



**DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION FOR ENHANCING YOUNG EFL LEARNERS'
BASIC VOCABULARY KNOWLEDGE:
A TWO-CYCLE COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM AT PPA IO-0133 KRAMMER
HILINA'A**

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Abstract: *This community service program addressed the diverse levels of basic English vocabulary among young EFL learners at PPA IO-0133 Kramer Hilina'a Church. The program aimed to improve learners' vocabulary through differentiated instruction supported by simplified learning materials, songs, and educational games. The participants were 23 learners aged 9–11 years in Class E. The program was implemented through the stages of needs assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation. Vocabulary assessments, observations, field notes, and documentation were used to evaluate learners' progress and participation throughout the activities. The results showed a substantial improvement in learners' vocabulary achievement, with the percentage of learners in the Good and Very Good categories increasing from 26.09% at the beginning of the program to 65.22% at the end of the program. Meanwhile, the percentage of learners in the Poor and Very Poor categories decreased from 39.13% to 0%. Observations also indicated increased confidence, participation, and vocabulary recall among learners. These findings suggest that differentiated instruction combined with songs and educational games can provide an effective and inclusive approach to supporting vocabulary development among young EFL learners in community-based learning settings.*

Keywords: *community service; differentiated instruction; young EFL learners; basic vocabulary; songs and games*

INTRODUCTION

English has become one of the world's principal languages of education, communication, and access to information. Introducing English in childhood helps learners build foundational language skills and prepares them for later academic and social demands. Young learners tend to engage most when activities are interesting, relevant, and developmentally appropriate; interactive experiences support both skill development and classroom participation (Paul, 2021).

Because vocabulary is the foundation on which the four language skills are built, strengthening basic vocabulary is a priority in early English instruction (Nation, 2001).

PPA IO-0133 Krammer Hilina'a Church is a community-based learning centre that supports children with varied prior schooling. A preliminary needs assessment revealed that learners in Class E entered with markedly different levels of basic vocabulary knowledge. When identical materials and tasks were given to all learners regardless of readiness, some followed comfortably while others struggled to understand the material and became less engaged in the learning activities. Such heterogeneity is common in EFL settings, where learners differ in background, proficiency, and learning needs, making a single, uniform instructional approach less effective (Religioni, 2024).

To respond to this diversity, a more flexible approach was required. Differentiated instruction adjusts content, process, and learning activities to learners' readiness, interests, and learning profiles (Tomlinson, 2017), and is therefore well suited to mixed-ability classes. This orientation is consistent with sociocultural views of learning, in which teaching is provided within the learner's zone of proximal development and supported through scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978). For young learners specifically, instruction should be concrete, multisensory, and enjoyable (Cameron, 2001; Pinter, 2017). Songs and games can reduce anxiety, maintain learners' attention, and create meaningful learning experiences that support vocabulary retention (Paul, 2021).

Based on these considerations, Class E learners aged 9–11 years at PPA IO-0133 Krammer Hilina'a Church were selected as the target participants of this community service program. The program implemented differentiated instruction supported by simplified learning materials, songs, and educational games to accommodate learners with different levels of vocabulary knowledge. The objective of the program was to improve learners' Basic English vocabulary while creating a more inclusive and supportive learning environment in which each learner could progress according to their individual needs and abilities. The effectiveness of the program was evaluated through vocabulary assessments, observations, field notes, and documentation conducted throughout the implementation of the community service activities.

METHOD

This community service program was conducted at PPA IO-0133 Krammer Hilina'a Church, a community-based learning centre, from 2 April to 21 May 2026. The program involved 23 young EFL learners from Class E, aged 9–11 years, who regularly participated in the centre's educational activities. The main objective was to improve learners' basic English vocabulary through differentiated instruction supported by simplified learning materials, songs, and educational games.

The implementation of the program consisted of four stages: needs assessment, program planning, implementation, and evaluation. During the needs assessment stage, observations and discussions were conducted with program coordinators, community representatives, and learners to identify participants' learning characteristics and vocabulary needs. The results indicated considerable differences in learners' vocabulary knowledge and learning readiness. Therefore, differentiated instruction was selected as the primary approach to accommodate learners' diverse abilities (Tomlinson, 2017).

