Journal of Innovative and Creativity
Journal Homepage: https://joecy.org/index.php/joecy
e-mail: galungwaknook@gmail.co

Faculty of Education
University of Pahlawan Tuanku Tambusai
ISSN 2775-771X (Online)
ISSN 2962-570X (Printed)
5 (3) 2025, Page: 36773-366778

Building Students' English Foundation Through A Contextual And Practical Pedagogical Grammar Approach At SMP IT Imam Syafi'i Cendikia Pekanbaru

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Published: December, 2025

ABSTRACT

The goal of this community service program at SMP IT Imam Syafi'i Cendikia Pekanbaru was to help students improve their practical English skills, especially their speaking and writing. Even though students had learnt grammar in a formal setting before, it was clear from observations that there was a big difference between what they knew about grammar and how well they could use it in real-life situations. A contextual and applicative Pedagogical Grammar approach was implemented to tackle this issue, in accordance with the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) framework that priorities flexible, meaningful, and student-centered learning. The program included socialization, training for teachers, putting what they learnt into practice in the classroom, mentoring, and regular evaluations. Grammar lessons were part of real-life communication tasks like role-playing, group discussions, and writing. The learning materials were made more relevant to students' lives by using themes like empathy, bullying awareness, and hobbies. The results show that students' English skills have gotten a lot better. Students showed more confidence when speaking English, wrote messages and short texts with more accuracy and fluency, and used grammatical structures better in real-life conversations. Teachers also said that using interactive and context-based methods to teach grammar made them more effective. In general, using contextual Pedagogical Grammar has been shown to improve students' ability to communicate and close the gap between knowing grammar and using it in real life. This method helps MBKM reach its goals and gets students ready to meet the demands of global communication with more linguistic confidence and skill.

Keywords: Pedagogical grammar, communicative competence, community service initiative.

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INTRODUCTION

SMP IT Imam Syafi'i Cendikia Pekanbaru is an educational institution with a strong commitment to providing quality education. Located in the city of Pekanbaru, this school accommodates students from various backgrounds who have great potential in mastering foreign languages, especially English. As an international language that is highly needed in the global world, English proficiency has become one of the main objectives in the school's curriculum. However, despite the high enthusiasm of students to master English, there are still some fundamental problems that need to be addressed.

In terms of regional potential, SMP IT Imam Syafi'i Cendikia Pekanbaru is situated in the city center, making it easily accessible and equipped with facilities that support learning, such as comfortable classrooms and competent teaching staff. On the other hand, there are several challenges in English language instruction. One of these is the gap between the theory taught in class and the students' practical ability to use English in daily life. This is evident from observations of students' speaking and writing skills, which have not yet reached an optimal level, even though they have learned grammar and a variety of vocabulary.

The problems faced by students are not limited to mastering grammar, but also include their inability to connect theory with practice (Jasrial et al. 2024; Jufrizal 2014; Novitri and Astuti 2022). Often, the grammar material taught feels disconnected from their real lives, making it difficult for students to apply English in everyday conversation.

The formal and rigid teaching of grammar, without relevant context to daily life, is also a major cause of students' lack of confidence in speaking English.

Given this situation, a more contextual and practical approach is needed in teaching English. Pedagogical Grammar, which emphasizes understanding and using grammar in real-life situations, is the right solution to address these issues (Hardacre and Snow 2020; Mara and Saliés 2020; René 1990). This approach will enable students not only to memorize grammar rules, but also to understand how to use English effectively in their daily lives—whether in speaking, writing, or understanding texts (Almazloum 2018; Nawir 2020).

PURPOSES

The main objective of this activity is to improve the English language skills of students at SMP IT Imam Syafi'i Cendikia, particularly in speaking and writing, through the implementation of a contextual and practical Pedagogical Grammar approach. With this approach, it is expected that students will be able to understand grammar theory in a context that is more relevant to their real-life situations, so that they not only master grammar theoretically but are also able to actively apply English in conversations and other activities (4).

This activity is closely related to the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) program. Within the MBKM framework, students are given the freedom to learn using a more flexible and practical approach. By relating grammar material to real life, students will gain a more enjoyable and challenging learning experience, which is much more useful for developing their English skills (Islam 2011; Rozimela, Fatimah, and Fudhla 2025). Learning that is based on everyday life also enables students to learn in a more independent and contextual manner, in line with the MBKM principles that emphasize freedom in learning.

