

**DESIGNING COMMUNICATIVE AND NEEDS-BASED ENGLISH
TEACHING MATERIALS THROUGH TRAINING AND MENTORING****Kartin Lihawa**

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Abstract: This community service program aimed to design communicative and needs-based English teaching materials through training and mentoring activities for junior high school English teachers. The program was conducted in response to problems in English teaching, particularly the limited use of communicative learning methods, teachers' dependence on grammar-focused instruction, limited teaching materials, and students' low motivation and English achievement. The objective of the program was to improve teachers' knowledge and skills in developing learner-centered and contextual English teaching materials based on needs analysis. The program applied a participatory approach through workshops, group discussions, hands-on practice, and continuous mentoring sessions. Participants were introduced to communicative language teaching principles, needs analysis techniques, and strategies for designing interactive learning materials. The mentoring process also assisted teachers in revising and implementing the materials in classroom practice. As a result, participants demonstrated improved understanding, creativity, confidence, and competence in developing relevant, interactive, and communicative English teaching materials.

Keywords: communicative teaching materials; needs analysis; teacher training; mentoring; English language teaching

Abstrak: Program pengabdian kepada masyarakat ini bertujuan untuk merancang bahan ajar bahasa Inggris yang komunikatif dan berbasis kebutuhan melalui kegiatan pelatihan dan pendampingan bagi guru bahasa Inggris tingkat SMP. Program ini dilaksanakan sebagai respons terhadap permasalahan dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris, khususnya terbatasnya penggunaan metode pembelajaran komunikatif, ketergantungan guru pada pembelajaran berbasis tata bahasa, terbatasnya bahan ajar, serta rendahnya motivasi dan hasil belajar siswa. Tujuan program ini adalah untuk meningkatkan pengetahuan dan keterampilan guru dalam mengembangkan bahan ajar bahasa Inggris yang berpusat pada peserta didik dan kontekstual berdasarkan analisis kebutuhan. Program ini menggunakan pendekatan partisipatif melalui workshop, diskusi kelompok, praktik langsung, dan pendampingan berkelanjutan. Peserta diperkenalkan pada prinsip-prinsip pembelajaran bahasa komunikatif, teknik analisis kebutuhan, serta strategi merancang bahan ajar interaktif. Proses pendampingan juga membantu guru dalam merevisi dan mengimplementasikan bahan ajar dalam praktik pembelajaran di kelas. Hasil kegiatan menunjukkan bahwa peserta mengalami peningkatan pemahaman, kreativitas, kepercayaan diri, dan kompetensi dalam mengembangkan bahan ajar bahasa Inggris yang relevan, interaktif, dan komunikatif.

Kata kunci: bahan ajar komunikatif; analisis kebutuhan; pelatihan guru; pendampingan; pengajaran bahasa Inggris

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Background

The development of instructional materials plays a crucial role in the learning process, as it influences the effectiveness of content delivery and the achievement of educational goals; in teaching English at SMP particularly in Gorontalo Province, the MGMP (Musyawarah Guru Mata Pelajaran) monthly periodically discuss problems arise from all teachers' everyday activities in class according to Merdeka curriculum particularly at SMP level students. Najri in Putri *et.al* (2025, p. 34) To improve teacher competency, the government is promoting the role of Subject Teacher Consultative Groups (MGMP) as professional development platforms. It is also said by Rahman & Kurniawan, 2025 in Putri *et.al* (2025, p. 34) Through these forums, teachers can share experiences, develop teaching materials, and develop skills .

The objective of English learning at the junior high school level (Grades 7–9) is to develop students' communicative competence in both spoken and written English for daily and academic purposes. Students are expected to understand and use simple expressions, texts, and conversations related to their personal, social, and school environments. English learning at this level also aims to improve students' listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills through meaningful and interactive activities. In addition, students are encouraged to build confidence, critical thinking, creativity, and intercultural awareness while using English in various contexts appropriate to their level of development. This objective is in line with the use of the effective of applying communicative language teaching (CLT), Aswad *et.al*. (2024) is to enhance language skills, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Similarly, Sadiqzade (2025) explain that active learning methods focus on engagement, interaction, and language application in meaningful contexts, later on Bonwell and Eison (1991) in Sadiqzade, this approach makes learning more enjoyable and fosters deeper understanding and retention. The shift from teacher-centered instruction to student-centered engagement highlights the transformative potential of active learning.