In the planning stage, the community service team prepared learning materials and activities tailored to learners' needs. The materials included English songs, picture-word matching activities, simple vocabulary exercises, worksheets, and educational games designed to create an engaging and age-appropriate learning environment (Paul, 2021).

The implementation stage was carried out through a series of learning sessions. During the activities, learners were grouped according to their readiness levels, and tasks were adjusted to match their abilities. Additional guidance and support were provided to learners who required more assistance. Songs and games were integrated into the lessons to increase motivation and participation while strengthening vocabulary acquisition.

The evaluation stage aimed to assess the effectiveness of the program. Learners completed vocabulary assessments before and after the implementation of the activities to measure vocabulary improvement. The scores were calculated using the formula (total score ÷ maximum score) × 100 (Arikunto, 2018). In addition, observations, field notes, and documentation were used to evaluate learner participation, engagement, and responses throughout the program. The evaluation results were used to identify the strengths of the program and provide recommendations for future community service activities.

Program Evaluation

Learners' vocabulary achievement was evaluated using descriptive statistics to determine the effectiveness of the community service program. The participants' scores were determined by dividing the total score they achieved by the highest possible score and then multiplying that result by 100 to express it as a percentage (Arikunto, 2018). The formula is presented as follows:

$$\text{Score} = \frac{\text{Total Score}}{\text{Maximum Score}} \times 100$$

The participants' scores were determined by dividing the total score they achieved by the highest possible score and then multiplying that result by 100 (Arikunto, 2018). The scores that were obtained were then grouped into five categories:

Table 1. Score Range

Score Range	Categories
80-100	Very Good
66-79	Good
56-65	Fair
40-55	Poor
0-39	Very Poor

The categories of scores presented in Table 1 were used to assess the participants' level of understanding in Basic English. The classification was used to evaluate learners' vocabulary development during the implementation of the program in both the pre-test and post-test and to assess the extent of improvement that occurred following the program's implementation.

RESULT

The initial stage of the community service program was conducted at PPA IO-0133 Krammer Hilina'a Church and involved 23 learners from Class E aged 9–11 years. The program was implemented through four learning sessions designed to develop learners' basic English vocabulary. Differentiated instruction was applied through simplified learning materials, songs, and educational games to accommodate learners with different levels of readiness and encourage active participation throughout the activities.

During the learning sessions, learners participated in various activities, including singing English songs, matching vocabulary cards with pictures, answering simple questions, completing worksheets, and playing educational games. These activities were designed to help learners understand and use basic English vocabulary in an enjoyable and meaningful way. Observations indicated that learners showed high enthusiasm during song-based and game-based activities. However, some learners still experienced difficulties in understanding certain vocabulary items and completing learning tasks independently.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the activities, a vocabulary assessment was administered at the end of the initial implementation stage. The scores were calculated by dividing the total score obtained by the maximum possible score and multiplying the result by 100 (Arikunto, 2018). The results were then classified into several achievement categories. The learners' vocabulary achievement is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Learners' Basic Vocabulary mastery Scores in Cycle 1

Score Range	Category	Frequency	Percentage
80–100	Very Good	1	4.35%
66-79	Good	5	21.74%
56-65	Fair	8	34.78%
40-55	Poor	7	30.43%
0-39	Very Poor	2	8.70%
Total		23	100%

Table 2 shows that the majority of learners were classified in the Fair category, representing 34.78% of the total participants. This finding indicates that most learners had acquired a basic understanding of the English vocabulary introduced during the initial implementation stage of the program, although their vocabulary mastery remained limited. In addition, 30.43% of learners were categorized as Poor and 8.70% as Very Poor, indicating that several participants still experienced difficulties in understanding and applying the target vocabulary. Only one learner (4.35%) achieved the Very Good category. These findings suggest that while the differentiated learning activities contributed positively to learners' vocabulary development, further adjustments were needed to better accommodate learners with lower levels of readiness.

Observations conducted during the initial implementation stage showed that most learners actively participated in learning activities involving songs, games, and visual materials. Learners

demonstrated positive attitudes when singing English songs, matching pictures with vocabulary cards, and participating in group-based games. However, differences in learning readiness were evident throughout the activities. Some learners were able to understand instructions and complete tasks independently, while others required additional explanations and support from the facilitators. These observations indicate that the activities successfully increased learners' engagement, although further modifications were necessary to address the diverse vocabulary needs of the participants.

