



### Training Secondary English Teacher Competence at Toba Regency Through Simulation Technique

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#### Abstract

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The success of the learning process is inseparable from the competence of the teacher. As one of the determining factors for the success of learning, teachers are expected to continue to improve competency and literacy by adjusting to the times. However, with the end of the Covid 19 Pandemic hitting the world, learning platforms that used to use online learning have been changed back to using conventional learning modes. Realizing this transition, the Community Service Team from the Faculty of Cultural Sciences, University of North Sumatra conducted pedagogic training and increased literacy for English teachers throughout Toba Regency, North Sumatra Province from 15 May to 31 May 2023 in Balige, Toba Regency. By adopting an Action research pattern, this program was successfully implemented where the training participants consisted of junior high school teachers whose schools were mostly located in remote and isolated areas. The results of this community service program succeeded in increasing the literacy of English teachers in preparing teaching plans, and teaching practices, and evaluating innovative English lessons. The training participants hope that this activity can be carried out regularly and continuously so that English teachers in the District have good pedagogical literacy and can improve the quality of English learning.

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#### Abstrak

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*Keberhasilan proses pembelajaran tidak terlepas dari kompetensi guru. Sebagai salah satu faktor penentu keberhasilan pembelajaran, guru diharapkan terus meningkatkan kompetensi dan literasi dengan menyesuaikan perkembangan zaman. Namun seiring dengan berakhirnya Pandemi Covid 19 yang melanda dunia, platform pembelajaran yang tadinya menggunakan pembelajaran dalam jaringan (daring) telah diubah kembali dengan menggunakan mode pembelajaran konvensional. Menyadari transisi ini, Tim Pengabdian masyarakat dari Fakultas Ilmu*

**Kata Kunci:**  
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*Budaya, Universitas Sumatera Utara melaksanakan pelatihan pedagogik dan peningkatan literasi kepada guru guru Bahasa Inggris se Kabupaten Toba Propinsi Sumatera Utara pada tanggal 15 Mei sampai 31 Mei 2023 di Balige, Kabupaten Toba. Dengan mengadopsi pola penelitian Tindakan, program ini berhasil dilaksanakan dengan baik dimana para peserta pelatihan terdiri dari guru guru SMP yang lokasi sekolahnya sebagian besar di daerah terpencil dan terisolir. Hasil program pengabdian masyarakat masyarakat ini berhasil meningkatkan literasi guru guru bahasa Inggris dalam mempersiapkan perencanaan pengajaran, praktik pengajaran dan evaluasi pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris yang inovatif. Para peserta pelatihan berharap bahwa kegiatan ini dapat dilakukan rutin dan berkelanjutan agar para guru Bahasa Inggris di Kabupaten memiliki literasi pedagogy yang baik dan dapat meningkatkan mutu pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris.*

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## **1, INTRODUCTION**

### **General description**

After the Covid-19 pandemic, the learning process at the elementary school level up to tertiary institutions underwent drastic changes (Ellis, Steadman, and Mao, 2020; Collier Villaume *et al.*, 2021). Learning that was previously carried out "on the network" or online, has changed again by implementing face-to-face learning (Sepulveda-Escobar & Morrison, 2020). Of course, this change caused more or less problems for teachers and students, especially in terms of adjusting learning conditions and practices. During the Covid 19 pandemic, teachers tended not to prepare materials, techniques, and learning processes properly. As a result, the impact of this phenomenon can be seen in the teacher's ability which tends to decrease in terms of productivity and creativity in presenting learning materials (Hall et al., 2020).

Responding to this phenomenon, the Government of Toba Regency, North Sumatra implemented an education and training program for junior high school teachers specifically for Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, and English. This activity was facilitated by the Education, Youth, and Sports Office of Toba Regency, North Sumatra Province, from 15 May to 31 May 2023. Specifically for English Language Teaching Training, this program is handled by a community service team from the Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Universitas Sumatera Utara, Medan, Indonesia (Nurgiartiningsih, 2010).

Especially for the English subject in this activity, the Toba Regency Sports and Youth Education Office invited a team of 2 English tutors from the Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Sumatera Utara, Medan who are actively doing community service as an implementation of the Tridarma of Higher Education (Roessingh, 2020). This training activity is expected to equip teachers in Toba Regency, especially those located in remote and isolated areas, to be able to improve their teaching skills and improve the quality of learning so that they can compete with schools located in the City of Toba Regency. Besides that, this activity also aims to equip teachers with good teaching skills by applying the latest approaches, methods, learning techniques, and up-to-date learning materials and provision the ability to use Multimedia. It is hoped that teachers must be able to apply effective English learning methods within the limited facilities and infrastructure that exist in their respective schools (Mubarok, 2018).

