

Implementation of English Language Learning in the Elementary School Teacher Education Study Program of the Open University

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Education, English,
Implementation,
PGSD.

Article history:

Received: 2025-01-11

Revised: 2025-02-14

Accepted: 2025-07-01

ABSTRACT

The challenges of education today are inevitable. The need for education which is part of the needs of life accompanied by increasingly sophisticated technological developments must of course go hand in hand to become an innovation for education. This study aims to see and describe clearly how the implementation of English language education for elementary school teacher education at the Open University. The research method used is a descriptive qualitative approach, in which the author is the key to the research who directly collects data in the field through observation, interviews with informants, then collects documentation related to the research. The results of the study show that the implementation of English education at UT has been designed with the aim of equipping students with basic English language skills that are relevant to the context of elementary education. Learning is carried out through an online learning system that combines independent learning with printed and digital modules and online tutorials (TUTON). Technology, such as the UT LMS platform and video and audio media, is the main means of delivering material and evaluation. Learning evaluation is carried out through individual assignments, discussion forums, quizzes, mid-term exams, final semester exams, as well as teaching practices and Final Program Assignments.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education is something that is constantly moving, changing by itself based on needs that also change and increase naturally. The educational methods and systems that are applied are also naturally a must to continue to improve, modify to respond to these changes. Education that is believed to be a need of everyone also transforms into something that must be innovated so that everyone can experience this education, whether it is through formal, non-formal, or informal education (W. Gunawan et al., 2022). Education according to Paulo Freire quoted by (Mogale & Malatji, 2022) mentioned that education is a process of cultural inheritance. Culture that in the past was a daily habit that humans did to survive is actually similar to the present, the difference in how to survive in the past and in the present is much

different. Nowadays, Indonesian people are now clashed with obligations in education and the need to live life because not everyone has the same opportunities in education with the same method (Nirwana et al., 2024). Some people do not have the opportunity to follow the regular education system in general, with the same time and the same location. For this reason, the Government of Indonesia presents Innovation by opening an Open University whose education system or the implementation of learning is different from education in general.

The author observes that Open University is a very effective innovation in education, but of course in its implementation there must be obstacles. Education that has been directly facing between teachers and students, Open University is different. This education system allows learning to be carried out remotely (Haryani & Sari, 2021). Distance education (PJJ) is a learning system that allows students to learn without having to be physically present in the classroom. PJJ includes important elements such as technology-based learning interactions, student learning autonomy, and teaching materials that are independently prepared so that they can be learned flexibly (Hasriadi, 2022). At the Open University, the PJJ approach is fully implemented, where students learn through printed materials, digital media, learning videos, and limited online and offline tutorials. This model is very useful for reaching the wider community, especially those who work or live in remote areas (Zamrodah, 2016). However, the effectiveness of learning, especially for skill-based courses such as English, is highly dependent on the quality of interaction, tutor guidance, and the use of interactive learning media.

English education certainly requires a face-to-face meeting between students and teachers, because correcting language, such as pronunciation or pronunciation, will be difficult if done remotely, as well as other materials. English Language Education aims to develop students' overall language skills, which include listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. In the learning process, teachers not only play the role of conveyors of information, but also as facilitators who encourage active language interaction (Manurung et al., 2019). The education that is developing today is no longer just placing teachers as teachers and supervisors, with the development of many learning media, teachers are more suitable to place themselves as facilitators and mediators. As mediators, teachers are required to have good communication and be more communicative with students in the learning process. The communicative approach is one of the main strategies in modern language teaching, which emphasizes the importance of using language as a real communication tool, not just grammar memorization (Jannah et al., 2018). The expert opinion above emphasizes that without proper communication, the learning process will feel rigid, while today students have been presented with communication facilities through the rise of social media. Teachers should not be less dominant as a source of knowledge with other sources of information that students can get.

The use of technology has become an integral part of modern English learning, especially in the context of distance learning. Technology such as video conferencing, Learning Management System (LMS), AI-based training applications, to social media, function to increase student engagement and motivation to learn (Hidajat et al., 2023). Technology allows language learning to be more authentic, as learners can interact with contexts and native speakers through a variety of digital platforms. In the context of learning English Education, of course, a forum for students to hear directly native speaker that students can get through digital platforms (Lee et al., 2021).

In the Open University environment, the use of technology is the main focus of learning. This requires students to have good digital literacy in order to be able to access and utilize all learning resources independently. In addition, tutors' skills in designing communicative and collaborative learning activities also greatly determine the success of the English learning process in an open and distance system. In

Indonesia, English language skills are one of the important indicators in readiness to face the world of work and international academia (Khusniyah & Hakim, 2019). Therefore, English education is not only directed at mastering linguistic structures, but also language skills in a meaningful and applicative context.

