

IMPROVING TEACHER COMPETENCE AT SDN GIRIMEKAR 3 BANDUNG: PREPARING FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AS A MANDATORY SUBJECT AT THE PRIMARY EDUCATION LEVEL

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Abstract

The implementation of English language learning at the primary education level requires teachers to be prepared in terms of both English language competence and pedagogical competence. This Community Service (PKM) activity aimed to improve the competence and readiness of teachers at SDN Girimekar 3 Bandung to prepare for and implement English language instruction. The activity was conducted through several stages: needs analysis, pre-test, training, microteaching, and post-test. A learning-by-doing approach was implemented through demonstrations, practice, feedback, and reflection. The microteaching sessions provided teachers with opportunities to practice the use of classroom English, giving instructions, questioning, games, speaking activities, the use of teaching media, and classroom management. The results indicated an improvement in teachers' competence and readiness, as reflected in the comparison of pre-test and post-test results, microteaching performance, and participants' reflections. The activity demonstrates that integrating English language competence, pedagogical knowledge, teaching practice, and reflection represents a relevant approach to preparing primary school teachers for the implementation of English language instruction.

Keywords: Teacher Competence, Primary School English, Young Learners, Classroom English, Microteaching

INTRODUCTION

English holds a strategic position in education because it functions not only as a means of international communication but also as a means of accessing global knowledge, technology, information, and learning resources. In the context of primary education, English language teaching has different characteristics from English learning among adolescents and adults. Primary school students are at a developmental stage that requires concrete, engaging, and interactive learning experiences appropriate to their cognitive, social, and emotional development. Therefore, English learning for young learners needs to be designed through activities that provide opportunities for students to listen, imitate, move, play, interact, and use

English in meaningful contexts (Cameron, 2001; Pinter, 2017).

The need for English language learning in Indonesian primary schools is also becoming increasingly relevant in the development of national education policy. Changes in curriculum policy place school and teacher readiness as important factors in the successful implementation of English language learning. Based on Regulation of the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education Number 13 of 2025, English at the primary education level is directed to become a mandatory subject starting in the 2027/2028 academic year. This policy change has implications for school readiness, particularly in terms of teacher availability, teacher competence, learning resources, teaching materials, and learning strategies appropriate to the characteristics of primary school students (Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education of the Republic of Indonesia, 2025).

This policy indicates that the implementation of English language learning in primary schools cannot rely solely on the availability of a curriculum and teaching materials but also requires teachers with adequate competence. Teachers are the key component in translating curriculum policy into classroom practice. In teaching English to children, teachers are expected to possess both English language proficiency and pedagogical competence to adapt language, materials, activities, media, and assessment to the characteristics of young learners (Cameron, 2001; Pinter, 2017). Therefore, teacher readiness needs to be understood as an integration of English proficiency, pedagogical competence, methodological competence, classroom interaction, and teacher confidence.

The condition of primary school teachers in Indonesia indicates that strengthening these competencies remains necessary. Diyanti, Nurhayati, and Supriyanti (2020), for example, found that the profile of primary English teachers in Indonesia is diverse and that opportunities to receive specialized education and training for teaching young learners still need to be strengthened. This condition demonstrates the importance of teacher professional development that is oriented not only toward improving English proficiency but also toward developing pedagogical and methodological abilities appropriate to the primary education context. Meanwhile, Angraeni and Yusuf (2022) indicate that primary school teachers' readiness to teach English needs to be understood more broadly, including psychological readiness, experience, and teachers' perceptions of their own abilities.

The issue of teacher competence becomes increasingly complex because teaching English to children is not simply a matter of mastering the English language. Teachers need to understand how language can be introduced to children through activities appropriate to their developmental stages. Cameron (2001) emphasizes the importance of considering young learners' characteristics when determining language learning objectives, materials, activities, and strategies. Similarly, Pinter (2017) identifies an understanding of child development, language skills, the use of communicative activities, teaching materials, technology, and assessment as important components of teaching English to young learners. Therefore, primary school teachers require multidimensional competencies.

