Applying an Arts-Integrated Approach in English Language Material Development for PGSD Students in Distance Education

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Abstract *The development of contextualized English teaching materials is very important for PGSD students, especially in the distance learning system at the Open University. This research aims to apply an arts integrated approach to the development of English language materials to improve students' learning engagement and understanding. This approach incorporates elements of visual art, creative expression and aesthetic values into language learning content. The method used was R&D with the ADDIE model. Data were obtained from observation, questionnaires, and interviews, then analysed descriptively qualitatively. The results showed that more than 85% of students felt the material was easier to understand because of the visual elements. Students also became more active, completed tasks more quickly, and retained vocabulary for longer periods. Final products such as visual journals, picture vocabulary cards, and mini storybooks reflected improved language comprehension as well as pedagogical creativity. These findings support the arts-integrated approach as an effective learning strategy in developing English teaching materials within a distance education context.*

INTRODUCTION

The advancement of information and communication technology has significantly transformed the education system, particularly through the implementation of distance learning in higher education. As a pioneer of open and distance higher education in Indonesia, the Open University is committed to providing equitable, flexible, and high-quality access to education, including for students in the Elementary School Teacher Education (PGSD) Study Program.

However, distance learning poses unique challenges, especially in delivering teaching materials that are engaging, motivating, and supportive of holistic understanding. One essential course in the PGSD curriculum is English, which serves not only as a linguistic skill but also as a tool for global literacy and interdisciplinary learning. PGSD students are expected to be capable of managing basic English instruction for elementary-level children in a way that is interactive and enjoyable. Therefore, English materials need to be informative, contextual, and creative—particularly within a distance learning model that often lacks real-time interaction.

Addressing these challenges requires innovation in material development that considers not only the cognitive domain but also the affective and psychomotor domains of learners. The arts-integrated approach—which combines elements of visual art, design, creativity, and aesthetics into other subject areas—offers promising pedagogical potential. In this approach, art functions not as a separate subject, but as a medium for enhancing learner engagement, expression, and comprehension. This aligns with the concept of holistic education, emphasizing the development of learners' full potential (Eisner, 2002; Bresler, 2021).

For PGSD students, exposure to arts-integrated learning promotes active participation, motivation, and meaningful learning experiences. It also provides pedagogical insights into how to design child-friendly, engaging, and human-centered instruction—essential for future elementary teachers. Despite this potential, research on the systematic application of the arts-integrated

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approach in distance learning contexts remains limited (Burnaford et al., 2020; Eren, 2020).

Therefore, this study aims to explore two main issues: first, how the arts-integrated approach can be systematically applied in developing English teaching materials tailored to the characteristics of PGSD students; and second, how effective these materials are in enhancing learning engagement and linguistic understanding in a distance learning environment. The findings are expected to contribute to innovative, interdisciplinary strategies in teacher education—responding to the evolving needs of digital-era learning.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach using the Research and Development (R&D) method to develop English teaching materials based on an arts-integrated approach. The development model applied was the ADDIE model—Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation—which allows the process to be conducted systematically, iteratively, and based on learner needs.

The research was conducted at the Open University, with participants drawn from the Elementary School Teacher Education (PGSD) Study Program enrolled in English language courses. The study took place from March to May 2024. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, considering student availability, active participation in online learning, and access to digital learning materials. A total of 42 PGSD students participated in the material trial, with sub-groups involved in various stages of data collection.

Participant demographics included students aged between 19–24 years old, with a majority being in the second and third semesters. Most participants had limited prior exposure to integrated arts approaches in language learning, and were accustomed to asynchronous, text-heavy online modules.

Data were collected through the following techniques such as participatory observation, conducted with 12 students during material trials, to explore interaction patterns, engagement, and responses toward the developed materials. In-depth interviews, carried out with 6 students and 2 English

lecturers, aimed at gaining insights into the effectiveness, relevance, and practicality of the materials. We also distributed closed and open-ended questionnaires to all 42 student participants, used to evaluate aspects of learning engagement, vocabulary retention, and visual appeal of the materials. The questionnaire instrument consisted of 15 items, including Likert-scale items and narrative response prompts. The instruments were developed by the researcher and reviewed by experts to ensure content validity. The questionnaire and interview guides were validated by one English language expert and one arts education expert, focusing on clarity, relevance, and consistency with research objectives.

