



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ARTICLE

# Development of Multidisciplinary Competencies for the Young Generation through English Language Literacy, Digital Ethics, and Economic Literacy at PERMAI Pulau Pinang, Malaysia

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## Abstract

This community service program aims to develop the multidisciplinary competencies of young people through strengthening English literacy, digital ethics, and economic literacy. The program was conducted at PERMAI Pulau Pinang, Malaysia, involving 30 participants from the Indonesian diaspora community, including students and youth members. The implementation used participatory and educational approaches through interactive training, group discussions, and hands-on practice. The results indicate a significant improvement in participants' understanding and skills, with an average post-training score increase of 80%. Participants demonstrated more effective English communication, ethical behavior in digital activities, and better financial management awareness. The multidisciplinary approach proved effective in shaping an adaptive young generation with strong ethical values and economic empowerment. This program serves as a model for empowering Indonesian diaspora communities to face the challenges of the digital transformation era.

## Keywords

English Language Literacy; Digital Ethics; Economic Literacy; Multidisciplinary Competencies.

## Abstrak

Kegiatan pengabdian kepada masyarakat ini bertujuan untuk mengembangkan kompetensi multidisiplin generasi muda melalui penguatan literasi Bahasa Inggris, etika digital, dan literasi ekonomi. Program dilaksanakan di PERMAI Pulau Pinang, Malaysia, dengan melibatkan 30 peserta dari kalangan remaja dan pelajar diaspora Indonesia. Metode pelaksanaan menggunakan pendekatan partisipatif dan edukatif melalui pelatihan interaktif, diskusi kelompok, serta praktik langsung. Hasil kegiatan menunjukkan bahwa pemahaman dan keterampilan peserta meningkat secara signifikan, dengan rata-rata peningkatan skor penilaian sebesar 80% setelah pelatihan. Peserta mampu berkomunikasi menggunakan Bahasa Inggris secara lebih efektif, menunjukkan perilaku etis dalam aktivitas digital, dan memiliki pemahaman lebih baik dalam pengelolaan keuangan pribadi. Pendekatan multidisiplin terbukti efektif dalam membentuk generasi muda yang adaptif terhadap tantangan global dan berkarakter etis serta berdaya ekonomi. Program ini dapat menjadi model pemberdayaan bagi komunitas diaspora Indonesia di luar negeri dalam menghadapi era transformasi digital.

## Kata Kunci

Literasi Bahasa Inggris; Etika Digital; Literasi Ekonomi; Kompetensi Multidisiplin.

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

The era of rapidly developing globalization requires the younger generation to have comprehensive life skills, not only in academics but also in self-management and finance. This is because the adolescent phase is often called the age period which is the center of attention of experts and religious leaders because adolescence is a specific period. Children aged 7–18 years are an important phase in the formation of characters, mindsets, and habits that will influence their lives in the future. Character refers to the principles that underlie human behavior based on religious norms, culture, law and constitution, tradition, beauty, and others. Character education is a conscious effort to instill, realize and instill these values in students with the aim of being able to play a role as a whole individual (Sari Br Marbun *et al.*, 2024). The Indonesian Society Organisation (PERMAI) Penang, Malaysia, is a forum for Indonesians living in Malaysia, including children and adolescents who are currently studying. The presence of this community is a strategic space to provide useful education, especially in the fields of English Literacy, Education Law, and Basic Economics. This is important because most children in overseas communities often face challenges in cultural adaptation, education, and self-management skills that can support their future success.

The young generation is an important asset in the development of a country, especially in facing increasingly complex globalization challenges as seen in changing language styles, clothing, consumption patterns, and information technology, such as the use of English or foreign languages (Supriatna & Atikah, 2024). This activity is included in the public sector category that focuses on fostering basic skills in the form of soft skills in everyday English communication for children and adolescents (Setiawati & Mayasari, 2021). For this reason, the development of multidisciplinary competencies is very important so that they are ready to compete at the international level. One way to achieve this is through education that integrates various fields of science. In Malaysia, the Education for Community Development and Empowerment (PERMAI) program located in Pulau Penang offers opportunities for the younger generation to expand their horizons and skills through English literacy, Digital Ethics, and Economic Literacy.

The role of language as a tool to support the success of education can no longer be ignored. With this, the influence of globalization makes the role of English itself very large in daily life. Therefore, the younger generation is expected to have good knowledge and skills in English. English as a foreign language in Indonesia began to receive special attention in the field of education since the early 1990s on the basis of awareness of the importance of learning English as early as possible to be able to participate in competing in an increasingly modern and globalized world. Thus, learning English has begun to be applied in schools and universities. It is undeniable that the ability to speak English has become one of the demands of today's society. Along with the development of the millennial era and modern technology, in addition to mastery of Indonesian and regional languages, the desire to learn English encourages the expansion of bilingual programs, especially in the world of Education (Sepriyadi, 2024). Therefore, learning strategies that are creative, interactive, and relevant to technological developments are an urgent need. Various innovative approaches have been implemented to improve the mastery of English vocabulary and literacy skills in the younger generation (Krisna & Zakiah, 2025).