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One of the common problems in English teaching at the junior high school level at SMPN Gorontalo is the limited use of communicative and engaging learning methods in the classroom. Many teachers still rely on traditional teaching approaches that focus heavily on grammar and textbook exercises, causing students to become less active and less motivated in learning English. In addition, limited teaching materials and insufficient opportunities for language practice often affect students' ability to develop their English skills effectively. As a result, many students experience difficulties in understanding vocabulary, expressing ideas in English, and achieving satisfactory learning outcomes, particularly in speaking and writing skills. Teacher-centered instruction and limited interaction opportunities or without application of SCL (Students-Center Learnin) Abdillah, *et.el* (2025 P. 32.) argued it may face major barriers Students often struggle with self-regulation and collaborative learning, while teachers revert to traditional methods due to inadequate preparation, lack of support, and rigid curricula. Student resistance to independent and collaborative tasks also hampers its adoption can reduce students' motivation and communicative development in language learning. In addition, Mishan and Timmis (2022) argue that inappropriate or less contextual teaching materials may hinder students' engagement and negatively influence their learning outcomes.

The English proficiency of junior high school students in Gorontalo City varies significantly due to differences in students' educational backgrounds and family environments. Many students come from elementary schools where English was not taught intensively, resulting in limited prior exposure to the language. In contrast, students from schools such as SMP Santa Maria and SMP Muhammadiyah 1 receive more intensive English instruction both in the classroom and in dormitory activities, where students are encouraged or required to communicate in English in their daily interactions. Outside these two schools, however, the English abilities of students in many junior high schools in Gorontalo City remain highly diverse. Some students have already mastered basic English skills, such as vocabulary related to colors, numbers, body parts, greetings, self-introduction, and simple sentences, while others have not yet reached this level of competence. On the other hand, the curriculum requires students to achieve learning objectives related to reading and listening

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comprehension skills. These demands require teachers to make extra efforts in designing and implementing effective teaching strategies in order to improve students' learning outcomes despite their varied levels of English proficiency.

Another problem is related to contextual learning in English instruction. Based on discussions among teachers during MGMP (Musyawarah Guru Mata Pelajaran/Subject Teacher Forum) activities, not all teachers have fully implemented contextual learning approaches in their classrooms. Some teachers still rely mainly on textbooks by selecting topics that are considered familiar to students, such as tourist attractions, although students only know these places from stories or pictures in the books and have never experienced them directly. However, several creative teachers have implemented more authentic contextual learning activities in the classroom. For example, in teaching procedure texts, teachers involve students in practical activities such as demonstrating how to make tea or how to plant flowers. These activities allow students to connect English learning with real-life experiences, making the learning process more meaningful and engaging.

Method

This community service program was carried out through collaboration with English teachers working in Gorontalo City who were also undertaking further studies at the Graduate Program of Universitas Negeri Gorontalo (UNG). Purba, et al, (2026) argued synergy among universities, communities, and other stakeholders emerges as a key factor in the success of community service initiatives. During lecture meetings between the lecturer and these teachers as postgraduate students, discussions were conducted on English learning at the junior high school level in Gorontalo City. In these discussions, the teachers presented various instructional issues from their respective schools. One of the postgraduate students, who also serves as the secretary of the MGMP (Subject Teacher Forum), highlighted several teaching and learning issues, including teaching strategies, students' motivation in learning English, curriculum implementation, learning materials, learning outcomes, and the four English language skills. Based on these issues, I, as a lecturer at the Graduate Program, became one of the implementers of this community service program and



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selected the topic “*Designing Communicative and Needs-Based English Teaching Materials through Training and Mentoring.*” This activity was conducted in conjunction with the monthly MGMP meeting on April 10, 2026, at SMPN 10 Gorontalo City. A total of 32 participants attended the program out of all of 63 MGMP members in Gorontalo City.

It used participatory method/approach through workshops, group discussions, hands-on practice, and continuous mentoring sessions. During the activities, participants were introduced to the principles of communicative language teaching, techniques for conducting needs analysis, and strategies for designing interactive learning materials. The mentoring process also assisted participants in revising and implementing the materials in their teaching practice. As a result, the participants showed better understanding and increased competence in developing relevant, interactive, and communicative English teaching materials. The program also encouraged teachers’ creativity and confidence in preparing effective learning resources that suit students’ needs.