Data analysis was conducted through descriptive qualitative analysis, involving stages of data reduction, categorization, display, and conclusion drawing. Triangulation of data sources (students and lecturers) and data collection techniques (observation, interview, and questionnaire) was carried out to ensure credibility and trustworthiness of findings. In addition to producing a prototype of teaching materials, this research also aims to present a replicable model of integrating arts into language learning, particularly relevant in the context of distance teacher education in Indonesia.

RESULT & DISCUSSION

A. The Process of Applying an Arts-Integrated Approach in Developing English Teaching Materials

The integration of an arts-integrated approach in the development of English teaching materials was conducted systematically using the ADDIE model (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, Evaluation). This model was chosen because it enables the structured and responsive design of learning products based on learners' needs—making it highly relevant for adult students in a distance learning environment (Molenda, 2003).

During the analysis stage, data were gathered through interviews and observations involving students and lecturers of the PGSD English course. Results showed that PGSD students needed contextual, visually supported materials due to the lack of direct interaction in distance education. They expressed strong preferences for learning tools that were visual, interactive,

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and aesthetically engaging. These findings align with Burnaford et al. (2020), who emphasize that visual elements can significantly enhance learner motivation and understanding. Similarly, Eisner (2002) argues that artistic modes of representation help students construct meaning in more personal and memorable ways.

At the design stage, initial material drafts were created by combining text-based language content with visual arts components such as illustrations, color harmony, clear typography, and layout design. Learning tasks included art-based activities such as "describing picture tasks", visual vocabulary card-making, and matching colors with words. This approach reflects Bresler's (2021) model of embedded arts integration, where art is a means of cognitive engagement, not just decorative enhancement.

In the development stage, the materials were transformed into a digital module and uploaded to the Open University Learning Management System (LMS). Topics covered included basic English themes such as "Introducing Myself", "Daily Routines", and "School Activities", supported by thematic illustrations, short videos, and infographics. For instance, an interactive worksheet titled "Let's Learn English with Colors and Images" was developed, containing illustrated expressions, vocabulary-matching games, and visual dialogue activities. This is consistent with Mayer's (2009) Multimedia Learning Theory, which asserts that well-designed visual-verbal integration enhances memory and understanding by reducing cognitive load.

The implementation stage involved 42 PGSD students who used the materials over one instructional cycle. Feedback was collected through open-ended questionnaires and interviews. The students consistently reported that the integration of visual and artistic elements improved their engagement and comprehension. In the evaluation stage, experts in English education and art education validated the materials based on criteria including relevance, usability, and integration quality. Suggestions from the validators—such as simplifying visual complexity for students with limited digital access—were incorporated into the final revision.

This process demonstrated that arts integration was not merely a pedagogical ideal but a practical and effective design strategy, especially in distance learning contexts where engagement is often lacking. As Rinne et al. (2011) noted, when learners engage in art-based tasks, they activate emotional and creative dimensions of learning, which contributes to deeper language processing.
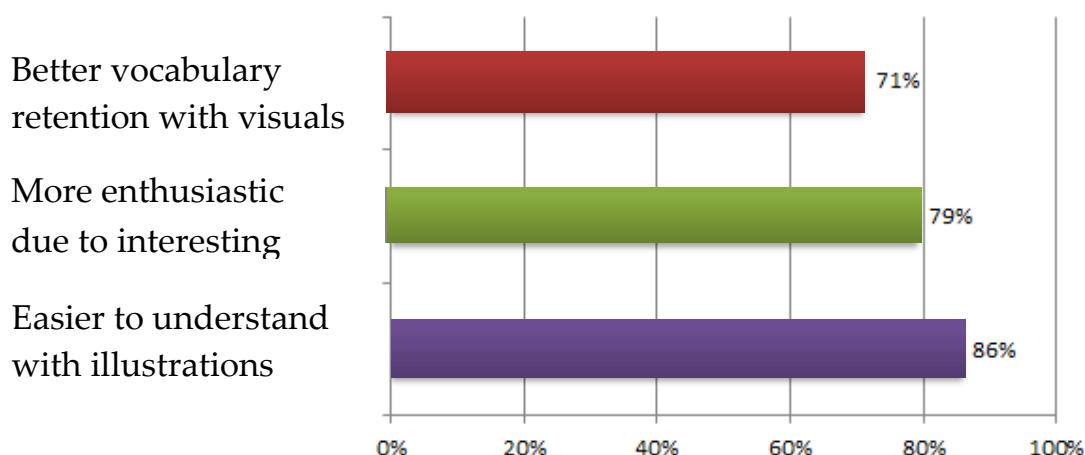
B. **Effectiveness of the Arts-Integrated Materials in Enhancing Engagement and Understanding**

