningful experience, significantly enhancing long-term retention (Pratiwi et al., 2022). Furthermore, the consistent encouragement for students to write their answers on the whiteboard served a dual purpose: it reinforced spelling and recall while simultaneously functioning as a low-stakes platform for public practice. This routine built what Mercer (2021) identifies as "linguistic self-confidence," a learner's belief in their ability to successfully use the language, which is a critical precursor to autonomous communication. The observed progression from hesitant mumbling to enthusiastic, choral responses and voluntary participation indicates that the program did more than teach words—it cultivated a budding, confident language identity among the learners (Norton, 2023).

The success of this project underscores the profound significance of *Fun English Learning* as a pedagogical imperative for equitable education. The results demonstrate that optimal learning is not contingent on a formal classroom or abundant resources but on the deliberate creation of an engaging and joyful learning experience (Pinter, 2017). First, the integration of the SAVI and PAKEM models proved to be a powerful combination. The multisensory activities (singing, moving, observing, solving) catered to diverse learning styles and kept children physically and intellectually active, making the learning process more memorable and effective (Meier, 2002). This aligns with modern understandings of embodied cognition, which posit that physical engagement can enhance

cognitive processing (Skulmowski & Rey, 2017). Second, the project challenges the deficit narrative often associated with underprivileged learners. Instead of focusing on what the children lacked, the program leveraged their natural curiosity and capacity for play. By using games and songs, the project reframed English not as a daunting academic subject, but as a medium for fun and interaction. This approach is crucial for building a positive "L2 Learning Experience," which is a key driver of long-term motivation (Dörnyei, 2019).



Figure 4. Students Practice and Present Their Works

Ultimately, this case study provides compelling evidence that community-based, non-formal education, when intentionally designed with empathetic and innovative pedagogy, functions as a potent vehicle for operationalizing the ambitious goals of Education for All (EFA). It moves beyond the simplistic metric of enrollment to address the qualitative core of equitable education: meaningful learning. The project at Anak Bangsa Mandiri offers a replicable and scalable model for NGOs and community organizations worldwide, demonstrating that fulfilling a child's fundamental right to education is a twofold endeavor. It necessitates not only ensuring physical access to a learning space but, just as critically, guaranteeing that the learning process itself is empowering, meaningful, and joyful (West, 2023). This approach directly counters what scholars have identified as a key challenge in global education—the "learning crisis," where children may be in school but are not acquiring foundational skills due to disengaging pedagogical methods (World Bank, 2018). By centering student well-being and engagement through frameworks like PAKEM and SAVI, the program fostered what Dweck (2015) would identify as a "growth mindset" towards language learning, where children viewed challenges as opportunities rather than threats. Therefore, this model demonstrates that true educational equity is achieved not merely by opening classroom doors, but by transforming the educational experience within them, ensuring that even the most marginalized learners can develop the competencies and confidence necessary for lifelong success (Darling-Hammond, 2024).

CONCLUSION

This project at "Kelompok Belajar Anak Bangsa Mandiri" conclusively demonstrates that a *Fun English Learning* approach is highly effective in fostering basic English skills and positive learning attitudes among underprivileged children in a non-formal setting. The significant engagement and progress observed in the participants affirm that pedagogical methods centered on joy, participation, and creativity are essential for breaking down barriers to education. The

implications for "Education for All" are clear: to truly leave no child behind, educational strategies must be inclusive not only in access but also in methodology. This involves investing in teacher training for volunteer-based programs, developing context-appropriate joyful learning resources, and championing non-formal education as a legitimate and vital component of the national educational ecosystem. Future initiatives should build upon this model by incorporating simple digital tools (ICT) to further enrich the learning experience. By scaling such empathetic and engaging approaches, we can move closer to a world where every child, regardless of socioeconomic background, can claim their right to the knowledge and skills needed for a brighter future.

Despite its positive outcomes, this study acknowledges certain limitations, primarily the relatively short intervention period and the limited number of participants, which may affect the generalizability of the findings to larger or more diverse non-formal settings. Furthermore, as the project relied heavily on the physical presence of volunteer teachers, the long-term sustainability of the program remains a challenge in the face of volunteer turnover. Future research should, therefore, consider longitudinal studies to track the long-term retention of English skills acquired through joyful learning models. Additionally, there is a significant opportunity to explore the integration of blended learning—combining these face-to-face interactive methods with simple, accessible digital tools (ICT)—to mitigate the shortage of specialized teachers and provide learners with more autonomous practice opportunities. Investigating how this model can be formally integrated into community-based policy frameworks would also be a valuable step toward ensuring the institutional sustainability of such grassroots initiatives.

DECLARATION OF AI AND AI ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

In the preparation of this manuscript, the author utilized ChatGPT to assist with improving the readability, linguistic structure, and grammatical accuracy of the text. All outputs were subsequently reviewed and revised by the author, who assumes full responsibility for the final content of the publication. The author confirms that this AI tool was used only as a supporting instrument for language refinement and not for generating original research ideas, data analysis, or substantive scientific conclusions.

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