Open University provides access to higher education to the wider community, especially those who have limited time, distance, and socioeconomic conditions. With a flexible and technology-based learning system, UT is a strategic choice for those who want to continue their education without having to attend face-to-face lectures regularly. However, the distance learning model also presents its own challenges, especially in English teaching that emphasizes active communication skills such as speaking and listening (Sahabuddin & Irfan, 2022).

The Elementary School Teacher Education Study Program at UT has a great responsibility in producing educators who not only master English theory and teaching methods, but are also able to apply effective learning approaches in the context of distance education (Meilani et al., 2021). Therefore, it is important to research more deeply about the implementation of English education in PGSD at the Open University, including the curriculum, learning methods, the role of tutors, as well as the challenges and solutions faced by students in the teaching and learning process. English education in several educational units has been carried out since elementary school, the author himself sees that English learning is very good from an early age, but the learning material needs to be determined properly, for example entering the introduction stage. Indonesia itself is actually a little hesitant regarding English education starting from elementary school, it needs special methods, strategies, techniques, of course to apply English learning at the elementary school level.

Therefore, this study aims to see and describe straightforwardly how the implementation of English language education in elementary school teacher education in open universities. Technology, such as the UT LMS platform and video and audio media, is the main means of delivering material and evaluation. Learning evaluation is carried out through individual assignments, discussion forums, quizzes, mid-term exams, final semester exams, as well as teaching practices and Final Program Assignments.

2. METHODS

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach, which is a research method that aims to describe systematically, factually, and accurately the conditions that occur in the field. Sugiyono (2022), The descriptive qualitative research method is a research based on the philosophy of postpositivism used to research the condition of natural objects where the researcher is a key instrument. The researcher uses this approach because the author wants to get a direct and original overview of the implementation, process, obstacles, explore a deep understanding of students' experiences, perceptions, and views as well as the steps taken in learning English in the Elementary School Teacher Education Study Program (PGSD) at the Open University.

The research will be carried out at the branch office of the Open University in Pematangsiantar. The implementation time is planned in May 2025 for approximately 1 week, adjusted to the schedule of academic activities and the availability of resource persons. The research subjects consist of active students of the PGSD of the Open University, a minimum of 5-10 people as informants. The selection of participants was carried out by purposive sampling technique, which is to select informants who are considered to have relevant information and direct experience related to the learning process of English Language Education in PGSD at the Open University. Data collection techniques in this study are through interviews, direct observation of the learning environment or ongoing academic activities (if possible), and documentation. The researcher used instruments in the form of an interview guide (an open-ended list of

questions) and recording devices such as voice recording devices, field notebooks, and cameras (if required for documentation). The data collected will be analyzed using thematic analysis techniques, which are grouping data based on certain themes that emerged during interviews and observations. This process involves several stages of data reduction (filtering out important information), presenting the data (grouping by category or theme), and drawing provisional conclusions and verification.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Open University (UT) offers two main paths in the new student registration process, namely through study groups (POKJAR) or independently online. POKJAR can help take care of registration so that it is directly processed by the center. In the learning process, UT provides modules as the main learning resource, without the addition of other digital learning facilities such as learning videos or e-books. The online learning system at UT is divided into two types, namely Online Tutorials (Tuton) and Webinar Tutorials (Tuweb) (Tafari & Kamaludin, 2023). The exam for Tuton is conducted online, while for Tuweb it still uses the written exam method. The obstacles faced by students are generally related to internet access and minor technical issues such as access code errors.

However, the main challenges in the online learning process are relatively minimal. Students tend to feel comfortable being able to study flexibly without having to leave their jobs or residences. In terms of assessment, some students consider that online assessments tend to be less than optimal because students rely more on technological assistance such as AI, and are no longer diligent in opening books (Fatimah, 2019). In fact, in-person assessments are considered to produce higher scores than online assessments.

In terms of English language proficiency, learning is only given in the first semester for certain study programs such as PGSD, with fairly basic materials such as introductions and greetings. Even so, students consider online learning to be quite effective, as long as students have commitment and responsibility in their learning process (Leonard, 2016). The lecturer will still give a good assessment if the student shows maximum results. However, there is an input that the time for collecting assignments in Tuweb learning which is only five days should be extended, because many students are tired of working and find it difficult to complete assignments on time (Santie & Mesra, 2022).

In the aspect of communication, students said that the relationship with lecturers and fellow students was quite good. Each course has a discussion group either through social media such as WhatsApp or through UT's official e-learning platform (Yolandari et al., 2020). This communication supports student involvement in discussions and the delivery of information related to learning. UT also organizes practice-based support programs, for example, in sports courses, students are asked to make videos of sports activities as a form of practical assignment (Nurkhin & Fachrurrozie, 2018).