The effectiveness of the developed materials was measured through a combination of qualitative and quantitative data obtained during implementation. Students were given access to the digital module and completed a series of art-integrated language activities, including illustrated introduction cards, visual vocabulary flashcards, and short story writing with accompanying images. Observations indicated that students were more active in uploading tasks and participating in discussion forums; they used more communicative English, even with limited vocabulary; and assignments were submitted more promptly and with improved quality. These behavioural changes align with Winner et al. (2013), who found that arts-based instruction increases student investment in learning and improves expressive performance, especially among learners with limited linguistic confidence.

Quantitative data from the questionnaire (N = 42) showed that 86% found the material easier to understand due to visual elements; 79% felt more enthusiastic because of its creative and non-monotonous presentation; and 71% reported better vocabulary retention due to visual context.

The following horizontal graph illustrates the results of the questionnaire from 42 respondents. This graph shows that the majority of students felt helped in understanding the material, more enthusiastic about learning, and easier to remember vocabulary because of the illustrations and interesting visual displays.

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Figure 1. Student Perceptions of Integrated Art-Based English Material

These results were in line with Catterall (2009), who demonstrated that the arts increase both engagement and cognitive gains in literacy education. In particular, the retention benefits of visual aids resonate with research by Mayer (2009) and Eren (2020), who emphasized that multimodal materials reduce abstraction and foster long-term memory in language learning. As tangible evidence of learning, students produced three final projects, namely Visual Diaries containing five personal illustrations and descriptive sentences in English, Vocabulary Flashcards decorated with student-chosen visuals, and Mini Books featuring illustrated short stories about daily life.

Compared to prior studies such as Suyatmini (2018), which explored arts-based English teaching in face-to-face PGSD classrooms, this study extended the implementation into the context of full distance education, providing new insight into how the arts-integrated approach remains effective without direct classroom interaction.

C. Critical Reflection

The results indicated that integrating arts into English language learning materials was not only feasible, but also effective in enhancing engagement, comprehension, and creativity—even in distance learning formats. It addressed the need for more humanistic and multisensory approaches in online teacher education. Moreover, the students' visual outputs suggested a meaningful

connection between linguistic development and artistic expression, as supported by Eisner (2002) and Burnaford et al. (2020).

Thus, arts integration in English language teaching for PGSD students could be seen not only as a design enhancement, but as a pedagogical strategy that bridges affective, cognitive, and psychomotor learning dimensions—preparing future elementary school teachers to design engaging, child-friendly, and creative lessons in diverse contexts.

DISCUSSION

This research aimed to develop English teaching materials based on an integrated arts approach, tailored to the characteristics of PGSD students in a distance learning (PJJ) system. The findings demonstrate that the incorporation of visual illustrations, sound elements, and display aesthetics significantly enhances students' comprehension, engagement, and memory retention.

The use of the ADDIE model (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, Evaluation) provided a structured and iterative development process. Each phase ensured that the resulting teaching product was not only pedagogically sound but also aesthetically engaging and user-friendly for independent online learning. This aligns with Branch (2009), who emphasizes that the ADDIE model offers a flexible and adaptive instructional design framework, particularly suitable for diverse learning contexts.

A. Learner Responses and Engagement Outcomes

Quantitative data from 42 PGSD students revealed the following perceptions: 86% reported that the materials were easier to understand due to the visual illustrations, 79% felt more enthusiastic as the materials were dynamic and non-monotonous, and 71% stated they could remember vocabulary longer with visual reinforcement.

These findings support previous research by Eisner (2002), who argues that art-based learning fosters deep understanding through multisensory engagement. The approach used here integrates language learning with artistic elements, echoing Mayer's (2009) cognitive theory of multimedia learning, which posits that combining verbal and visual input reduces cognitive load and supports memory.

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In the context of PGSD, such integration is especially relevant. As Burnaford et al. (2020) and Bresler (2021) note, prospective elementary school teachers benefit from developing both verbal and visual literacy, which are essential in designing creative and child-centred learning experiences. The materials also align with contextual teaching and learning principles (Johnson, 2002), which emphasize connecting learning content to real-world experiences—here, through the visual and cultural dimension of language.

