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Introducing English to Elementary School Students in Pekijing Village Through Songs: A Community Service Program

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Abstract. *This program of community service was conducted to help the basic English mastery of elementary school students in Pekijing Village, Taktakan District, and the songs were used as a medium for enjoying learning. The drive was motivated by a medium English speaking issues seen among the kids of the region and most trying to recognize the English alphabet. The reasons for this include too little exposure to English in everyday life, a low level of knowledge among teachers and parents on how to make good progress with English language learning as well as a lack of motivation from children. The program employed a participatory descriptive approach, actively involving elementary school students in all stages of the learning process. The implementation consisted of three main stages: preparation, execution, and evaluation. During the learning sessions, the ABC song was used as the primary instructional medium to introduce and reinforce alphabet recognition in an enjoyable and interactive way. Data were collected through participatory observation and documentation to assess student engagement and learning progress throughout the program. The results showed an observable improvement in students' ability to recognize and pronounce the English alphabet. In addition, the use of songs contributed positively to students' learning motivation, participation, and confidence during the activities. The students became more enthusiastic, active, and responsive in engaging with the learning process. These findings indicate that songs can serve as an effective and enjoyable medium for introducing basic English to young learners. Furthermore, this program had a positive impact on the local community by increasing awareness of the importance of early English education as a foundation for children's future learning development.*

Keywords: *English learning, song-based learning, elementary school students*

INTRODUCTION

English has become one of the most essential global languages in education, communication, and professional development. In the era of globalization, early exposure to English is increasingly important to prepare younger generations for future academic and professional challenges. Children at the elementary school level are considered to have strong cognitive flexibility and natural language acquisition abilities, making early childhood an ideal stage for learning a foreign language. Therefore, introducing English at an early age through engaging methods such as songs can reduce anxiety, increase

motivation, and encourage children's participation in communication activities (Lucas, 2023; Pitychoutis et al., 2026).

Effective English instruction for young learners should align with children's developmental characteristics. Unlike adult learners, children tend to learn more effectively in interactive, enjoyable, and meaningful environments. Learning activities that incorporate repetition, movement, rhythm, and playful interaction are more likely to improve engagement and retention. Thus, selecting appropriate teaching methods and learning media that align with young learners' characteristics is essential for creating effective and engaging English language learning (Budianto, S. et al., 2024; Siregar et al., 2026)

received considerable attention in English language learning is song-based learning. Songs provide rhythm, repetition, and enjoyable learning experiences that help young learners improve vocabulary, pronunciation, memory retention, and motivation. Previous studies have shown that songs positively influence language learning by creating enjoyable and low-anxiety learning environments. Songs also enable children to absorb language patterns naturally through repeated exposure to sounds and words (Marpaung et al., 2025; Neithanantan et al., 2023).

The use of songs in English learning has also been found effective in increasing students' motivation and classroom participation. Song-based learning allows children to learn while singing, moving, and interacting, which makes learning less intimidating and more engaging. Research by Siregar et al., (2026) found that songs significantly improve elementary students' motivation in learning English. Similarly, (Nadiya et al., (2026) reported that song-based learning contributes positively to young learners' speaking development, vocabulary acquisition, and confidence.

Despite these advantages, effective English learning remains challenging in many rural and underserved areas, including Pekijing Village, Taktakan District. Based on preliminary observations conducted before this community service program, many elementary school students in Pekijing Village demonstrated limited English proficiency, particularly in basic skills such as alphabet recognition and pronunciation. Many children were unable to recite English letters correctly or pronounce them accurately. This condition indicates that English exposure remains highly limited both in formal educational settings and in daily interactions.

Several factors contribute to this problem. First, limited access to educational resources and innovative teaching methods reduces children's opportunities to engage with English meaningfully. Second, the lack of English exposure in daily life makes language acquisition more difficult. Third, limited support from parents and surrounding communities further affects children's motivation and confidence in learning English. These challenges are common in rural communities where access to educational support remains limited (Al-Farizy et al., 2025; SAB. et al., 2026).

To address these challenges, innovative and child-friendly learning approaches are needed. English learning for young learners should not rely solely on conventional

teacher-centered methods, as such approaches often reduce student engagement and motivation. Instead, more creative approaches that combine educational value and enjoyable learning experiences are required. Song-based learning offers strong potential because it integrates fun, repetition, and interaction into the learning process.

Several previous studies have examined the use of songs in English language learning for young learners. Most studies reported positive outcomes in improving vocabulary mastery (Fauzi, 2022; Helmi, 2024), pronunciation (Regiani et al., 2024; Safitri et al., 2024), speaking skills (Hasibuan et al., 2023; Manuputty, 2021), and learner motivation (Hamdani, 2024; Urbaite, 2025). However, most of these studies were conducted in formal classroom settings such as schools or language institutions. Limited studies have explored the implementation of song-based English learning in community service contexts, particularly in rural communities with limited access to English education.

