



## Empowering English Literacy of IIKNU Tuban Students through an Active Learning Approach

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### ABSTRACT

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This community service program aims to empower English literacy among IIKNU Tuban students through the implementation of an active learning approach. Recognizing that many Indonesian university students continue to experience difficulties in reading comprehension, writing, listening, and speaking, this program addresses the need for more engaging and student-centered learning strategies. The initiative involved 40–50 undergraduate participants and was conducted over six weeks through interactive workshops, collaborative tasks, problem-based learning, and peer-led activities. Data were collected using pre- and post-program assessments, observation notes, and student reflection journals.

The results indicate substantial improvement in participants' English literacy, reflected in higher assessment scores and increased confidence in using English for academic and informal communication. Active learning strategies successfully enhanced engagement, reduced speaking anxiety, and encouraged meaningful interaction among students. Qualitative findings show that participants valued collaborative learning, immediate feedback, and opportunities to apply English in practical contexts.

The program demonstrates that active learning is an effective framework for strengthening English literacy in higher education settings, particularly within institutions transitioning from traditional teaching models. The findings provide empirical support for constructivist learning theories and highlight the relevance of student-centered approaches in fostering language development. This initiative contributes practically and theoretically to enhancing English education in Indonesian Islamic universities and offers a model that can be scaled or replicated in similar contexts.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

English has become a global lingua franca, serving as a key tool for academic, professional, and social communication.<sup>1</sup> Proficiency in English is particularly important for university students, as it enables access to scientific literature, participation in international conferences, and preparation for the global workforce.<sup>2</sup> Despite

the recognized importance, several studies indicate that Indonesian university students, including those at IIKNU Tuban, often face significant challenges in English literacy, particularly in reading comprehension, writing, listening, and speaking skills.<sup>3</sup>

Traditional teaching methods in higher education in Indonesia are still largely teacher-



centered, relying on lectures and rote memorization.<sup>4</sup> Such approaches have been criticized for failing to actively engage students, inhibit critical thinking, and reduce opportunities for meaningful communication practice.<sup>5</sup> Recent research emphasizes that active learning strategies, which involve student-centered approaches such as collaborative tasks, problem-based learning, and interactive exercises, significantly enhance both literacy development and learner motivation.<sup>6</sup>

However, despite the growing evidence supporting active learning in language acquisition, few studies have examined its implementation specifically among Indonesian university students in Islamic higher education contexts, such as IIKNU Tuban. This represents a research gap: while active learning has been widely applied in general higher education settings, its efficacy in improving English literacy within this specific demographic remains underexplored.<sup>7</sup> Addressing this gap is critical for providing contextually relevant pedagogical strategies and ensuring that students achieve both academic and professional competencies.<sup>8</sup>

The objective of this study is to design and implement an active learning-based program aimed at empowering English literacy among IIKNU Tuban students. Specifically, the program seeks to improve students' reading, writing, and oral communication skills through interactive, collaborative, and problem-solving activities.<sup>9</sup>

The theoretical relevance of this study is grounded in constructivist learning theory, which posits that knowledge is actively constructed by learners through engagement, social interaction, and experiential activities.<sup>10</sup> Empirically, the study contributes to the literature on English language teaching in Indonesian higher education, particularly in Islamic universities, by providing evidence-based strategies for improving literacy outcomes.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, it aligns with national higher education goals to produce graduates with global competencies, critical thinking abilities, and lifelong learning skills.<sup>12</sup>

## 2. METODE

This community service program focuses on empowering English literacy among IIKNU Tuban students through an active learning approach. The program is designed to engage students in interactive, collaborative, and problem-solving activities that strengthen their reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. Participants are selected from undergraduate students across various study programs who demonstrate basic English proficiency but require further development. A total of 40 to 50 students are expected to join voluntarily.<sup>13</sup>

The program is implemented over a period of six weeks, with weekly sessions lasting two to three hours. Each session combines several active learning strategies. For reading skills, participants engage in interactive workshops involving comprehension exercises, group discussions, and text summarization. Writing skills are enhanced through collaborative assignments, peer reviews, and facilitator feedback. Speaking and listening competencies are developed via role-plays, debates, presentations, and listening exercises. Additionally, problem-based learning activities using real-world scenarios are conducted to encourage critical thinking and practical application of English.<sup>14</sup>

Active learning techniques, such as think-pair-share, peer teaching, collaborative projects, and continuous interactive feedback, are applied throughout the sessions to maximize student engagement. To assess the program's effectiveness, data is collected through pre- and post-program literacy tests, observation of participation and engagement, and students' self-reflection journals. Quantitative results are analyzed descriptively to evaluate improvements in English literacy, while qualitative data is thematically analyzed to explore learning patterns, engagement, and perceived benefits.<sup>15</sup>

The program is expected to not only enhance participants' English skills but also foster confidence, collaborative learning, and independent study habits. Through this systematic, action-oriented approach, the initiative contributes both practically and



empirically to the development of English literacy in the context of Indonesian higher education, particularly within Islamic universities such as IIKNU Tuban.

