

Efforts to Improve English Language Skills for School Age Children by the Kabuna Village Government, Belu Regency

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Abstract

This research aims to determine the government's efforts in Kabuna Village, Kakuluk Mesak District, Belu Regency to develop English language skills for school-age children. Data acquisition techniques in this writing are interviews, observation and library literacy. In the interview method the author uses the snowball technique. Kabuna Village has two English learning groups, namely the English learning group at the village office and in Bautasik Hamlet. The location of this research is an English learning group at the Kabuna and Bautasik Village offices called Bautasik English Speaking (BES). The author conducted interviews with 13 sources consisting of village officials, English teachers and students. BES is located at RT/RW 01/01 Bautasik Hamlet. The aim of BES is to cultivate English for school-aged children with a speaking orientation. The form of activity is speaking practice.

Keywords: *Efforts to Improve English Language Skills*

INTRODUCTION

Literacy is a fundamental human right and the foundation for lifelong learning. Based on this understanding, literacy is the skills possessed by individuals to read, write, calculate, and skills to solve problems. Literacy can be realized in the form of libraries, one of which is the village library. Village libraries play a role in increasing information literacy in rural communities, providing a platform for various positive activities such as basic life skills training, computer workshops, and so on. Kabuna village library literacy is not only a tool for fulfilling the rights of rural communities to learn but also a partner for human resource development in the border area of Belu Regency.

Kabuna Village is one of the 3 T areas, located in Kakuluk Mesak District, Belu Regency. The geographical location of the Kabuna Village area is on the crossroads of the Unitary Republic of Indonesia and the Democratic Republic of Timor Leste (RDTL). Kabuna Village, Kakuluk Mesak District, Belu Regency is also close to Australia, Fiji, Fanuatu and other countries around the Australian region which can access Indonesia via land routes (PLBN Mota'ain), sea routes and air routes. These geographical conditions represent opportunities and challenges for the government of Kabuna Village, Belu Regency in particular and the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia in general. Realizing

this condition, the Kabuna Village government launched a village library literacy development program. One important part of the Kabuna Village library literacy program is English language lessons for school-aged children. Kabuna Village has two English learning groups, namely the English learning group at the Kabuna Village Office and in Bautasik Hamlet.

Objective from the Bautasik English Club (BEC) is to introduce and develop the abilities of school-age children in the field of English as an international language of instruction. The activities carried out are speaking and listening and at least reading. This was done because based on observations, children graduating from high school cannot speak and hear. The number of active participants in English learning activities in the last three years (2022-2024) has fluctuated between 20 and 50. The level of student attendance is influenced by the season. When school exams approach, attendance decreases and even stops temporarily, but after the exams the enthusiasm of participants usually increases. The target of achieving this activity is to prepare school age children to be able to speak English, have communication, socializing and public speaking skills. This activity was carried out at Mr. Yance Kun's house from Monday to Saturday. The challenge faced in implementing this activity is the level of attendance. Student attendance fluctuates (up and down).

Formulation of the problem

The problem formulation in this paper; What are the Kabuna Village government's efforts to improve English language skills for school-age children in the form of a village library literacy program, especially English learning activities?

RESEARCH METHOD

The methods used in this research are interviews, literature study and observation. Creswell illustrates Observation is the process of obtaining first-hand data, by observing people and the location where the research is carried out. Patton describes the observation method as an accurate and specific method for collecting data and seeking information regarding all activities that are the object of research study. According to Eko Putro Widyoko Observation is the systematic observation and recording of elements that appear in a symptom on the research object. Riyanto explained that observation is a data collection method that uses direct or indirect observation.

The interview technique used in this research was the snowball technique. Heckathorn stated that the snowball technique is a sampling technique that allows researchers to reach hidden or difficult-to-reach populations by utilizing participants' existing social networks. According to Kaplan and Saccuzzo, the snowball sampling technique is sampling based on references from initial participants to recruit new participants. According to Bernard, sampling using the snowball technique is sampling based on participants' social networks to recruit new participants. The author also uses literature related to village library literacy. Village library literature becomes a reference and adds to the author's insight in exploring research on developing village library literacy in Kabuna Village, Kakuluk Mesak District, Belu Regency.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

English language learning activities in Kabuna Village consist of two groups, namely the group studying at the Kabuna village office

and the Bautasik English Speaking (BES) group.