Furthermore, only a limited number of studies specifically focus on using simple alphabet songs as introductory tools for building basic English literacy among elementary school children. This research gap highlights the need for contextual and community-based educational programs that address the real learning needs of children in underserved areas.

The novelty of this community service program lies in three important aspects. First, this program applies song-based English learning in a community service setting rather than a formal classroom context. Second, it specifically focuses on introducing basic English literacy through alphabet recognition using the ABC song as the primary learning medium. Third, this program adopts a participatory approach involving lecturers, university students, children, and the local community to create a more interactive and meaningful learning environment.

Based on these problems, this community service program seeks to answer two main questions: (1) how can song-based learning improve elementary school students' interest and understanding of basic English in Pekijing Village? and (2) to what extent can songs improve students' motivation, participation, and confidence in learning English?

Therefore, this community service program aims to introduce basic English skills, particularly English alphabet recognition, to elementary school students in Pekijing Village through song-based learning activities. In addition, this program aims to improve students' motivation, participation, and confidence by creating enjoyable and interactive learning experiences.

The significance of this program extends to several aspects. For students, it provides meaningful and enjoyable English learning experiences. For parents and local communities, it increases awareness of the importance of early English education. For educators and higher education institutions, this program contributes to the development of innovative community-based educational practices to support English learning in underserved areas.

METHODS

This community service program employed a participatory descriptive approach, which combines a systematic description of program activities with the active involvement of participants throughout each stage of the learning process. This approach is particularly relevant in community-based educational settings, as it allows facilitators to gain a direct understanding of the learning process through active interaction with participants. In addition, the participatory approach positions participants as essential contributors to the learning process rather than merely as passive recipients, thereby enhancing engagement and creating more meaningful learning experiences (John W. Creswell., 2014; Robert K. & Yin., 2018).

This program was conducted in Pekijing Village, Taktakan District, targeting elementary school students from the local community. Lecturers and university students served as facilitators, whose roles extended beyond delivering instructional materials to creating an interactive and enjoyable learning environment. Within a participatory framework, facilitators functioned as learning companions who encouraged active student participation, enabling more dynamic two-way interaction throughout the learning process (Stephen Kemmis. et al., 2005).

The implementation of the program was carried out through several structured stages. The first stage was preparation, which included preliminary observation to identify participants' conditions and learning needs, as well as the development of learning materials suited to the characteristics of elementary school students. During this stage, the team designed learning activities using the ABC song as the primary medium for introducing the English alphabet. The selection of songs as a learning medium was based on the consideration that children tend to learn more effectively through enjoyable activities and direct learning experiences (Paul, 2003).

The second stage involved the implementation of interactive learning activities. The session began with ice-breaking activities to create a comfortable atmosphere and improve students' readiness to learn. Following this, facilitators introduced the English alphabet through the ABC song, which was sung together with the participants. The children were encouraged to repeatedly imitate the pronunciation of each letter by following the rhythm of the song, allowing the learning process to occur naturally in an enjoyable and engaging manner. To reinforce understanding, the activities were continued with simple song-based games, such as letter recognition and alphabet sequencing exercises. These activities were designed to allow children to learn while playing, which is considered one of the fundamental principles of early childhood learning.



Figure 1. Learning activities for English alphabet introduction

Data collection in this program was conducted through participatory observation, which involved directly monitoring students' engagement, responses, and learning progress during the learning activities. Participatory observation enables the researcher to obtain more in-depth data due to direct involvement in the observed situation (John W. Creswell., 2014). In addition, documentation in the form of photographs and field notes was used to complement the data and provide a more comprehensive description of the program implementation.

The final stage of the program was evaluation, which was conducted descriptively based on the results of observation and documentation. The evaluation focused on students' level of participation, enthusiasm, and basic English skills demonstrated after participating in the activities. The evaluation findings were then analyzed to examine the effectiveness of using songs as a learning medium in improving students' understanding of the English alphabet. Through this participatory descriptive approach, the community service program is expected not only to systematically describe the implementation process, but also to demonstrate the tangible impact of active student engagement in the learning process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of the community service program in Pekijing Village, Taktakan District, took place in a conducive atmosphere and was characterized by high enthusiasm from the participants. The program involved elementary school students who previously demonstrated limited knowledge of English, particularly in basic aspects such as alphabet recognition. From the beginning of the activity, it was observed that most participants were unable to recite English letters in sequence, and some were unfamiliar with the pronunciation of certain letters. This condition further confirmed the initial finding that exposure to English in their environment was still very limited.

At the initial stage of implementation, the activity began with ice-breaking sessions aimed at building rapport between facilitators and participants. This activity proved effective in creating a more relaxed and enjoyable learning atmosphere, enabling children to become more open and ready to participate in subsequent activities. In the context of early childhood learning, a positive emotional atmosphere plays an important role in enhancing students' readiness and engagement in the learning process (Brown, 2007). This was reflected in the change in students' behavior, from being relatively passive at the beginning to becoming more active after the introductory session.