The target to be achieved in this community service program is to increase teaching literacy for junior high school English teachers in remote and isolated areas in Toba Regency, North

Sumatra. Observations made by the community service team revealed that teachers had not been able to determine the competencies that students had to achieve in each material, the application of teaching practices was still focused on activities originating from textbooks and learning evaluations were not well designed, in fact they only relied on the exercises contained in the textbook (Susan et al., 2020; Guevara-Bazán et al., 2020).



**Figure 1. Trainer and Participants**

### **Problem**

Before this community service activity was carried out, the team had received information that English teachers in Toba Regency, especially in remote and isolated areas, had very limited experience in designing learning objectives, and teaching practices and conducting learning evaluations of each material available in the syllabus. This information is reinforced by the results of observations and interviews with English teachers before the training activities.

Thus, the problems of this community service were formulated as follows:

1. How is the process of increasing English teachers' literacy in planning, practice and evaluation by using simulation technique in Toba Regency?
2. How is the English teachers' perception of Increasing English teachers' literacy by using simulation technique in Toba Regency?

### **Target solution**

The results of this community service program are expected to provide an understanding and increase the literacy of English teachers at the secondary school level who work in remote and isolated areas in Toba Regency, North Sumatra. Specifically, the target solutions for this activity include the ability of English teachers to prepare English learning objectives and materials measurably, practice the learning process using the latest methods, and design learning evaluations based on learning objectives by applying levels of Cognitive domains in a balanced manner.

## **2. METHOD**

This community service program was aimed at improving secondary school English teacher literacy after Pandemic Covid 19 by utilizing Simulation techniques. The community program was the implementation of a community service program provided by the Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Universitas Sumatera Utara Medan. The participants of the program were twenty-five English teachers at the secondary school level at Toba Regency, North Sumatra. The participants of the program were selected by the Department of Education, Youth, and Sports, Toba Regency Government, applying inclusion criteria, that is, English teachers from isolated and remote areas in the regency.

The participants' demography description was as the followings. The participants consisted of 18 female teachers and 7 male teachers. The ages of teachers range from under 30 years of age (10 teachers), to 31-40 years (8 teachers), and 41-50 years (7 teachers). The design of this community service program adopts an action research pattern, which consists of; planning, implementation, and evaluation. This community service program activity was carried out from May 15 to May 31 at Balige 1 Public Middle School, Jalan Kartini, Saposurung Balige. The implementation is fully supported by the Education, Youth, and Sports Office of Toba Regency. The purpose of community service: to increase the competence of English teachers in Toba district, North Sumatra, especially teachers who are in isolated and remote areas. The results of this service program are expected to equip junior high school English teachers in Toba Regency to be able to improve teaching literacy so that they have the same quality as English teachers in North Sumatra in particular and in Indonesia in general. This service team is an expert in teaching English brought in by the Education Office from the Faculty of Humanities, University of North Sumatra.

## **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The English teacher competency training activities which took place from May 15 to May 31 2023 were divided into 3 (three) stages which included; teaching planning simulations, teaching practice simulations, and evaluation simulations of learning English at the junior high school level.

### **The Simulation of Setting Lesson Plan**

Before the teaching planning simulation activity is carried out, the tutor first conducts a dialogue with the training participant teachers about the readiness of the learning devices before the teaching and learning process is carried out. Information obtained from the statements of the participants revealed that in carrying out teaching, most of the teachers did not prepare their teaching practices properly. at each meeting and material. The trainees only rely on textbooks to guide their teaching patterns.

In this training, tutors emphasize the importance of teaching planning. in this context, tutors train teachers to determine at least 3 specific instructional objectives, according to the topic of teaching and the competencies/skills developed; listening, reading, speaking, writing, and vocabulary. After giving examples of how to make good goals for each sub-competence, participants were asked to determine specific learning goals using operational verbs that can be achieved. In this activity, the participating teachers carried out the activity well by working in teams consisting of 2 teachers for each team.

After the participants had determined the learning objectives at each meeting they would go through, each group was asked to present, explain and discuss the learning objectives they had set. The determination of learning objectives is based on the language skills component contained in the junior high school English curriculum which is divided into listening, reading, speaking, writing, and vocabulary skills (Mehdi Riazi, 2010). After the teachers have finished carrying out this stage, the tutor team then provides an evaluation of the determination of the learning objectives of each skill component, and the participants record and document the results of setting the learning objectives that they have set together which they can later use in the learning process In their respective schools.