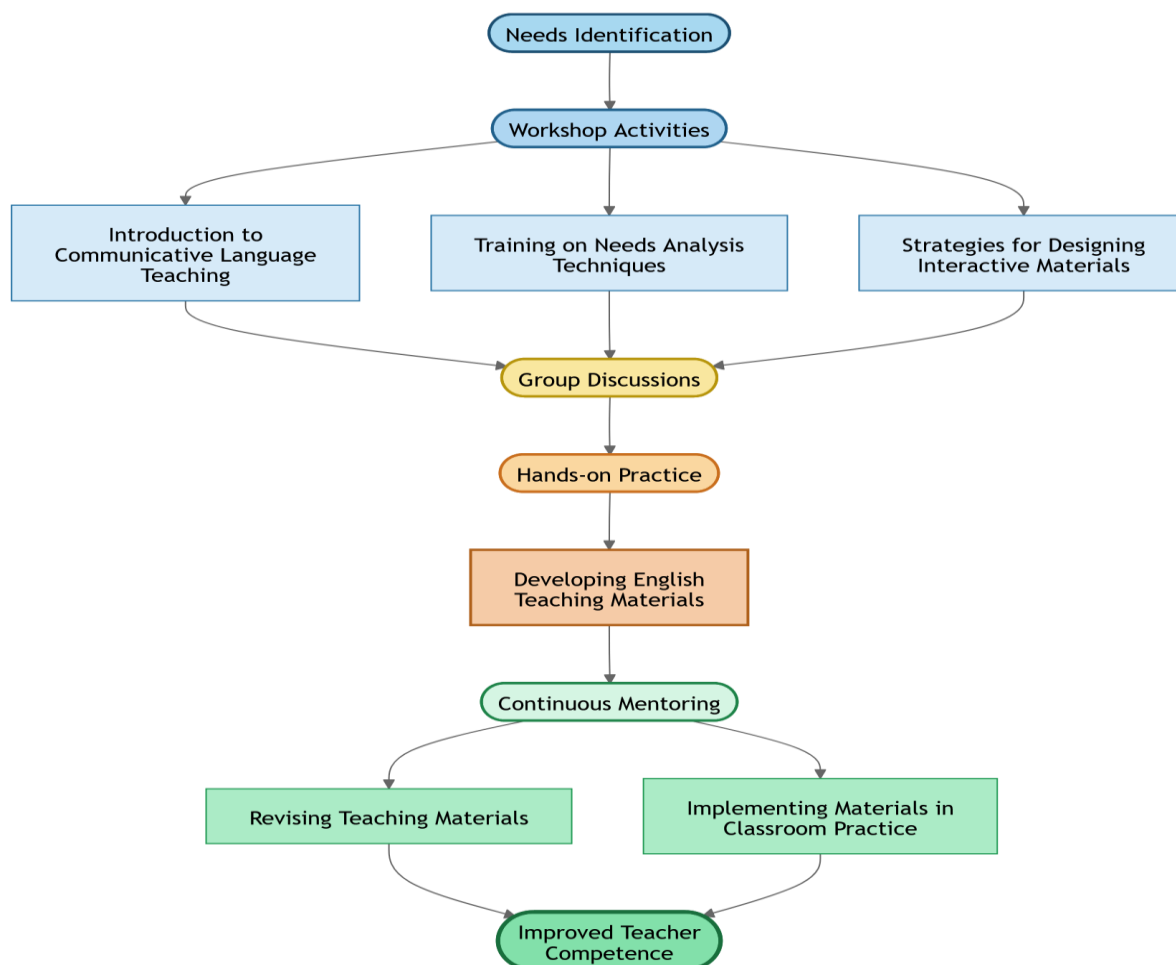


Figure 1. Implementation of the Community Service Program in the MGMP of Gorontalo

The figure illustrates the sequence of workshop activities, starting from needs identification, training sessions, group discussions, and hands-on practice in developing English teaching materials, followed by continuous mentoring through material revision and classroom implementation to improve teacher competence.

Result

The implementation of the community service program, using the proposed methods and approaches, was initiated through a needs identification process as illustrated in Figure 3. This stage focused on situational analysis during the field implementation of the program. Based on the findings of the situational analysis, five major issues were identified: (1) teaching strategies, (2) students' motivation in learning English,

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(3) curriculum implementation, (4) learning materials, (5) learning outcomes and the mastery of the four English language skills.

In response to these issues, a workshop and mentoring program were conducted to assist teachers in developing communicative and contextual English teaching materials. Jarske, et al, (2025) said in the workshops, participants ideated social robots intended to support youth participation in society, starting with the robot's purpose and continuing with defining its interaction methods and appearance. As the results of conducted workshop in MGMP Gorontalo indicated that 21 out of 32 participating teachers successfully developed in their written works as the contextual learning materials for teaching procedure texts in English. Among them, 4 teachers designed lesson plans and materials on how to make noodles in the classroom, 9 teachers developed materials on how to make tea, 5 teachers prepared materials on how to make coffee, and 3 teachers designed materials related to planting flower seedlings.

Meanwhile, the remaining 11 teachers implemented partially contextualized teaching practices by teaching descriptive texts based primarily on textbook materials. The contextual elements included topics related to tourist attractions in Gorontalo and well-known public figures familiar to students. Although these materials were considered contextual because students recognized the objects being described, they were categorized as partially contextual since students did not directly observe, interact with, or experience the objects in real-life contexts. This partial contextual teaching materials used text book in line with Chandio (2025, p. 30) the books remain inadequate in promoting intercultural competence, co-existential prevalence, and global outlook. This is the same as using traditional method. Amirova (2025) argued that traditional methods offer structure and clear accountability (often easier to manage in large classes) but tend to foster passive learning and rote memorization. From 32 partisipans that have understood operating curriculum in managing the concept of contextual teaching materials in class, they showed their jobs as the model as contextual teaching of procedural text.