One aspect that needs to be strengthened is teachers' ability to use English in classroom interactions, or classroom English. Teachers need to be able to use simple expressions to open and close lessons, give instructions, ask questions, provide praise and reinforcement, manage group activities, check understanding, and provide feedback. Consistent use of English in

classroom interaction can provide students with meaningful language exposure while also serving as a model of English use for children (Harmer, 2015; Pinter, 2017). Therefore, strengthening classroom English is an important part of preparing primary school teachers to implement English language instruction.

In addition to linguistic competence, teachers also require pedagogical competence. Teachers need to understand the characteristics of young learners, determine learning objectives, select appropriate materials, develop communicative activities, use teaching media, manage the classroom, and conduct assessments appropriate to students' abilities. English language teaching for children requires a variety of activities because children's attention spans and learning experiences differ from those of adults. The use of games, songs, stories, movement, Total Physical Response (TPR), role play, flashcards, and collaborative activities can provide more concrete and engaging learning experiences (Cameron, 2001; Pinter, 2017). Damayanti and Faozah (2016) also demonstrate the relevance of using games and songs in teaching English to young learners.

In the context of learning implementation in primary schools, the development of teaching materials and media is also important. Teachers need learning materials that are appropriate to students' English proficiency levels, contextualized to their environment, easy to use, and capable of supporting communicative interaction. Teaching materials for young learners need to consider not only linguistic aspects but also visual elements, activities, games, stories, and children's learning experiences (Pinter, 2017). Therefore, teachers' ability to select, adapt, and develop teaching materials is an integral part of pedagogical competence.

Based on these needs, the PKM activity was implemented using a competency development approach that integrated the strengthening of English language skills, pedagogical knowledge, classroom English, lesson planning, teaching media, and teaching practice. The program did not merely provide training but also provided participants with opportunities to develop teaching materials and practice them through microteaching. Through microteaching, teachers gained experience in practicing opening, classroom instructions, questioning, presentation, pair and group activities, games, speaking activities, feedback, and closing. These practices were subsequently used as a basis for providing feedback and reflecting on teaching abilities.

Thus, this PKM activity was not positioned merely as English language training but as a needs-based teacher professional development program integrating language and pedagogical competencies. This approach is aligned with the professional development needs of primary school English teachers in Indonesia, particularly in response to policy changes that position English as a mandatory subject at the primary education level. The program is expected to make a practical contribution to the readiness of SDN Girimekar 3 Bandung to prepare for communicative, contextualized English language instruction appropriate to the characteristics of primary school students.

IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

The implementation method of the Community Service (PKM) activity was designed as needs-based teacher professional development. This approach was adopted because improving teachers' ability to teach English to primary school students cannot be achieved through the delivery of theoretical materials alone but requires the integration of language competence, pedagogical competence, teaching practice, feedback, and reflection. Effective teacher professional development needs to provide teachers with opportunities to connect acquired knowledge with classroom practice and to reflect on that practice (Hadi, 2019). In the context of Teaching English to Young Learners, the selection of materials, activities, media, and learning strategies also needs to consider the developmental characteristics of primary school students (Cameron, 2001; Pinter, 2017).

Stage 1: Needs Analysis

This stage was conducted to obtain an overview of the teachers' initial conditions and actual needs before the competency development intervention was provided. Needs analysis is an important stage in program development because it enables training materials and strategies to be adjusted to the gap between participants' existing competencies and the competencies required to carry out their teaching responsibilities.

In the context of teaching English to children, teachers' needs are not only related to their ability to use English but also to their understanding of young learners' characteristics, activity selection, use of media, classroom management, and assessment (Cameron, 2001; Pinter, 2017).

The results of the needs analysis were used as the basis for determining training materials, practical activities, and the development of a teaching-material package. Thus, the intervention was not generic but was directed toward the actual needs of the partner teachers.