**Figure 2. Photo session in Training Room**

### **Simulation of Teaching Practice**

This activity contains the development of teaching techniques, improving the quality of teaching, and selecting interactive teaching methods. Before the simulation of teaching activities is carried out, the tutor first mentions and explains the latest English language teaching approaches, methods, and techniques to the trainees.

As with other training activities, this simulation activity hones teachers' skills in teaching practice based on predetermined material plans. These skills are applied by the teacher to the tutor by playing several roles without prior training i.e. out of time or without any training. In this activity, a simulation is a form of acting in which the trainees display their skills in teaching spontaneously according to the topic of their choice. Each group of trainees (consisting of 2 participants) is allocated 15 minutes to present the subject matter, and the next 15 minutes is to deliver reflections on their teaching practices in the form of conformity of material to planning, suitability of material to teaching methods, suitability of teaching techniques to the level of difficulty material and other things that are reflective of the development of learning.



Figure 3. A Trainer made reflection of participants' practices

At the end of this session, the community service tutor concluded the importance of teaching practice to the participants. In this activity the tutor also emphasizes the importance of creating a conducive learning atmosphere, emphasizing the positive aspects of communication that stimulate students to be more active in learning activities. Even though there is already a standard pattern of the learning process, the participants are given the flexibility to be able to explore and present their teaching style which leads to an increase in students' learning motivation.

In addition, tutors also introduce the latest methods in teaching English based on curriculum needs and student needs, such as the application of project-based learning methods, digital storytelling, and role-play. Through this teaching practice simulation activity, the participants' insights to develop themselves are more open because what they have practiced so far has only been guided by the teaching techniques and methods listed in the textbooks.

### Simulation of Setting Learning Evaluation

The process of defining, gathering, and giving relevant data for assessing choice alternatives is known as evaluation. Evaluation is a methodical procedure that determines the degree to which students are meeting their educational goals. Evaluation combines qualitative and quantitative data with value judgments about the behavior's attractiveness.

The assessment category for this course is evaluation. Before giving a brief overview of the importance of evaluation in the context of language learning, the tutor in this project went even further to explore the understanding, skill, and respect that students and teachers had for one another in the context of the evaluation practice that had already been carried out. From the statements made by the tutoring participants, it may be inferred that they were not fully understanding the material based on their honest evaluation of the course's objectives. They only conduct classroom evaluations following the materials included in the handbook. In contrast to this, they struggled to understand the threshold of cognition while developing a statement to evaluate students' capacity.



Figure 4. A Trainer explained various teaching methods

To overcome this problem, the tutor explained, trained, and evaluated the participants in designing the correct evaluation questions by predetermined learning objectives. In this activity, the community service team first explained the stages of cognition based on taxonomic blooms; knowledge, understanding, analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and creation (Matrouk & Raqqad, 2018). The activity continues with the practice of designing learning evaluation questions, peer-reviewing activities for making evaluation questions, and an explanation of the stages of cognition implied in the evaluation item items. Each training participant is allowed to design, test items and explain the accuracy of the items they produce and the effectiveness of their use in measuring students' English skills. This learning evaluation simulation activity lasted for 3 days so that all training participants were able to demonstrate how to make questions that could explore students' English skills.

### **Participants' Perception on Competence Training**

After the training activities were carried out, the community service team and the Toba District Education Office team distributed questionnaire forms to the training participants. In this case the participants were asked to write down their opinions and perceptions about the implementation of this community service program. In general, the participants gave a positive response to this activity, especially in training on designing learning objectives, introducing the latest methods of learning English and methods of making questions based on level of cognition. From the range of satisfaction levels, they felt very satisfied, 19 participants (76%) and 24 participants (24%) were satisfied. They added that the education office should regularly organize English language teaching training activities, especially for teachers working in remote and isolated areas in Toba Regency.



**Figure 5. Trainers and Officers of Education Department of Toba Regency**

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

This community service program is aimed at increasing the literacy and competence of English teachers in Toba Regency, North Sumatra, especially teachers who are placed in remote and isolated areas. This community service activity program is fully supported by the Education, Youth and Sports Office of the Toba Regency Government which lasts for 15 days (15 May-31 May 2023). In accordance with the objectives of the community service program that had been previously set, this program was able to equip English teachers with the ability to prepare lessons, carry out teaching and carry out learning evaluations properly. The results of a survey conducted at the end of this program activity revealed that teachers gained a new experience in designing, teaching and evaluating learning processes based on their level of cognition, which they had never had before. The activity participants suggested that activities like this could be carried out regularly and continuously so that English teachers in Toba Regency, especially those working in isolated and remote areas, could hone their teaching skills. Given the limitations of carrying out this activity in terms of method and time, the volunteers can then focus more on activities honing students' abilities to be able to compete in the national Olympics.

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