This activity also contributes to the Main Performance Indicators (IKU), particularly in developing students' English language competency. One of the indicators to be achieved is the improvement of students' speaking and writing skills in English. With a more practical approach, it is expected that students will become more confident in using English, both in daily conversations and in future academic and professional situations. This is in line with efforts to produce competent graduates who are ready to face global challenges (Abduh et al. 2025; Novitri, Satriani, and Nazirun 2025).

In addition, this activity is also closely related to the focus on community service, which is part of the school's social responsibility to the wider community. By improving students' English language skills, the school participates in creating a generation that is ready to face global challenges. As an educational institution that prioritizes quality, SMP IT Imam Syafi'i Cendikia plays an important role in equipping students with the skills needed in the international arena, especially English.

The contextual and practical Pedagogical Grammar approach will involve more interactive teaching methods that are relevant to students' lives. In addition to grammar lessons, students will be involved in various practical activities, such as group discussions, conversation simulations, and real-life-based projects, which will make learning more interesting and challenging. These activities are not only aimed at sharpening language skills but also at increasing students' confidence in communicating in English.

To support the implementation of this activity, teacher training is crucial. Teachers will receive training to effectively implement the pedagogical grammar approach in the classroom. This training will cover techniques for teaching grammar in an applied manner, as well as ways to relate grammar material to situations relevant to students' daily lives. Furthermore, teachers will also be trained to design learning activities that focus not only on theory but also on the use of English in practical contexts.

Regular evaluations will also be conducted to assess the extent of students' progress in understanding and applying grammar in real-life situations. The results of these evaluations will be

used to improve and enhance the quality of learning, ensuring that each student has the optimal opportunity to develop. This evaluation activity will also involve feedback from students to identify which aspects of learning have been effective and which need improvement.

Through the contextual and practical Pedagogical Grammar approach, SMP IT Imam Syafi'i Cendikia Pekanbaru is committed to improving students' English language skills by providing learning experiences that are relevant and beneficial to everyday life. With this approach, students will not only master grammar theoretically, but will also be able to apply English in more practical and effective conversation and writing. This activity aligns with the principles of the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) program and also contributes to developing students' competencies to be better prepared for global challenges (Daif-Allah and Aljumah 2020; Susilawati et al. 2024).

The main issue prioritized in community service activities at SMP IT Imam Syafi'i Cendikia Pekanbaru is the lack of students' practical skills in using English, even though they have learned various grammar concepts. This main problem is reflected in most students' inability to apply English in daily situations. Although English grammar has been formally taught in class, students tend to find it difficult to speak or write in English fluently and confidently. This condition occurs because English instruction at this school is still focused on grammar theory, which is less connected to everyday usage contexts.

From discussions with the target partner, namely SMP IT Imam Syafi'i Cendikia Pekanbaru, it has been agreed that this issue is a priority problem that must be addressed immediately. Although students possess a basic knowledge of grammar, they are still unable to apply that knowledge in real communication, such as conversations in social situations, writing informal texts, or even speaking in public using English. This leads to a lack of confidence in communicating in English, which ultimately affects their overall achievement in language learning.

To address this problem, the proposed solution is the implementation of a contextual and practical pedagogical grammar approach. This approach helps students understand and apply grammar in more real-life contexts, rather than just as formal rules to be memorized (Wardana, Dharmayanti, and Arsana 2022). With this approach, students are encouraged to practice using English in everyday situations relevant to their lives, such as talking with friends, writing short messages, or having casual conversations in English.

The solution provided in this Community Service activity consists of several steps. First, the grammar material that has been taught is adjusted to suit the real-life contexts of students, so they can immediately feel the benefits of the learning (Zhang 2022). For example, when learning about tenses or modal verbs in theory, students are given the opportunity to use these tenses in real daily conversations, such as discussing activities they did over the weekend or planning future activities. This approach makes the material feel more relevant and useful.

Second, students are involved in various speaking activities, such as group discussions, role plays, and presentations (Liu and Deris 2023). Through these activities, students are trained to speak confidently in English, both individually and in groups. These activities give students the confidence to use grammar in more natural conversational contexts, making them feel more comfortable and practiced in communication.

With this solution, students not only gain a deep understanding of grammar theory, but are also able to actively use English in their daily lives, which will ultimately improve their speaking and writing skills.

Through the implementation of a contextual and practical pedagogical grammar approach, the problem of students' lack of practical English skills can be overcome. In this way, SMP IT Imam Syafi'i Cendikia Pekanbaru will be able to produce a young generation that not only masters the theory of language but is also ready to apply English in their everyday lives.