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Furthermore, the mentoring process helped participants revise and implement the developed materials in their classroom practices. The activities also improved teachers' understanding and competence in designing English teaching materials that were relevant to students' needs and aligned with their instructional expertise. This is inline with Qizi and Qosimova (2026) that the role of teachers as material designers is examined, emphasizing their responsibility to adapt and create content that meets learners' changing needs.

More importantly, the program supported teachers in achieving curriculum objectives through learner-centered and needs-based instructional materials. In contrast to non-traditional approaches Amirova (2025) (e.g. inquiry-based, collaborative learning) promote critical thinking and motivation, but require significant teacher preparation, effective scaffolding, and new assessment methods.

Discussion

The results of this community service program indicate that training and mentoring activities can improve teachers' understanding and skills in developing communicative and contextual English teaching materials. The participatory approach applied through workshops, group discussions, hands-on practice, and continuous mentoring sessions provided teachers with practical learning experiences that encouraged active involvement in the material development process. This finding supports Aristia, et al, (2025) who emphasize that the integration of local cultural contexts fostered a deeper understanding of both target language use and cross-cultural interaction, bridging gaps between learners' cultural frameworks and English-communication contexts.

The implementation of contextual teaching materials during the workshop demonstrated positive changes in teachers' perspectives toward English instruction. Most participants were able to design learning materials connected to students' real-life experiences, particularly in teaching procedure texts through activities such as making tea, making coffee, and planting flower seedlings. These activities reflected the principles of contextual learning, in which students learn more effectively when learning content is related to authentic situations. Salmanova (2025) stated The

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communicative language teaching promotes students-centered learning, task based instruction, and the use of authentic materials, making language acquisition more engaging and active.

The findings also revealed that not all teachers were able to fully implement contextual learning approaches. Several participants still developed partially contextual materials, such as descriptive texts about people, animals, objects, and tourist attractions, without involving direct classroom practices. This condition indicates that some teachers still depend on conventional teaching methods and textbook-oriented instruction. It is consistently to the result research conducted by Kapici et al (2017) that the students, who experienced Science-Technology-Society Approach (STS) based curriculum through one full semester, are able to apply basic science concepts to new situations meaningfully better than students who exposed to textbook oriented instruction.

However, the mentoring process contributed significantly to increasing teachers' awareness and creativity in designing more interactive learning materials. Continuous guidance enabled participants to revise their teaching materials and adapt them to students' needs and classroom conditions. This result is consistent with Wright (2021) The choices teachers make in managing classroom second language learning, vested with the authority that they invariably have, are fundamental in shaping learning experience and influencing its quality.

Social changes were also observed during the implementation of the program. Teachers became more confident in applying communicative teaching approaches and showed greater willingness to use contextual learning activities in their classrooms. In addition, collaborative discussions among teachers during MGMP activities created opportunities for sharing experiences and innovative teaching practices. These developments indicate the emergence of a more reflective and student-centered teaching culture among participating teachers.

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Conclusion

The training, mentoring, and monitoring program conducted for English teachers in MGMP Gorontalo demonstrated positive outcomes in improving teachers' competence in designing contextual and needs-based English teaching materials. Most participants were able to develop and implement contextual learning materials, particularly for teaching procedural texts through activities closely related to students' daily lives, such as making noodles, tea, coffee, and planting flower seedlings. These practices indicated that teachers had begun to understand and apply the principles of contextual teaching and learner-centered instruction in their classroom practices.

Although several participants still relied on textbook-based materials, the integration of familiar local topics showed an initial effort to contextualize English learning. However, the findings also revealed that partially contextualized materials were less effective in providing direct experiential learning opportunities for students. Therefore, continuous professional development is necessary to strengthen teachers' ability to design fully contextual and interactive learning experiences.

Furthermore, the mentoring process played an important role in helping teachers revise, improve, and implement teaching materials that aligned with students' needs and curriculum objectives. The program also reinforced the role of teachers as material designers who are capable of adapting instructional content to support meaningful learning. Overall, this study highlights that training combined with continuous monitoring can significantly contribute to enhancing teachers' pedagogical competence and promoting more communicative, contextual, and needs-based English teaching practices.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to express sincere gratitude to the Head and Secretary of the MGMP (Subject Teacher Forum) of English Teachers in Gorontalo City, as well as all English teachers as members of the organization, for their support, cooperation, and the opportunity provided to carry out this community service program within the MGMP group.

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The author also extends appreciation to the Dean of the Faculty of Letters and Culture for the trust and support given in conducting the author, as an English lecturer, to conduct this community service activity. Their encouragement and institutional support have been highly valuable in the successful implementation of this program.

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