The online learning system at the Open University provides convenience and flexibility, especially for students who work or are out of town. However, the effectiveness of learning is highly dependent on the discipline and motivation of the students themselves. Several aspects such as the assessment system, task collection time, and graduation procession are still challenges that need to be considered for future improvement (Hakky et al., 2018).

Based on the results of interviews with several students of the Elementary School Teacher Education Study Program (PGSD) of the Open University (UT) who have taken English courses. From the interview, it is known that the English course at PGSD UT is designed to equip students with basic English skills, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The material provided is focused on mastering simple expressions that are in accordance with the context of basic education, such as self-

introduction, greetings, and class instructions, so as to support the role of students as prospective elementary school teachers.

In terms of learning methods, because UT uses a distance learning system, the English learning process is carried out online with a combination of independent learning through print and digital modules, as well as online tutorials (TUTON) that take place every week. The resource person said that in addition to learning through teaching materials, students also access learning videos and audio media to practice listening and speaking skills (D. Gunawan et al., 2023). Online discussion forums are an important means to discuss with tutors and other students.

Learning evaluations are carried out in a variety of ways, ranging from individual assignments, participation in discussion forums, quizzes, midterm exams, to final semester exams. Several speakers also mentioned the existence of teaching practices and Program Final Projects as part of the final assessment. Based on their information, the learning materials are adjusted to the needs of elementary school teachers, both in terms of topics and delivery methods, so that students can teach basic English with a communicative and contextual approach (Suja & Qudsiyah, 2021).

The role of technology is very dominant in the English learning process at UT, because all activities are carried out online. UT's LMS platform, UT Mobile application, and the use of video and audio are the main means of delivering materials and evaluations. However, some students who live in remote areas admitted that they experienced difficulties in accessing materials online due to network limitations (Awaluddin et al., 2021). Even so, UT still provides print modules that can be used without an internet connection, so that accessibility is maintained.

Although there is no official English language improvement program, students can take advantage of the online tutorial service to consult with a tutor if they encounter difficulties. Some local pokjars (learning groups) and Distance Learning Program Units (UPBJJ-UT) also sometimes organize additional activities independently (Shafira & Santoso, 2021). From the interview results, some of the interviewees found it difficult to remember the material due to the lack of direct practice, but students who actively participated in tutorials and discussions were generally able to achieve the targeted basic competencies. So, although there is no special mentoring program available for English courses, the Open University has provided a variety of flexible and accessible learning facilities according to the student's conditions. Success in mastering English is highly dependent on students' discipline and independence in following the distance learning process.

As a result of interviews with several students of the PGSD of the Open University (UT), the implementation of English education in this study program is designed to equip students with basic English language skills needed in the context of basic education. The focus of the material taught includes listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, with an emphasis on mastering simple phrases relevant to the situation in the elementary classroom, such as self-introduction, greetings, and classroom instructions.

Learning is carried out online with a combination of independent learning through print and digital modules and online tutorials (TUTON) which are held every week. To support listening and speaking skills, students can also access learning media in the form of video and audio. Learning evaluation is conducted through a variety of methods, including individual assignments, participation in discussion forums, quizzes, midterm exams, and final semester exams, as well as teaching practice and Program Final Projects as part of the final assessment (Putri & Okatini, 2023).

Technology plays an important role in supporting the learning process, with the use of UT's LMS platform, UT Mobile application, and various other digital media. Nonetheless, obstacles such as limited

internet access in remote areas are a hindrance, even though UT has provided print modules as an alternative. Although there is no specific program for improving English language skills, students can still take advantage of online tutorial services to consult with tutors and take part in additional activities organized by pokjar or UPBJJ-UT.

Success in mastering English is highly dependent on the discipline and independence of students in participating in distance learning. Overall, English education at PGSD UT is quite effective in equipping students with the basic competencies needed to teach English in elementary school, although some aspects, such as hands-on practice and material accessibility, need to be improved to make learning more optimal.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the discussion, the implementation of English education at UT has been designed with the aim of equipping students with basic English language skills that are relevant to the context of basic education. Learning is carried out through an online learning system that combines independent learning with print and digital modules as well as online tutorials (TUTON). Technology, such as UT's LMS platform and video and audio media, is the main means of delivering materials and evaluations. Learning evaluation is carried out through individual assignments, discussion forums, quizzes, midterm exams, final semester exams, as well as teaching practices and Final Program Projects. However, challenges related to limited internet access in remote areas and lack of direct practice are obstacles in the learning process. The success of students in mastering English is highly dependent on discipline and independence in participating in distance learning. So, although English learning at UT is quite effective, there are still aspects that need to be improved, especially regarding the accessibility of the material and improvements for hands-on practice.

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