This process also positioned teachers as co-developers in the development of teaching materials. Involving teachers in the development process enabled the resulting materials to be more appropriate to the school context and learning needs. This context-based approach is important in teacher professional development because the implementation of English language learning in primary schools is influenced by teacher conditions, the school environment, learning resources, and student characteristics (Diyanti & Madya, 2021).

Location and Partner

The PKM activity was conducted at SDN Girimekar 3 Bandung as a partner school in a program to strengthen teacher competence in preparation for the implementation of English language teaching at the primary education level. The school was selected based on the need to strengthen English language competence, pedagogical competence, young learner teaching methodology, teaching-material and media development, and teaching practice, in line with the importance of primary school teacher professional development (Diyanti et al., 2020).

The activity involved 15 core teachers who actively participated in the development of teaching materials, learning resources, practice activities, feedback, and reflection. A participatory approach was employed by considering teachers' experience and needs as well as the school's learning context. Therefore, competency development was directed not only toward improving English proficiency but also toward pedagogical abilities to adapt language,

activities, and learning strategies to the characteristics of young learners (Cameron, 2001; Pinter, 2017).

Stage 2: Pre-Test

The pre-test was administered before the training to establish a baseline of participants' competencies. The initial data were used to map competency areas requiring reinforcement and subsequently served as a basis for comparison with the post-test results.

The assessment was not limited to language ability but also included pedagogical aspects and teacher readiness. This is consistent with the view that English teacher competence involves the relationship between language proficiency and pedagogical ability to use the language in the teaching process (Hadi, 2019).

The pre-test instrument included the following components:

- a. **Vocabulary**, measuring knowledge of basic vocabulary relevant to the school environment, daily life, objects, activities, and children's learning contexts.
- b. **Basic Grammar**, measuring understanding of basic English structures required to produce simple sentences and instructions.
- c. **Classroom Expressions**, measuring understanding of expressions used in classroom interaction, such as greeting, asking questions, giving instructions, checking understanding, and closing the lesson.
- d. **Speaking**, identifying teachers' ability to use English orally in simple contexts related to learning activities.
- e. **Listening**, measuring the ability to understand vocabulary, instructions, and English expressions used in learning contexts.
- f. **Pedagogical Knowledge**, measuring teachers' understanding of basic principles of teaching English to children, activity selection, use of media, and learning management.
- g. **Confidence/Teaching Readiness**, identifying teachers' perceptions of their level of confidence and readiness to use English during learning activities.

The use of these components was based on the need to examine teacher readiness multidimensionally. Research on primary school teachers in Indonesia indicates that readiness to teach English is not solely related to language proficiency but is also associated with experience, background, and teachers' readiness to perform their pedagogical roles (Angraeni & Yusuf, 2022; Diyanti et al., 2020). The pre-test results were subsequently established as the baseline for evaluating changes in competence after the completion of the entire series of activities.

Stage 3: Training

Training was the main stage for strengthening teacher competence. The training was designed using an interactive, participatory, and practical approach, combining material presentation, demonstrations, discussions, simulations, practice, and feedback.

The selection of training materials was based on the needs identified through the needs analysis and considered the competencies required by teachers to teach English to young learners. Teachers need not only to master linguistic elements but also to understand how the

language is used in classroom interaction and how materials can be adapted to children's characteristics (Cameron, 2001; Pinter, 2017).

The training materials included:

1. English for Teachers;
2. Classroom English;
3. Teacher Talk;
4. English vocabulary for primary education;
5. Pronunciation;
6. Basic Grammar;
7. Teaching English to Young Learners;
8. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT);
9. Task-Based Learning (TBL);
10. Classroom Management;
11. Teaching Media; and
12. Assessment for Young Learners.

These materials integrated two groups of competencies: **linguistic competence** and **pedagogical competence**. This integration is important because teachers who teach English in primary schools require both language ability and the ability to adapt language and learning activities to children's needs (Cameron, 2001; Pinter, 2017).

