



# Integrating Javanese Culture into English Pronunciation and Vocabularies Learning at SDN Gading Surakarta

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Published online: 08 November 2025

## ABSTRACT

This community service is in the form of a spoken English workshop for beginners through the introduction and improvement of correct pronunciation skills and sufficient vocabulary. This is deemed necessary because it is a needed foundation whether the spoken English is correct or not and its use in the next stage. The method is descriptive qualitative design within a community service framework. The participants of this learning workshop are students of grades 4, 5, 6 of State Elementary School (SDN) Gading Surakarta with a composition of 10 students each with the school conducting the selection. The training time is July to August 2025. The teaching materials were developed based on the principles of contextual teaching and learning (Johnson, 2002), in which English such as number, color, simple phrase are introduced through familiar cultural content such as wayang, gamelan, batik, keris, joglo and various Javanese culture. The result of this training is that spoken English has been known and practiced by participating students. From the number 0 /'zi:roʊ / to 100 /wʌn 'hʌndrəd/; colors and simple phrase such as white joglo (/waɪtjoglo/). This training also successfully integrated the Javanese culture into spoken English learning through pronunciation and vocabulary can significantly improve student engagement and understanding.

**Keywords:** Spoken English; Beginners; Vocabulary; Pronunciation; Javanese Culture

## INTRODUCTION

English has become one of the important competencies that must be mastered since elementary school. English for elementary school children has become part of the language learning curriculum in Indonesia. However, spoken English for young learners is often considered to be more difficult (Puspitaloka, N., & Wahyuna, Y. T. 2018). English was once an elective subject for local content. In ASEAN countries such as Vietnam, the Philippines, and Cambodia, English is already taught in primary education to prepare children for the next level of education (Ma'mun, 2022; Tuminah, 2023). However, with the strategic introduction of English at an early age, almost all levels of primary education have implemented it in their respective institutions.

English language skills have four forms, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. However, English language learning in elementary schools in Indonesia often still focuses on grammar and vocabulary memorization without adequate oral practice. As a result, students lack confidence when they have to speak in English. Good speaking and pronunciation skills are believed to support smooth communication and prepare students for English-language material at the next level (Pinter, 2006; Roach, 2009). The service team conducted interviews with several teachers who teach English in elementary schools and revealed several problems faced by these teachers. The

problems faced are almost the same, namely elementary school (Sekolah Dasar /SD), reading, writing, and English as a foreign language are taught to build various academic skills. Teachers still dominate learning activities and remain the

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center of learning. This encourages students to be passive and only receive (Tuminah, et.al, 2023). This is believed to cause students to find listening to English more difficult than writing English for simple English. At the elementary education level, English lessons, especially spoken English, are not easily found in both urban and rural areas (Asipi, L. S., & Puspitaningsih, I. 2024).

A learning approach that links the target language to the local cultural context is believed to increase student motivation and engagement (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 2010). The integration of Javanese cultural elements, such as vocabulary related to *wayang*, *gamelan*, *keris*, *joglo* and *batik*, provides a learning experience that is closer to the daily lives of students in Surakarta. In this way, learning not only introduces new sounds and vocabulary, but also fosters an appreciation for one's own cultural heritage. This community service program aims to strengthen the spoken English skills of 4th, 5th, and 6th grade students through Javanese culture-based activities. The activities focus on introducing English sounds that often cause difficulties for Javanese speakers, pronunciation and vocabulary exercises, and vocabulary development through local cultural arts terms.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The learning design refers to the principles of Contextual Teaching and Learning (Johnson, 2002), in which English material is linked to the local cultural context to increase the relevance of learning. The concept of learning in context synergizes with the meaningful connections that Johnson offers, which can address the needs of English language learning for beginners based on local Javanese cultural vocabulary. It bases learning on the contextualization of grammar in the form of English pronunciation with the cultural involvement of Javanese learner.