Kabuna Village Program

The formulation of the Kabuna Village library literacy program by including English as one of the subjects taught regularly to school-aged children stems from several problems such as geographical problems, concerns about children's ability to speak English after graduating from high school/vocational school and the hope that it will open up opportunities. It is better for children if they are equipped with English language skills. Kabuna Village is geographically located on the main route/state road that connects the Republic of Indonesia and the Democratic Republic of Timor Leste. This results in Kabuna Village often becoming the main traffic between the two countries and other countries such as Australia and Singapore which enter Indonesian territory via the PLBN Mota'ain route. This is both a challenge and an opportunity for future generations of Kabuna Village residents.

These geographical conditions have encouraged the Kabuna Village government to implement programs related to developing the knowledge and insight of school-age children through the village library program. The Kabuna Village library literacy program has been running since 2019. One of the activities is English language lessons for school-aged children in the Kabuna Village area, namely the group studying at the Kabuna Village Office and the BES group.

Kabuna Village Office Group

The study group at the Kabuna Village office carries out English learning activities for school-aged children on Wednesdays. The resources prepared by the Kabuna Village government to support the implementation of this activity are:

a) Teacher/tutor

The Kabuna Village Government prepares tutors for English subjects. His job is to accompany students in English lessons. Lesson materials in English learning activities are reading, listening, writing and speaking. The learning concept is learning

while playing. The material taught is basic. The aim is to instill English in children from an early age so that children do not feel foreign. Study time is in accordance with the lesson schedule for English, namely Wednesday. Study time has been set standardly because apart from English, children also take part in other activities, namely computers and mathematics

b) Internet Network

A facility that helps facilitate English language learning activities for early childhood in Kabuna Village is the internet network. Kabuna Village has an internet network to speed up access to information and services. Another goal is to answer the challenges of public services in the 5.0 era. This internet network can be used during English lessons to make it easier for children in learning activities such as accessing dictionaries to look up the meaning of words, accessing English learning videos, accessing English games and so on.

c) Library and study room

The Kabuna Village Government has village library and reading room facilities. In the library and reading room, tables and chairs are provided as learning facilities. This tool is often used during English lessons. English lessons are sometimes held in the village office yard if the material is related to environmental recognition, games such as hide and see and so on.

d) Toilets and clean water

Facilities that can be used during English learning activities are toilets and clean water. The Kabuna Village Government has a drilled well. The water can be used during activities in the village, including during English lessons. Drilled well water is also distributed to the community around the village office to meet their clean water needs

Bautasik English Speaking (BES) Group

BES was founded in 2019 by BP Yance Kun. The beginning of the founding of BES was based on Mr. Yance's reflection that high school/vocational school graduates could not

speak because they were not trained and used to it. Apart from that, children do not have good public speaking and social skills. Data shows that young Indonesians have low public speaking skills as reported in the Jakarta Tribune 15/03/2023. Based on Mr Yance's concerns, an English learning group was formed under the name BES. BES concentrates more on speaking. The BES teaching staff is BP Yance Kun, assisted by guest teachers such as Hermina Manlea, a lecturer at PT UNIMOR. He completed his Masters and PhD in Australia. Hermina's mother's presence became a source of enthusiasm that encouraged the children to study harder. There are also guest teachers as housewives who work in Malaysia but are able to speak English fluently because they work with Indians. The presence of these guest teachers is a clear example that the ability to speak English is a value that brings children access to scholarships and jobs with better income.

The aim of BES is

a. Training school age children's English-speaking skills.

The method used in BES learning is the mother tongue method, meaning that children are continuously trained to speak as the mother tongue is taught to babies in the early speaking phase. If children are trained and accustomed to speaking continuously, they will be able to speak. Children are given as wide an opportunity as possible to speak according to a predetermined topic. Monday's topic is talking about school, Tuesday is talking about shopping, Wednesday is talking about visiting friends, Thursday is talking about brotherhood, Friday is talking about parties, Saturday is singing. This topic will develop and change once children feel they are fluent enough.

b. Develop public speaking, socialization and communication skills

This activity is carried out by being the Master of Ceremony (MC) at birthday events, delivering opening remarks, promoting tourist attractions, playing games with English language instructions. All activities are carried out using English.