Play and Learn Approach

The training also emphasized the play and learn approach through the use of:

1. songs;
2. Total Physical Response (TPR);
3. stories;
4. games;
5. movement;
6. crafts;
7. role play; and
8. flashcards.

These activities were selected because teaching English to children needs to provide concrete, engaging, and meaningful experiences. Games and songs, for example, can be used to increase children's engagement while providing opportunities to use language in a more enjoyable learning environment (Damayanti & Faozah, 2016). This principle is also consistent with the young learner approach, which positions activities, experiences, interaction, and contextual language use as important parts of the learning process (Cameron, 2001; Pinter, 2017).

The training applied the principle of learning by doing. Teachers did not merely receive explanations about the methods but also experienced simulations of activities from the learners' perspective. Afterward, teachers attempted to adapt these activities into learning activities that could be implemented in their classrooms.

Thus, the training process followed the cycle:

Concept → Demonstration → Practice → Feedback → Reflection → Application

This cycle enabled participants to move from conceptual understanding toward practical application. The integration of knowledge and practice is an important aspect of teacher professional competence development (Hadi, 2019).

Stage 4: Microteaching

Microteaching was the practical stage used to examine teachers' ability to apply the materials, methods, and teaching resources developed during the training. At this stage, teachers conducted learning simulations within a limited setting, focusing on specific teaching skills.

Each teacher practiced several learning components:

1. opening;
2. greeting;
3. classroom instructions;
4. presentation;
5. questioning;
6. pair/group work;
7. games;
8. speaking activities;
9. use of teaching media;
10. feedback; and
11. closing.

Teachers also practiced the use of classroom English for giving instructions, asking questions, providing reinforcement, checking understanding, and managing classroom interaction. These abilities are important because teacher talk is one of the sources of language exposure received by students during English language learning (Harmer, 2015; Pinter, 2017). Microteaching was evaluated using an observation checklist/performance rubric. The observed aspects included:

Table 1. Performance Observation Rubric

No	Aspect	Indicator
1	Content Mastery	Accuracy and relevance of materials
2	Classroom English	Use of English expressions during instruction
3	Instructions	Clarity and appropriateness of instructions
4	Pronunciation	Clarity of pronunciation
5	Method	Application of play and learn methods/communicative activities
6	Interaction	Teacher-student interaction
7	Classroom management	Management of the classroom and activities
8	Assessment	Ability to check understanding/learning outcomes

Microteaching followed the pattern:

Practice → Feedback → Reflection → Improvement

Teachers received feedback from the implementation team and peers regarding aspects that had been performed well and aspects that still needed improvement. The feedback was then used to reflect on and improve teaching practices. This approach is important because teacher competence development requires opportunities to apply knowledge in practice, receive feedback, and engage in reflection. Therefore, microteaching functioned not only as a performance evaluation but also as a learning process for teachers.

Stage 5: Post-Test

The post-test was administered after participants completed the training and microteaching activities. The purpose of the post-test was to determine changes in participants' competencies following the competency development intervention.

The post-test instrument was aligned with the pre-test components, namely:

- vocabulary;
- basic grammar;
- classroom expressions;
- speaking;
- listening;
- pedagogical knowledge; and
- confidence/teaching readiness.

The alignment of the components enabled comparisons between participants' initial and final conditions. Changes in competence were assessed not only based on written test results but also on performance evidence and activity products.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Community Service (PKM) activity at SDN Girimekar 3 Bandung was implemented through five main stages: Needs Analysis, Pre-Test, Training, Microteaching, and Post-Test. The five stages were designed as an integrated sequence of teacher competency development, in which the results of each stage became the basis for the implementation of the following stage. Conceptually, the activity flow can be illustrated as follows: **Needs Analysis → Pre-Test → Training → Microteaching → Post-Test**