The young generation needs to be careful and ethical in using social media because many young people abuse digital media to threaten, deceive, or make negative comments against others, even those they don't know. This phenomenon shows that unethical behavior in cyberspace is increasingly common among adolescents, and most of them have been victims of cyberbullying (Ashari & Yuliana, 2023). Digital ethics emphasizes not only the wise use of technology, but also on moral and social responsibility in every online activity. The younger generation is expected to be able to build critical awareness of the impact of their behavior in the digital space, maintain good manners, and respect the rights and privacy of others. Education about digital ethics needs to be instilled from an early age so that the character of a generation that is digitally intelligent, has integrity, and is able to utilize technology for positive and productive things (Setiawan & Mulyadi, 2022). The younger generation also needs to understand knowledge about Economics, in this case economic literacy is an important material that needs to be given to children as an effort to solve economic problems in their social relations in society. Providing students with an understanding of economic literacy requires intervention from families and schools (Society, 2024). So that with economic literacy, it is hoped that students can learn to live frugally and can save first to get what they want. Economic literacy is very necessary to be taught to students so that they can live during modern society in the society 5.0 era. In addition, the importance of economic literacy will minimize the consumptive behavior of students in consuming. This knowledge is necessary to master tasks or have an understanding related to economic problems (Janah & Harsono, 2023).

## 2 | METHOD

The method of implementing this community service activity uses a participatory and educational approach that

emphasizes the active involvement of participants in all stages of the activity. This approach was chosen to ensure that the activities focus not only on knowledge transfer, but also on the formation of practical skills, ethical attitudes, and positive character of the young generation in the PERMAI environment of Penang, Malaysia.

## 2.1 Preparation Stage

At this stage, the implementation team coordinates with the PERMAI management to identify training needs. The participants involved were 30 people, consisting of teenagers and Indonesian diaspora students aged 7-17 years. The inclusion criteria for participants include: (a) active membership in PERMAI, (b) basic Indonesian language skills, and (c) willingness to participate in the entire series of activities. There are no exclusion criteria other than the absence of more than one training session. In addition, a pre-test was carried out to measure the initial level of English literacy, understanding of digital ethics, and economic literacy. This pre-test is used as a basis for comparison with post-test results at the evaluation stage.

## 2.2 Implementation Stage

The implementation of activities was carried out for three days through three main thematic sessions, namely:

- 1) The English Literacy session includes basic communication training, thematic conversations, and simulations of language use in academic and social contexts.
- 2) The Digital Ethics session focused on the formation of ethical and responsible behavior in online activities, including social media ethics, digital security, and productive use of technology.
- 3) The Economic Literacy session, including the introduction of basic economic concepts, personal financial management, and the role of economics in the family and community.
- 4) Each session uses interactive lecture methods, small group discussions, case studies, and role simulations to encourage active participation and contextual learning (Kolb, 2015).

## 2.3 Evaluation and Reflection Stage

Evaluation was carried out through a combination of pre-test and post-test, semi-structured interviews, and direct observation during the activity.

- 1) Pre-test and post-test were used to measure quantitative improvement in three key aspects: English language proficiency, understanding of digital ethics, and economic literacy. The test instruments are arranged based on the assessment rubric (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).
- 2) Semi-structured interviews were conducted on 10 participants who were purposively selected to explore changes in attitudes and perceptions after participating in the activity.
- 3) Direct observation was carried out using a structured observation sheet that contains indicators of active participation, cooperative ability, and the application of ethics in digital activities (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2019).

Quantitative data were analyzed using comparative descriptive statistics (comparison of pre-test and post-test averages), while qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis with an open coding and categorization process to find participants' behavior patterns and perceptions. All participants and the management of PERMAI gave written consent before the activity started. The confidentiality of participants' personal data is fully maintained, and the results of the analysis are reported in the aggregate without including the identity of the individual. This method is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the effectiveness of the participatory-educational approach in strengthening the multidisciplinary competencies of the younger generation, as well as becoming an empowerment model that can be replicated in other diaspora communities.