Apart from honing English-speaking skills, the activities above also develop social and communication skills

BES Achievements

BES has organized activities such as an English speech competition sponsored by the NGO saved the children in 2022. Promoting tourist attractions in Belu Regency through the BES YouTube account. BES was also asked to take part in several activities as a guest star, namely welcoming the national literacy ambassador who visited Kabuna Village in 2021, being a guest welcomer at the Perbub socialization event on Community-Based Total Sanitation (STBM) which was attended by village heads in the East Tasifeto and Subdistrict areas. Kakuluk Mesak, Belu Regency, was a guest star on RRI Belu Regency 4 times, was a guest star on Atambua's favorite radio once, was a guest star in the 3rd Musda activities of the Belu Regency National Nurses Association in 2022, was a guest star at the St. Mary's Kindergarten graduation. Hendrikus, Kabuna Village, Kakuluk Mesak District, Belu Regency

Challenges faced

The most difficult challenge is the presence of students. Student attendance is unstable. This is influenced by various factors. One of the most prominent factors is that students come from families whose economic background is not very well off. This situation often conditions children to help their parents with their work at home. Children as students do not only focus on teaching and learning activities but receive other tasks from their parents. This causes children not always to attend English learning activities.

The strategy used is for the teacher to repeat the same material over several meetings. The aim is not only to provide opportunities for students who are not present, but also to internalize the material that the students have received. This is done based on the awareness that students do not have enough time to study independently at home due to economic conditions, teaching and learning activities at school and other extracurricular activities.

Opportunity

- a) Preparing a generation that is able to communicate in English

A generation that is able to communicate will have a positive impact on themselves as well as on the government and society. English language skills enable children to access better jobs, take part in the LPDP scholarship selection to obtain higher education, promote culture and tourist attractions in English through social media accounts and so on. This at least minimizes the problem of weak public speaking skills as written in the Jakarta Tribune news 15/02/23 about the low public speaking skills of young Indonesians,

- b) Preparing the nation's generation to welcome the free market of Indonesia and Timor Leste

The location of the Kabuna Village area is quite strategic, namely 30 minutes to the PLBN Mota'ain boundary gate and is on the main route/state road. This location allows Kabuna VILLAGE to become a flow of trade traffic between the two countries. The National Border Management Agency (BNPP) noted that the Motaain National Border Post (PLBN) in Belu Regency, East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) reported export activity of IDR 50,963,727,435 in January 2024. The export products were nine basic commodities, water minerals, electronic goods, furniture, clothing, cosmetics, household furniture, kitchen equipment, office stationery, motor vehicles, building materials, children's toys and vehicles.

Apart from export trends, the Motaain PLBN which is managed by the National Border Management Agency (BNPP) also records data on departure crossings between countries for both Indonesian citizens (WNI) and foreign citizens (WNA). The number of people crossing from the arrival terminal was recorded as 11,472 people in January 2024, consisting of 5,564

Indonesian citizens and 5,908 foreigners. From the departure terminal, a total of 12,470 cross-border movements were recorded, consisting of 5,120 Indonesian citizens and 7,350 foreign nationals. The total number of interstate travelers through the state gate at PLBN Motaain was recorded at 23,942 people. Meanwhile, the number of inter-state travelers using cross-border transportation was 1,732 people

The data above shows that trade flows between the two countries will increase. The exchange rates used are dollars and rupiah. The languages used are Tethun and Indonesian. If there is involvement from other countries such as Australia, Fiji, Fanuatu and countries around Australia, of course the language used is English. This is an opportunity but also a challenge for school-age children in the Kabuna Village area. If you are able to participate because you have skills in language, communication and social skills then this opportunity will be a blessing, but if you don't have the skills then this opportunity will turn into a challenge.

CLOSING

CONCLUSION

The formation of an English learning group in Kabuna Village is an implication of the presence of village library literacy in the Indonesian border region. English learning activities are carried out at the Kabuna Village and Bautasik Hamlet offices which are called Bautasik English Speaking (BES). The impact of this activity is to develop English speaking skills, social skills, public speaking, communication and leadership. After several years of running the activity, the positive impact of this activity was evident in the form of: holding an English speech competition sponsored by an international NGO, being asked to be a guest star, being asked to be a receptionist and giving a welcome greeting in English, promoting tourist attractions in Belu

Regency. in English via the BES YouTube channel, and others.

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