This flow enabled the activity to go beyond the delivery of materials by assessing teachers' initial conditions, providing interventions based on needs, offering opportunities for practice, and measuring changes in competence after the activity. The needs analysis was the initial stage conducted to identify the conditions and needs of teachers at SDN Girimekar 3 Bandung before the training. Needs identification was conducted through interviews, observations, needs questionnaires, and discussions with the school. This stage was directed at obtaining information regarding:

1. teachers' initial English abilities;
2. vocabulary and pronunciation proficiency;
3. teachers' use of English expressions during instruction;

4. teachers' understanding of methods for teaching English to children;
5. teachers' experience in teaching English;
6. teachers' difficulties in implementing instruction;
7. needs for teaching materials and learning media; and
8. teachers' readiness and confidence in using English in the classroom.

The identification results indicated that the partner school's needs were not limited to English language competence but also included pedagogical and methodological competence. The problems identified included limited vocabulary and pronunciation, limited understanding of methods for teaching English to children, limited teaching materials and learning media, and the need for teaching practice and mentoring. The needs analysis results can be summarized into four main areas:

Table 2. Needs Analysis

No	Aspect	Teacher Condition/Need
1	Linguistic Competence	Strengthening vocabulary, pronunciation, basic grammar, and expressions
2	Classroom English	Strengthening the ability to give instructions and interact using English
3	Pedagogical-methodological	Understanding English teaching for children and the play and learn method
4	Media and Teaching Materials	Need for engaging, contextual, and easy-to-use materials and media

The needs analysis results showed that improving teachers' competence to implement English language learning requires an integrated approach. Strengthening English language ability needs to occur alongside strengthening pedagogical ability. This finding is important because primary school teachers who teach English need to be able to use the language while also teaching it to primary school learners. In other words, teacher competence comprises two inseparable dimensions: **language competence** and **teaching competence**.

Therefore, the needs analysis results served as the rationale for selecting training materials that included English for Teachers, Classroom English, Teacher Talk, pronunciation, basic grammar, and Teaching English to Young Learners. These materials were then combined with Communicative Language Teaching, Task-Based Learning, classroom management, teaching media, and assessment.

The pre-test was conducted to obtain an overview of participants' initial competencies before participating in the training. The pre-test functioned as a baseline for determining teachers' level of proficiency and as a basis for comparison with the post-test results.

The aspects measured included:

- vocabulary;
- basic grammar;
- classroom expressions;
- speaking;
- listening;
- pedagogical knowledge; and
- confidence/teaching readiness.

The measurements were designed to examine teacher competence more comprehensively rather than merely assessing the ability to answer English questions. The pre-test results provided an overview of the gap between teachers' initial competencies and the competencies required to teach English in primary schools.

If the data show that a particular aspect receives a lower score than other aspects, that aspect becomes a priority in the training. For example, if classroom expressions and speaking show relatively low scores, the training needs to provide more opportunities for practicing oral English.

This approach makes the training process more responsive to participants' conditions. It is consistent with the principle of needs-based training, in which training is developed according to participants' actual needs rather than solely on predetermined materials. Training was the core stage of the PKM activity. Based on the needs analysis and pre-test results, the training focused on two main components:

1. improving teachers' English language competence; and
2. improving teachers' pedagogical competence in teaching English to children.

The training materials included:

- a. English for Teachers;
- b. Classroom English;
- c. Teacher Talk;
- d. English vocabulary for primary education;
- e. pronunciation;
- f. basic grammar;
- g. Teaching English to Young Learners;
- h. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT);
- i. Task-Based Learning (TBL);
- j. classroom management;
- k. teaching media; and
- l. assessment for young learners.

The training did not rely solely on lectures but combined explanations, demonstrations, exercises, simulations, discussions, and practice. This approach was used so that teachers could directly try out the language and teaching strategies. One of the focuses of the training was to improve teachers' ability to use English in professional and instructional contexts (English for Teachers and Classroom English). Teachers were introduced to expressions that could be used for:

- a. opening the lesson;
- b. greeting students;
- c. giving instructions;
- d. asking questions;
- e. checking understanding;
- f. giving praise;
- g. providing correction;
- h. managing activities;
- i. forming groups;
- j. ending activities; and
- k. closing the lesson.