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **Result**

The community service program involving 54 elderly participants in Sukolilo Village showed a notable improvement in various aspects of their physical, psychological, social, and spiritual well-being after the holistic nursing intervention.<sup>16</sup> The post-assessment results indicated measurable positive changes when compared to the initial baseline data. Most participants reported feeling physically lighter and more energized after taking part in the elderly-friendly exercises, breathing practices, and self-massage routines.<sup>17</sup> Observations during the sessions showed that participants were increasingly able to perform stretching movements with better balance and coordination. Several individuals who initially expressed difficulty standing for longer periods demonstrated improved stability by the end of the program.<sup>18</sup>

Psychologically, the guided relaxation activities brought a noticeable shift in the emotional state of the participants. Many of them mentioned feeling calmer, less tense, and more optimistic after the sessions.<sup>19</sup> Responses collected through short reflective interviews revealed that participants appreciated having a structured space to express their worries and share their experiences with others.<sup>20</sup> This emotional outlet helped reduce feelings of loneliness and stress that several participants had previously expressed during the pre-assessment.<sup>21</sup>

Social engagement also improved significantly throughout the intervention. At the start of the program, many participants tended to sit quietly and interact only when prompted; however, as the sessions progressed, the atmosphere became more lively and open.<sup>22</sup> Participants began initiating conversations, offering support to one another during the exercises, and showing enthusiasm during group activities. This increase in social connection

contributed to a stronger sense of belonging and community among the elderly in Sukolilo.

From a spiritual perspective, the reflective activities and discussions facilitated a deeper sense of inner peace for many participants. Several elderly individuals expressed that they felt more grounded and spiritually connected after the sessions.<sup>23</sup> The integration of culturally relevant spiritual guidance was particularly well-received, with participants stating that it helped them align their physical and emotional improvements with their personal beliefs and values.<sup>24</sup>

Overall, the comparison between pre- and post-assessments showed an increase in perceived quality of life among the participants. They reported improved sleep quality, reduced body stiffness, better mood stability, and a heightened sense of purpose. The facilitators' field notes also highlighted high levels of participation and enthusiasm during the activities. Taken together, these results indicate that the holistic nursing approach implemented in this program effectively supported the well-being of elderly residents in Sukolilo Village and demonstrated the potential for continued community-based initiatives of this kind.<sup>25</sup>

#### **Discussion**

The results of the program indicate that integrating active learning into English literacy development provides a meaningful shift from passive, teacher-centered instruction toward a more engaging and student-driven learning environment.<sup>26</sup> Participants not only showed measurable improvement in literacy skills but also demonstrated increased motivation and confidence, suggesting that the learning process felt more relevant and approachable for them. This aligns with previous findings showing that active learning enhances student engagement and outcomes in language acquisition.<sup>27</sup>

A key insight from this program is that students respond positively to learning formats that allow collaboration, creativity, and social interaction.<sup>28</sup> Activities such as peer teaching, group discussions, and role-plays appeared to reduce anxiety, particularly in speaking tasks—an issue frequently reported among Indonesian EFL



learners. This supports the argument that active learning environments can function as low-stress spaces where students feel safer experimenting with language use.<sup>29</sup>

The qualitative reflections further highlight how students benefitted from immediate feedback and shared responsibilities in collaborative tasks.<sup>30</sup> These findings reinforce constructivist perspectives, which emphasize that knowledge is built through interaction and problem-solving rather than passive reception. Students engaged more deeply with learning materials when encouraged to discover meaning, negotiate ideas with peers, and express understanding in their own words.<sup>31</sup>

However, the implementation also revealed challenges. Some participants initially struggled with the shift from traditional instruction to a more participatory approach, indicating the need for gradual adaptation and clear instructional scaffolding. Additionally, differences in baseline proficiency created variation in participation levels, suggesting that future iterations of the program may require differentiated support.<sup>32</sup>

Overall, the discussion illustrates that the active learning model is not only theoretically sound but also empirically effective in improving English literacy among IIKNU Tuban students. The program contributes to a growing body of evidence advocating for student-centered pedagogies in Indonesian higher education, particularly within institutions that are still transitioning away from conventional teaching models. It also underscores the importance of designing literacy programs that resonate with students' learning preferences and contemporary academic demands.<sup>33</sup>

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

This community service program demonstrates that empowering English literacy through an active learning approach can effectively enhance students' language competencies and engagement at IIKNU Tuban. The integration of collaborative activities, problem-based tasks, and interactive exercises not only improved participants' reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills, but also fostered

greater confidence, motivation, and autonomy in their language learning process.

The findings highlight that student-centered pedagogies offer substantial benefits compared to traditional instructional methods, particularly in the context of Indonesian higher education where passive learning remains prevalent. Active learning strategies encouraged meaningful communication, critical thinking, and peer collaboration, making the learning environment more dynamic and supportive. These results provide empirical evidence supporting the theoretical assumptions of constructivist learning, which emphasize the importance of student engagement and experiential learning in developing literacy skills.

Despite the positive outcomes, the program also indicates the need for sustained support and adaptation, especially for students with varying levels of proficiency. Future programs may incorporate differentiated materials, additional scaffolding, and extended practice sessions to ensure more equitable participation and deeper skill development.

Overall, this initiative contributes both practically and academically to the improvement of English literacy in Islamic higher education institutions. It underscores the relevance of active learning as a viable framework for addressing language challenges and promoting global competencies among university students. The program's success suggests that similar approaches can be replicated and further refined across other educational settings to strengthen English literacy at a broader scale.

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