Field notes and documentation provided additional evidence supporting these observations. Several learners experienced difficulties in understanding certain vocabulary items and completing activities at the same pace as their peers. Documentation, including photographs and learning records, showed that learners were particularly engaged in activities involving physical movement, visual materials, and collaborative games. Based on these findings, the community service team refined the learning materials by simplifying vocabulary tasks, providing additional guidance, and grouping learners according to their readiness levels. These improvements were implemented in the subsequent learning sessions to provide more effective support for learners who required additional assistance.



Figure 1. implementation of Differentiated Learning Activities in cycle 1

In summary, the initial implementation stage of the community service program demonstrated that the use of varied learning activities, simplified materials, songs, and educational games contributed positively to learners' vocabulary development. The evaluation results showed that most learners were classified in the Fair category, indicating that they had acquired a basic understanding of the English vocabulary introduced during the program

activities. Furthermore, observations revealed that learners were enthusiastic and actively participated in interactive activities, particularly those involving songs, games, and visual materials.

Despite these positive outcomes, the evaluation also identified several areas requiring further improvement. A considerable number of learners remained in the Poor and Very Poor categories, suggesting that some participants still experienced difficulties in understanding the learning materials. Observations, field notes, and documentation also revealed clear differences in learners' readiness levels and learning progress. While some learners were able to complete tasks independently, others required additional guidance and support. These findings indicated that further adjustments were needed to better accommodate the diverse learning needs of the participants.

Based on the evaluation results, several improvements were introduced in the subsequent learning sessions. Learning materials were further simplified, learners were grouped according to their readiness levels, and additional differentiated activities were provided to better match learners' abilities and learning needs. These improvements were intended to enhance learner participation, provide more individualized support, and strengthen learners' understanding of Basic English vocabulary.

The subsequent learning sessions were conducted with the same group of 23 learners from Class E, aged 9–11 years. Building on the findings from the initial implementation stage, the community service team refined the learning activities to better support learners with diverse levels of readiness. The activities continued to focus on developing learners' basic English vocabulary through differentiated instruction.

During these sessions, learning materials were adapted to learners' levels of understanding, and learners were grouped according to their readiness levels to ensure that appropriate support could be provided. Songs, educational games, visual materials, and collaborative activities remained integral parts of the learning process. Additional guided practice and personalized assistance were also provided to learners who required further support. These adjustments helped create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.

The learning activities included vocabulary practice through songs, picture-word matching tasks, group competitions, simple role-play activities, and interactive educational games. Learners also participated in review activities designed to reinforce previously learned vocabulary. Compared with the earlier sessions, learners demonstrated greater confidence in answering questions, following instructions, and participating in classroom activities. The differentiated learning activities enabled learners to engage with the material according to their individual learning needs and abilities.

To evaluate the outcomes of these improved activities, a vocabulary assessment was conducted at the end of the program. The scores were calculated by dividing the total score obtained by the maximum possible score and multiplying the result by 100 (Arikunto, 2018). The results were then classified into achievement categories. The distribution of learners' scores is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Learners' Basic Vocabulary mastery Scores in Cycle 2

Score Range	Category	Frequency	Percentage
80–100	Very Good	6	26.09%
66-79	Good	9	39.13%

56-65	Fair	8	34.78%
40-55	Poor	0	0.00%
0-39	Very Poor	0	0.00%
Total		23	100%

Table 3 shows a substantial improvement in learners' basic English vocabulary achievement following the implementation of the improved learning activities. The number of learners in the Very Good category increased from one learner (4.35%) at the beginning of the program to six learners (26.09%) at the end of the program. Likewise, the number of learners in the Good category increased from five learners (21.74%) to nine learners (39.13%). The Fair category remained significant, with eight learners (34.78%) classified in this category. Notably, no learners were categorized as Poor or Very Poor at the end of the program. These findings suggest that the differentiated learning activities, supported by simplified materials, songs, and educational games, helped learners improve their understanding and use of basic English vocabulary.

Observations indicated that learners became more actively engaged and confident throughout the implementation of the program. Most learners were able to follow instructions, complete learning tasks, and participate in collaborative activities more independently than during the initial implementation stage. Learners showed particular enthusiasm during activities involving songs and educational games, which encouraged interaction and active participation. The observations also revealed improvements in learners' vocabulary recall and their use of classroom language during learning activities.