B. Development Process and Creative Outputs

In the analysis phase, it was found that PGSD students, as adult learners in a distance learning environment, needed materials that were not only linguistically informative but also visually stimulating and emotionally engaging. Hence, in the Design and Development phases, materials were crafted to include illustrations, layout design, typography, and interactive tasks such as drawing, creating vocabulary cards, and illustrating short stories. This approach reflects art integration models described by Marshall (2010), where learning content and artistic media are intertwined to enhance critical thinking and personal expression.

During the Implementation phase, the materials were applied in real-time online classes. Observations showed increased participation and faster task completion. Students demonstrated not only improved comprehension but also creativity in expressing meaning using English in context. Meanwhile, in the Evaluation phase, feedback was gathered through student surveys, interviews, and analysis of submitted assignments. Over 85% of students reported improved vocabulary retention and motivation. Their enthusiastic response, compared to prior experiences with text-heavy modules, suggests that art not only adds interest but becomes a core learning mechanism.

As a tangible outcome, students produced mini visual books (narrative + illustrations), vocabulary flashcards, and visual learning diaries. These outputs reflect transformative learning, where students internalize language through personal and artistic expression (Winner et al., 2013).

C. Comparison with Previous Studies

Compared to Suyatmini (2018), who applied art-based English instruction in face-to-face PGSD classrooms, this study contributes by demonstrating that the approach is equally applicable and effective in online distance learning. Unlike Catterall (2009), whose work focused on K–12 learners, this research explores teacher education, highlighting how arts-based learning can also shape pedagogical competence and teaching creativity in adult learners.

This research affirms that arts integration is not merely supplementary, but a pedagogical strategy that bridges the gap between linguistic knowledge and communicative practice, while honouring cultural and aesthetic dimensions. Furthermore, the approach enhances student agency, fosters engaged learning and prepares PGSD students to develop instructional designs that are both meaningful and child centred.

D. Limitations and Implications

Despite its success, the effectiveness of this approach is influenced by digital access and literacy. Not all students had the same technological readiness, which affected engagement levels for some. Future studies should consider mobile-friendly designs, offline accessibility, and scalable art-based tasks that can be adapted to varying infrastructure.

Nevertheless, this study provides a replicable model of art-integrated material development, emphasizing its potential to elevate the quality of English instruction in distance-based teacher education.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the integration of an arts-based approach in the development of English language materials for PGSD students at the Open University is both effective and relevant within the context of distance learning. The use of the ADDIE model enabled a structured development process that produced learning materials addressing not only linguistic content, but also aesthetic, visual, and creative engagement aligned with the learning characteristics of prospective elementary school teachers.

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The implementation of these materials demonstrated increased student engagement, improved comprehension of language concepts, and enhanced opportunities for creative expression, which collectively enriched the learning experience. Students responded positively to the visual and interactive aspects of the materials, suggesting that the integration of art-based strategies supports better retention and motivation in online English language learning.

A. **Practical Recommendations**
   1. For educators: Incorporate visual tasks, illustrated vocabulary, and creative assignments in English instruction to increase student engagement—especially in asynchronous environments.
   2. For instructional designers: Develop modules that are not only informative but also visually rich and interactive to support diverse learning styles.
   3. For institutions: Provide training and support for lecturers to adopt arts-integrated pedagogies and ensure that digital platforms can host multimedia-enhanced materials efficiently.

B. **Suggestions for Future Research**
   1. Investigate the long-term impact of arts-integrated materials on students' language proficiency and teaching competencies.
   2. Explore the integration of other art forms—such as music, movement, or performance—in language learning for prospective teachers.
   3. Conduct comparative studies between face-to-face and distance-based implementation of arts-integrated English learning to evaluate contextual effectiveness.
   4. Examine how different levels of digital literacy and access to technology affect student engagement with visual and artistic content in distance learning environments.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

This research has been conducted in accordance with applicable ethical principles of research. There were no manipulative actions, coercion, or discriminatory treatment during the research process. The authors declare that

this article is an original work that has never been published and is not being submitted to other journals. All citations and references have been appropriately included. The copyright for this article rests entirely with the author, and if the article is published by a scientific journal, the distribution rights will follow the journal's license terms.

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