The training also strengthened the basic language aspects needed by teachers. Vocabulary focused on words closely related to children's lives, the school environment, classroom objects, daily activities, family, colors, numbers, food, and other simple topics. Grammar was presented functionally, using structures that could be directly applied in simple communication. Similarly, pronunciation was not presented merely as phonological knowledge but was practiced through the pronunciation of vocabulary and expressions that teachers would use in instruction. Thus, the training approach did not position grammar as the ultimate goal but as a **language resource** to support communication.

The pedagogical component of the training was directed toward the characteristics of children as English language learners. Teachers were introduced to play and learn-based learning involving: Songs, stories, games, movements, TPR, crafts, role play, and flashcards.

These strategies provided alternatives to learning that focuses solely on vocabulary memorization or written exercises. The activity document specifically established these eight activities as part of the learning strategies introduced to teachers.

The training results showed that teachers gained new experiences in using English as part of classroom interaction and in selecting activities appropriate to students' characteristics.

The observed changes were primarily in:

- a. understanding the function of classroom English;
- b. familiarity with communicative learning methods;
- c. ability to select play and learn activities;
- d. understanding of the use of teaching media;
- e. understanding of teaching English to children; and
- f. increased readiness to try English language teaching practices.

The training can be illustrated as:

Knowledge → Demonstration → Guided Practice → Independent Practice

This stage was then followed by microteaching to examine teachers' ability to apply the training outcomes. Microteaching provided teachers with opportunities to apply the knowledge and skills acquired during training through learning simulations. During this activity, teachers practiced several learning components:

- a. opening;
- b. greeting;
- c. classroom instructions;
- d. presentation;
- e. questioning;
- f. pair/group work;
- g. games;
- h. speaking activities;
- i. use of teaching media;
- j. feedback; and
- k. closing.

The microteaching activities were also directed at enabling teachers to apply the methods introduced during the training. The activity document established that participants were expected to demonstrate at least two different methods during the microteaching session.

Qualitatively, the microteaching showed that teachers began to integrate classroom English and play and learn activities into their teaching simulations. Teachers also had opportunities to practice using teaching media and managing classroom interaction. An important aspect of this stage was the emergence of the peer feedback process. Teachers not only received evaluation from the PKM team but also learned to observe their colleagues' teaching practices.

This process encouraged teachers to reflect more critically on their teaching. Microteaching became the connecting point between the competencies acquired through training and the implementation of learning. While training resulted in improvements at the level of knowledge and understanding, microteaching tested whether that knowledge could be applied in teaching practice. Thus, the process established the relationship:

Training → Practice → Feedback → Reflection → Improvement

This approach represents one of the strengths of the activity because teachers were provided with a relatively safe space to make mistakes, receive feedback, and improve their practices before implementing them in actual classroom settings. The post-test was conducted after teachers completed the needs analysis, pre-test, training, and microteaching sequence. The purpose of the post-test was to determine changes in teacher competence following the intervention.

The post-test components were aligned with the aspects measured in the pre-test, allowing changes to be compared directly. Comparison of pre-test and post-test results served as the basis for examining the effectiveness of the activity in improving teacher competence. If the actual results showed an increase in the mean score, such an increase would indicate that the training and microteaching sequence contributed to the development of participants' competencies.

CONCLUSION

The Community Service (PKM) activity entitled “**Improving Teacher Competence at SDN Girimekar 3 Bandung: Preparing for the Implementation of English Language Teaching as a Mandatory Subject at the Primary Education Level**” was implemented through five main stages: Needs Analysis, Pre-Test, Training, Microteaching, and Post-Test. These five stages formed a systematic competency development sequence, beginning with needs identification, initial competency mapping, intervention, application practice, and evaluation of activity outcomes.

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