# 3 | RESULT AND DISCUSSION

## 3.1 Result

This PKM activity was carried out in accordance with the plan that had been prepared with PERMAI Penang partners. The participants who participated in the activity amounted to 30 people, consisting of teenagers and students who were members of PERMAI. The entire range of activities is designed to not only provide theoretical knowledge but also include hands-on practice involving participants actively in each training session. The enthusiasm of the participants was seen from the beginning of the activity, as evidenced by the full attendance and active participation in each session. In the initial session, participants were introduced to the objectives and benefits of the activity through interactive lecture methods. Ice breaking was conducted to create a pleasant atmosphere so that participants were more focused and enthusiastic. Participants also received motivation about the importance of English literacy, digital ethics, and economic literacy for a better future. Based on observations, most participants gave positive responses, as seen from their involvement in answering trigger questions given by the facilitator. Through English conversation activities, participants showed

improvements in speaking and listening skills. They became more confident to use English in everyday conversations. These activities succeeded in reducing their reliance on the use of local languages in a global situation and broadening their horizons to communicate with international audiences. In addition, the application of learning technology in English teaching also had a positive impact. The use of interactive learning apps and platforms allowed participants to continue learning outside of the classroom, making learning more flexible and accessible at any time.

In terms of digital ethics education, participants gained a deeper understanding of good behavior in social media. Before the activity, most of the participants did not fully understand the risks of misusing social media and the importance of maintaining a digital footprint. After the activity, participants were able to identify forms of digital ethics, such as respecting the privacy of others, avoiding hate speech, and understanding the legal consequences of unethical behavior in the digital space (Ribble, 2022). In the aspect of economic literacy, participants showed increased ability to understand basic economic concepts such as needs, desires, pocket money management, and the importance of saving and investing wisely. Simple simulation activities such as the "weekly budget" game helped participants practice rational economic decision-making according to their financial capabilities (Lusardi & Mitchell, 2014). Another result that should be noted is an increase in awareness of the importance of independence in various aspects of life, both in education, finance, and social. A better understanding of English literacy, digital ethics, and economic literacy has increased participants' confidence to make better decisions in their lives. Participants are now more open to international opportunities and ready to leverage existing resources to achieve their goals.



Figure 1. Activity Documentation

This PKM activity has shown positive results and has had a significant impact on the development of the competencies of the younger generation at PERMAI Pulang Penang. This program has succeeded in providing a solid knowledge base in three important areas that support each other, namely English Literacy, Digital Ethics, and Economic Literacy. This success is not only measured by the academic achievements of the participants, but also part of the preparation to improve their quality of life in the face of various challenges that exist in the future. To find out the extent of the improvement in the understanding and skills of the participants after participating in this PKM activity, measurements were made through pre-test and post-test. A pre-test is given before the training session begins to measure participants' initial knowledge of human resource management and financial literacy. Meanwhile, the post-test is carried out after the entire series of activities is completed to assess the learning results obtained. The comparison between the results of the pre-test and post-test provides an overview of the level of effectiveness of the program in improving the competence of participants. The following diagram visually presents the results of these measurements for easier analysis.

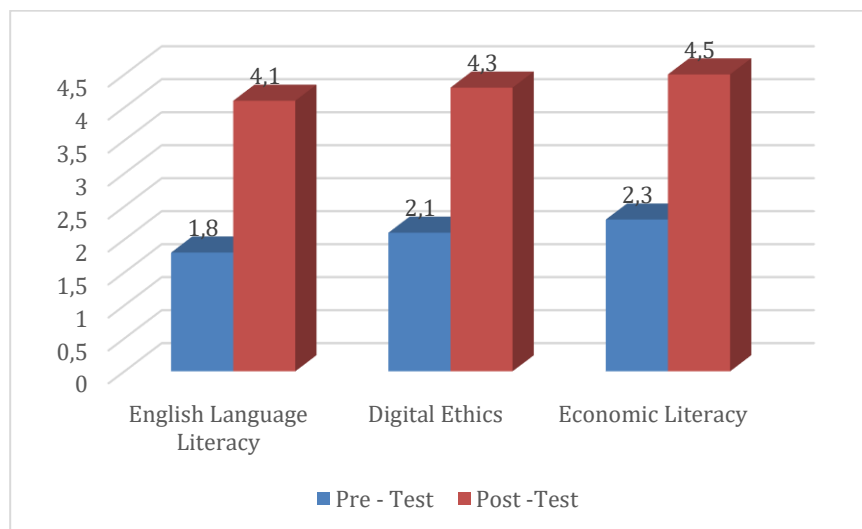


Figure 2. Pretest and Posttest Results

Based on the results of quantitative and qualitative analysis, this community service activity showed a significant increase in three main domains of participants' competencies, namely English literacy, digital ethics, and basic economic literacy. Measurements were carried out using a Likert scale of 1–5, where a value of 1 indicates a very low level of understanding and a value of 5 indicates an excellent mastery of the measured competencies.