METHOD

Community Service Implementation Method: Building the Foundation of English Language Skills for Students at SMP IT Imam Syafi'i Cendikia Pekanbaru through a Contextual and Practical Pedagogical Grammar Approach. The implementation of this community service program aims to improve the English language skills of students at SMP IT Imam Syafi'i Cendikia Pekanbaru,

particularly in the practical and contextual use of English through the Pedagogical Grammar approach.

This program focuses on teaching English by connecting grammar theory to real-life situations encountered by students, addressing issues related to the limited speaking and writing skills in English. The implementation method for this community service involves several stages, including socialization, training, the application of technology, mentoring, evaluation, and a sustainability plan for the program.

Socialization is the initial step in the program implementation process. In this stage, the service team will hold meetings with the school, including the principal, English teachers, and student representatives, to explain the objectives and benefits of the program. The purpose of this socialization is to ensure that all relevant parties understand and support the program being carried out.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The main problem faced by students at SMP IT Imam Syafi'i Cendikia Pekanbaru is the lack of practical skills in using English, even though they have already learned grammar theory formally. This limitation leads to students' inability to apply English in everyday situations. Based on a situational analysis together with the target partner, this problem has been identified as a priority that needs to be addressed immediately to comprehensively improve students' English language skills. The Contextual and Practical Pedagogical Grammar approach was chosen as the main solution to tackle this issue.

The implementation of the Pedagogical Grammar approach, which connects grammar material with students' real-life contexts, has provided a significant boost in students' confidence. Student activities were more focused on the practical use of grammar in daily conversations. Tenses, modal verbs, and other sentence structures were packaged in the form of conversations and commonly used communications, with an emphasis on real communication situations. The grammar material taught was linked to topics that attract students' attention, such as the importance of empathy, the dangers of bullying, and talking about hobbies. Students not only learned grammar theory, but also understood it within conversations and writing.

The results of this community service activity showed improvements in students' speaking skills, including:

1. Increased confidence when speaking English in front of the class or in group discussions.
2. Improved ability to use correct grammar structures in daily conversations.
3. The ability to express personal opinions and experiences on relevant topics, such as empathy, bullying, and hobbies, using appropriate English.
4. More active participation in class discussions and interactive activities.
5. Greater initiative in using English outside the classroom setting, such as in informal chats with friends or teachers.

These improvements demonstrate that the contextual and practical Pedagogical Grammar approach not only enhances students' understanding of grammar theoretically, but more importantly, enables them to apply their knowledge in real-life situations. This approach helps bridge the gap between theory and practice, resulting in more effective and meaningful English learning experiences for students at SMP IT Imam Syafi'i Cendikia Pekanbaru

CONCLUSION

Furthermore, the community service practices carried out by the team have strengthened the validity of this approach. The training activities provided to students showed that, with proper training and instruction, teachers are able to transform their teaching methods to become more practical and interactive, which ultimately has a positive impact on students' learning outcomes.

From this Community Service activity, it can be concluded that grammar instruction that focuses solely on memorizing rules without real-life context is less effective in building students' language skills. Conversely, through a contextual and practical approach, students are able to better understand, remember, and use English structures more naturally and confidently.

Based on the results of this research, the solution designed for SMP IT Imam Syafi'i Cendikia Pekanbaru includes not only the implementation of the pedagogical grammar approach in daily learning but also regular evaluations of student learning outcomes.

The problem of students' lack of practical English skills can thus be comprehensively addressed. The achievement targets that have been set—such as improvements in speaking, writing, and the use of grammar in real-life contexts—serve as benchmarks for the program's success. The implementation of this program not only improves students' academic achievement in English but also equips them with essential communication skills to face the global world.

Therefore, this contextual and practical pedagogical grammar approach serves as an innovative and effective, research-based solution for improving the quality of English language education at SMP IT Imam Syafi'i Cendikia Pekanbaru

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to express our gratitude to all parties who supported the implementation of this community service activity, including the leadership of FKIP UIR who provided funding for this service, which was authorized by the Directorate of Research and Community Service (DPPM UIR) through the 2025 Service Contract Number: 1185/KONTRAK/P-NK-PKM/DPPM-UIR/07-2025; the Principal of SMP IT Imam As-Syafii 2 Pekanbaru, the Board of Teachers, and the students involved; as well as the PKM Team from the English Education Study Program.

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