Field notes and documentation provided additional support for these findings. Learners required less assistance from facilitators and demonstrated greater willingness to ask questions and participate in discussions. Documentation, including photographs and learning records, showed increased participation in group activities and more positive attitudes toward learning English. These positive developments indicate that the improvements introduced during the program successfully addressed many of the challenges identified during the initial implementation stage and contributed to a more effective and inclusive learning experience for the participants.



Figure 2. implementation of Differentiated Learning Activities in cycle 2

In conclusion, the implementation of differentiated learning activities supported by simplified materials, songs, and educational games was effective in improving learners' basic English vocabulary. The evaluation results showed a substantial increase in the number of

learners who achieved the Very Good and Good categories, while no learners remained in the Poor or Very Poor categories at the end of the program. Furthermore, observations, field notes, and documentation indicated that learners became more engaged, confident, and actively involved throughout the learning activities. These findings suggest that differentiated instruction successfully accommodated learners' diverse needs and contributed to the achievement of the community service program's objectives.

DISSCUSSION

The findings indicate that differentiated instruction, supported by simplified materials, songs, and educational games, contributed positively to the development of basic English vocabulary among young EFL learners at PPA IO-0133 Krammer Hilina'a Church. The evaluation results showed continuous improvement throughout the implementation of the program. While the initial stage of the program still showed several learners in the Poor and Very Poor categories, the final evaluation demonstrated substantial growth in the Good and Very Good categories, with no learners remaining below the Fair category. These results suggest that the learning activities successfully supported learners' vocabulary development and increased their understanding of basic English concepts.

These improvements are consistent with the principles of differentiated instruction. According to Tomlinson (2017), adapting learning content, processes, and activities to learners' readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles can promote more effective learning outcomes. During the early stages of the program, some activities did not fully accommodate the wide range of learner abilities. Following the program evaluation, learning materials were simplified and learners were grouped according to their readiness levels, allowing each learner to participate at an appropriate pace and level of difficulty. The findings also support Ariani et al. (2024), who reported that differentiated English learning materials improved learners' comprehension and engagement.

The use of songs and educational games also played an important role in supporting vocabulary development. These activities created an enjoyable learning environment, increased learner participation, and reduced anxiety during English learning activities (Paul, 2021). This finding is in line with Budianto (2022), who found that young learners respond positively to game-based and song-based English learning activities, and Kholid et al. (2024), who reported that English songs can enhance vocabulary retention.

Observations, field notes, and documentation further supported the evaluation results. Learners who initially required continuous assistance gradually became more confident, participated more actively, and completed learning tasks with less support from facilitators. These findings support Fitria (2026), who argued that differentiated instruction helps create inclusive learning environments that accommodate diverse learner needs. Beyond improving vocabulary achievement, the program also expanded access to learner-centred English learning opportunities within a community-based educational setting. Through differentiated activities, learners with different levels of ability were able to participate meaningfully and experience success in learning English, supporting the findings of Weganofa (2025) regarding the positive impact of differentiated instruction on learner engagement and learning outcomes.

This community service program was implemented within a limited timeframe and involved a relatively small group of participants from a single community learning centre. Therefore, the experiences and outcomes reported in this program may differ in other contexts.

Future community service initiatives may consider extending the duration of activities, incorporating a wider range of learning resources, and involving larger groups of learners to maximize the benefits of differentiated English instruction for young learners.

CONCLUSION

This community service program demonstrated that differentiated instruction, supported by simplified learning materials, songs, and educational games, effectively improved the basic English vocabulary of young EFL learners at PPA IO-0133 Krammer Hilina'a Church. The percentage of learners classified in the *Good* and *Very Good* categories increased from 26.09% at the beginning of the program to 65.22% at the end of the program, while the percentage of learners in the *Poor* and *Very Poor* categories decreased from 39.13% to 0%. Observations, field notes, and documentation further indicated that learners became more engaged, confident, and independent throughout the learning activities. These findings suggest that differentiated instruction can serve as an effective and inclusive approach for supporting vocabulary development among young learners with diverse levels of readiness and learning needs. Therefore, teachers, community educators, and future community service teams are encouraged to implement learner-centered and differentiated learning activities when working with mixed-ability groups. Future community service programs may also consider expanding the variety of learning activities and extending the duration of implementation to further strengthen learners' English language development.

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