Furthermore, for English pronunciation references, we refer to *Sounds in English* by Daniel Jones (1988), *Routledge Dictionary of Pronunciation for Current English* (2025), and *Cambridge English Pronouncing Dictionary* (2011). The above books play an important role in helping students pronounce English correctly according to the rules of spoken English. For basic spoken English that focuses on integrating pronunciation and vocabulary with the local Javanese cultural context, it can complement Johnson's CTL above, which is introduced when students feel comfortable.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The method used in this Community Service program is a descriptive qualitative design within a community service framework. This method emphasizes community involvement, in this case, Gading Surakarta Public Elementary School, especially 4th, 5th, and 6th grade with the total 30 students. Furthermore, an important aspect is the quality of English pronunciation and vocabulary mastery based on local Javanese culture. The program consists of six sessions, each lasting 90 minutes. The teaching materials are developed based on the principles of contextual teaching and learning (Johnson, 2002), where English is introduced through familiar cultural content such as *wayang*, *keris*, *joglo*, *gamelan*, and *batik*. Each session combines listening and speaking exercises with cultural storytelling and interactive games. For example, students practice pronunciation through color vocabulary (brown, yellow, red) while describing Javanese characters such as *wayang coklat* as *brown wayang* rather than *wayang brown*. Data was collected through classroom observation, recordings of student pronunciation, and reflection notes from teachers and facilitators. The results were analyzed descriptively to identify improvements in pronunciation accuracy, vocabulary use, and student engagement in the culturally contextualized English learning process.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of English pronunciation and vocabulary learning integrated with elements of Javanese culture at SDN Gading Surakarta produced several observable results. First, students showed significant improvement in pronouncing basic English words that were previously difficult for them, such as distinguishing between the sound's /f/ and /v/, the sounds /t/ and /θ/, and the sounds /j/ and /dʒ/ for consonants. Meanwhile, for vowels, this was found in the sounds /æ/, /ɛ/, and /ə/. Second, students showed an increase in vocabulary mastery, especially words related to colors and numbers. This was previously not mastered by the participants, such as: zero /'ziərəʊ/, eleven /ɪ'levən/, twelve /twelv/. As a solution, the teacher gave direct examples in class and also prepared videos. From the pronunciation assessment assignment, which involved repeating vocabulary words, the results for grade 4 were as follows: out of 10 students, 7 students received a **good** rating and 3 students received a **very good** rating. For grade 5 students, the results were as follows: out of 10 students, 6 students received a **good** rating, and 4 students received a *very good* rating. Next, for grade 6, out of 10 students, 4 students received a **good** and 6 students received a **very good**.

From the vocabulary assignment or vocabulary assessment, which was to add new vocabulary, the results for grade 4 were as follows: out of 10 students, 3 students received a **good** rating and 7 students received a **very good** rating. For grade 5 students, the results were as follows: out of 10 students, 4 students received a **good** rating, and 6 students received a **very good** rating. Next, for grade 6, out of 10 students, 10 students received a *very good* rating.

From the assignment of assessing Javanese culture in simple phrases, which was to create simple phrases by combining the vocabulary of colors and numbers as modifiers with the word *Javanese culture* as the head. Simple phrase material included *wayang*, *gamelan*, *batik*, *keris*, *joglo*, *canting*, and other local vocabulary. For example, the phrase *wayang coklat* (*brown wayang*) and the phrase *duabelas canting* (*twelve cantings*) became simple phrases that students had previously mispronounced as *wayang brown*, which was adjusted to the Indonesian word *wayang coklat*. Students also still make mistakes when referring to *twelve (batik) canting*, without the “s.” Teaching new simple phrases involves one modifier/descriptive word and does not yet use two or more descriptive words. From this assessment, the results for grade 4 showed that 10 out of 10 students received a very good rating. For grade 5 students, the results were as follows: 10 out of 10 students received a very good rating. Furthermore, for grade 6, 10 out of 10 students received a very good rating.



**Figure 1 and 2.** After putting the words together, whisper the numbers 0-100 to your friend.

Students learn English about number and color. They memorize vocabularies related to these topics. Together, they arrange words from the letters provided. They feel happy and have mastered the material in good, even very good.



**Figure 3.** Mention number and color vocabularies correctly in terms of meaning and pronunciation.

The evaluation was conducted by asking the student several questions related to the vocabularies that had been previously learned. The student gave a slight smile when responding, which indicated their concentration and seriousness, particularly when both the answers and pronunciation were accurate. This behavior suggested that the student was confident and engaged in the learning process.