In the main learning activities, facilitators introduced the English alphabet through the ABC song. The song was selected due to its simple, repetitive structure, which makes it easy for children to follow. In the first stage, participants were asked to listen carefully while the song was played. Subsequently, the song was played again, and the children were invited to sing along while performing simple accompanying movements to support the learning process. The gradual repetition helped students memorize the sequence of letters and improve their pronunciation. The use of songs in language learning has been shown to enhance memory retention and assist learners in naturally understanding language patterns (Paul, 2003).

During the learning process, a noticeable increase in student participation was observed. Children who were initially hesitant to engage in the activity gradually showed greater confidence in singing and pronouncing the letters. Interaction between facilitators and participants also became more dynamic, as students not only listened but also actively responded to instructions. This is consistent with the principles of communicative learning, which emphasize the importance of active learner involvement in the learning process (Harmer, 2015). Consequently, the learning process was no longer one-directional, but became more interactive and meaningful.



Figure 2. Students' active participation in learning activities

To strengthen students' understanding, the activity was continued with song-based games, such as arranging letter sequences and guessing letters mentioned by the

facilitators. These activities functioned not only as informal assessment tools but also as a form of reinforcement of the previously taught material. The children showed high enthusiasm in participating in the games, and some of them even began to demonstrate the ability to recall the alphabetical order without the support of the song. This indicates that game-based learning can enhance students' motivation while also strengthening their understanding (Brown, 2007).

In terms of outcomes, the program demonstrated an improvement in participants' basic ability to recognize the English alphabet. Most of the children were able to recite the letters in sequence after participating in the activities, although some pronunciation errors were still observed. In addition, there was an increase in students' self-confidence, as reflected in their willingness to participate and perform during the sessions. This improvement not only reflects the effectiveness of the method applied but also shows that enjoyable learning approaches can positively influence students' affective development.

However, several challenges were encountered during the implementation of the program. One of the main challenges was the variation in students' ability levels, which required more intensive assistance for some participants compared to others. In addition, the limited duration of the program restricted the possibility of delivering more in-depth and sustained learning. Nevertheless, these challenges were addressed through flexible strategies, such as providing individualized support and repeating learning materials gradually to ensure understanding.

Overall, the results of this program indicate that the use of songs as a learning medium is an effective strategy for improving elementary school students' basic English skills. These findings are consistent with previous studies suggesting that songs can enhance learner engagement, motivation, and memory retention in language learning (Thornbury, 2017). Furthermore, the participatory approach employed in this program proved to be effective in creating a more meaningful learning experience, as it actively involved participants in each stage of the activity.

Moreover, this program not only contributed to the improvement of children's language skills but also increased community awareness of the importance of early English education. Parents who observed the activities responded positively and showed interest in the teaching methods used. This opens opportunities for the development of similar programs in the future, both on a larger scale and with more varied content.

Thus, it can be concluded that the integration of songs into English language learning through a participatory descriptive approach is capable of producing meaningful outcomes in both cognitive and affective domains. This program demonstrates that simple yet well-designed instructional strategies can have a tangible impact on improving educational quality in communities, particularly in areas with limited access to English language learning.

CONCLUSION

This community service program demonstrates that song-based learning can serve as an effective and engaging approach for introducing basic English skills to elementary school students in Pekijing Village, Taktakan District. The implementation of the program showed positive outcomes in improving students' basic English literacy, particularly in recognizing and pronouncing the English alphabet through the use of the ABC song as the primary learning medium.

The findings revealed that the integration of songs into English learning created a more enjoyable, interactive, and meaningful learning experience for young learners. Students who initially showed limited knowledge and low confidence in learning English gradually became more enthusiastic, active, and confident throughout the learning activities. The use of songs, combined with simple interactive games, not only supported students' cognitive development in alphabet recognition but also positively influenced affective aspects such as motivation, participation, and self-confidence.

This program also highlights the effectiveness of implementing song-based English learning in a community service context, particularly in rural areas with limited access to English education. The participatory approach involving lecturers, university students, children, and the local community contributed to the creation of a supportive and interactive learning environment. In addition, this program increased community awareness, particularly among parents, regarding the importance of introducing English at an early age as a foundation for future learning.

The novelty of this program lies in the application of song-based English learning in a non-formal community setting, with a specific focus on alphabet recognition through the ABC song and the integration of participatory learning strategies. These findings suggest that simple, accessible, and enjoyable instructional approaches can provide meaningful contributions to improving educational quality in underserved communities.

However, this program also encountered several limitations, including differences in students' ability levels and the limited duration of implementation, which restricted the depth and continuity of learning. Therefore, future community service programs are recommended to be conducted over a longer period with broader learning materials, including basic vocabulary and simple daily expressions. Greater involvement from parents, schools, and local communities is also encouraged to support sustainable English learning beyond the program activities.

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