1) English Literacy

The average score of the Pre-Test participants was 1,8, which indicates that communication skills and language understanding are still limited, especially in academic and social contexts. After participating in the training, the Post-Test score increased to 4,1. This improvement includes participants' ability to introduce themselves, discuss in small groups, and compose simple sentences independently. One participant stated, "*Before, I was afraid to speak in English, but after conversation practice, I am more confident to talk to friends from outside.*" These findings indicate that a practice-based learning approach is effective in improving participants' active communication skills.

2) Digital Ethics

In this domain, the average Pre-Test value is 2,1, indicating a still shallow understanding of ethical behavior in the digital world. After training, the Post-Test score increased to 4,3. This increase is mainly seen in the aspects of awareness of digital privacy, the use of polite language on social media, and the ability to identify hoax information. Based on the results of observation, participants began to show reflective behavior in discussions, such as reminding friends not to spread information without verification. One participant commented, "*Now I know how to distinguish between correct and untrue information on the internet.*"

3) Economic Literacy

The average Pre-Test score of participants was 2,3, which indicates a limited understanding of the concept of personal finance and the role of economics in the family. After the activity, the Post-Test score increased to 4,5. Participants demonstrated better ability to make simple budgets, save regularly, and understand the concept of needs versus wants. In the reflection session, a participant said, "*Now I know the importance of recording expenses so that money does not run out quickly.*"

The results show an average increase of more than 80% across domains. This confirms that the participatory-educational training model is able to significantly improve multidisciplinary skills. In addition to cognitive improvement, there are also behavioral and attitude changes, such as increased confidence, digital responsibility, and discipline in managing personal finances

### 3.2 Discussion

The community service activity which was carried out at PERMAI Pulang Penang, Malaysia focuses on efforts to develop multidisciplinary competencies for the younger generation through three main pillars, namely English literacy, digital ethics, and economic literacy. These three aspects are seen as interrelated and are important provisions in facing global challenges in today's digital era. According to the OECD (2018), strengthening multidisciplinary competencies in education can improve the adaptive skills, critical thinking, and competitiveness of the younger generation in various areas of life. In the context of English literacy, this activity is directed to improve communication skills and confidence of participants in using the international language in daily life. English language proficiency is not only important for academic needs, but also a key means of accessing global information and expanding economic opportunities (Crystal, 2012). Through a communicative and practice-based learning approach, participants are invited to actively participate in conversation simulations, role-plays, and contextual short presentation activities. The results showed that participants were more courageous in using English in social interaction and better understood the role of language as a tool for diplomacy and cross-cultural collaboration.

Furthermore, the aspect of digital ethics is an important component in shaping the character of the young generation who are responsible in cyberspace. In the era of information disclosure, the unethical use of digital media can have serious social impacts such as the spread of false information, cyberbullying, and privacy violations (Ribble, 2022). Through training sessions and reflective discussions, participants were introduced to digital ethical principles such as respecting privacy, keeping personal data safe, and using social media for productive purposes. This is in line with the view of Livingstone and Helsper (2010) that digital ethics education must be directed not only to technical skills using technology, but also to moral, social, and emotional aspects in interacting in the digital space. After participating in this activity, participants showed increased awareness of the importance of maintaining a digital footprint and using technology wisely and responsibly. Meanwhile, economic literacy plays a role as a foundation for the independence and financial awareness of the younger generation. In this activity, participants were trained to understand basic economic concepts such as the difference between needs and wants, pocket money management, and the importance of saving and investing. Economic literacy not only strengthens the ability to make financial decisions, but also shapes economic attitudes and social responsibility (Lusardi & Mitchell, 2014). Through simple simulations such as weekly budget games and personal finance case studies, participants are able to relate economic concepts to their real lives. This supports the findings of Remund (2010) who stated that economic literacy applied practically can improve the ability of individuals to manage financial

resources wisely and sustainably.

## 4 | CONCLUSION

Community service activities carried out at PERMAI Penang, Malaysia have had a positive and measurable impact in improving the multidisciplinary competence of the younger generation through strengthening three main aspects: English literacy, digital ethics, and economic literacy. The participatory, educational, and applicative approaches applied have proven effective in encouraging active participation of participants and creating an interactive, reflective, and contextual learning atmosphere. Participants not only gain increased theoretical knowledge, but also demonstrate changes in attitudes and practical skills in the use of language, digital technology, and the wise and responsible management of economic resources. In general, this activity emphasizes that a multidisciplinary approach based on global literacy can be an effective strategy in shaping a young generation that is adaptive to global challenges and highly competitive. For further development, it is suggested that this program be expanded through (1) strategic partnerships between Indonesian universities and diaspora organizations abroad, (2) integration of similar activities into competency-based training curricula in non-formal educational institutions, and (3) policy support from local governments and religious institutions to institute multidisciplinary literacy-based empowerment programs.

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