**Figure 4.** Showcasing Javanese cultural vocabularies in English: *brown gamelan, one canting, red wayang*

Activities such as coloring and drawing, storytelling about wayang characters, or matching English color words with random letters stimulate curiosity in both linguistic and cultural aspects. Classroom observations show that students are highly engaged when learning materials are linked to Javanese cultural background. Teachers also reported that students' confidence in speaking English gradually increased, as seen in short conversations and pronunciation games conducted in the last session.

## DISCUSSION

The above findings show that integrating local cultural content into spoken English learning can improve students' pronunciation accuracy and vocabulary. It is clear that after learning Javanese pronunciation and contextual words, students are able to apply them in simple phrases without error. Indeed, they have undergone a learning process involving pronunciation and vocabulary. They were very pleased to be able to answer simple phrases correctly. This supports Johnson's (2002) principle of contextual teaching and learning, which emphasizes the meaningful relationship between learning materials and the real-life context of students to increase engagement and understanding. When students encounter familiar cultural topics such as *wayang, gamelan, joglo houses, keris, and batik*, they are able to associate new English words with their prior knowledge, making the learning process more memorable and relevant.

Improvements in pronunciation, especially in avoiding common Javanese interference, show that contextualized oral practice can effectively overcome local linguistic challenges. The students have diverse backgrounds, but they have never had oral English lessons other than this community service activity. Each English sound is taught slowly so that each student can pronounce it accurately. The results show that 17 of the 30 students still experience difficulties with pronunciation, hesitation, and forgetfulness. By trying again, they learned the correct way, and therefore received a **good** rating. Meanwhile, 13 students were able to practice accurately and well after learning pronunciation. Therefore, they received a **very good** rating.

Number and color materials enriched with mathematical operations such as addition also appear in this spoken English learning process. Also, when students use their fingers, vocabulary enrichment often occurs to complement and add to the two topics mentioned above. The second result regarding vocabulary mastery also shows excellent results. The 30 students participating in this spoken English class, 24 students showed **very good** results, meaning they correctly knew the meanings of English words, while 6 students still made mistakes. When given the opportunity to remember, they were able to correct themselves and received a **good** rating. Furthermore, the combination of vocabulary and pronunciation assessments resulted in a **very good** rating for all participants. When asked what *batik biru* is, they accurately answered “*blue batik*” instead of “*batik blue*.” When asked to say 100 canting, they accurately said “*hundred canting(s)*”, although sometimes the pronunciation of /s/ was not clearly heard. “Don't hesitate to say /s/. Furthermore, at the end, there was a positive impression—the enthusiasm and confidence of the students—showing the motivational value of the cultural approach. These results confirm previous studies that contextual and culture-based language teaching not only fosters linguistic competence but also cultural awareness (Crawford, 2001; Berns & Erickson, 2001).

Overall, it was conveyed that, this program has demonstrated that integrating local Javanese culture into English language learning especially in speaking can not only be done in primary education but is also beneficial in maintaining communication skills and cultural identity among young learners.

## KESIMPULAN DAN SARAN

This community service project shows that integrating Javanese culture into spoken English learning through pronunciation and vocabulary can significantly improve the engagement and understanding of students at SDN Gading Surakarta. The use of cultural materials that are familiar in their daily lives—such as *wayang*, *gamelan*, *batik*, *keris* and other local Javanese expressions—helps students connect new English words with their everyday environment. As a result, students show improved pronunciation accuracy and greater motivation to speak English in classroom activities.

The combination of classical pronunciation references (Jones, 1988) and modern linguistic descriptions (Cruttenden et al., 2017) provides a balanced framework that promotes both accuracy and communicative naturalness. Furthermore, this culturally contextualized approach supports the principle of meaningful learning (Johnson, 2002), allowing students to actively construct knowledge rather than memorize vocabulary in isolation.

Overall, this program highlights that integrating culture into language teaching not only strengthens linguistic competence but also fosters students' sense of cultural identity and pride. The main conclusions of the study may be presented in a standalone Conclusions section or included as a subsection of the Discussion section.

## Conflict of Interests

The authors declared that no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the authorship and publication of this article.

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