

## “I love my job because I can provide wheelchairs for persons with disabilities”: English Communication Empowerment for a Disability Rights Organisation

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### Abstract

This community service programme was conducted in the form of an English communication empowerment programme for employees of OHANA, a disability rights organisation based in Yogyakarta. The programme consisted of ten 90-minute meetings conducted from early October 2022 up to mid-November 2022. The materials of this training included self-introduction, introducing others, making small talks with a wide range of topics, as well as job descriptions and job responsibilities. The programme was conducted in response to the need for OHANA employees to make more effective communications with foreign partners concerning their jobs as advocates of the rights of women and persons with disability. Despite the low attendance rate in some of the meetings due to the tight schedules of the OHANA employees in providing services to the community, the language empowerment programme can be considered successful seen from the engagement of the attending participants and the generally positive feedback from them. Several conclusions and recommendations are stated considering the degree of success of this programme for the betterment of future similar programmes.

**Keywords:** Community service, English communication empowerment, training, disability rights organisation

### INTRODUCTION

Persons with disability have equal rights in society. This has been mandated in the Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948) and has been reiterated or discussed in various subsequent documents (Parker, 2006; Quinn et al., 2002). It is argued that any impairment does not hinder human rights capacity and persons with disability are entitled to the protection of human rights (Degener, 2017). In Indonesia, more and more people seem to recognise the rights of these persons with disability, for example, by providing wheelchairs or providing braille on the wall of rooms or lifts (Hadi, 2019; Zaki et al., 2022). Several community service programmes have also been dedicated to help persons with disability (Jailani et al., 2022; Noviati et al., 2022; Resita et al., 2022).

Nevertheless, the journey to advocate the rights of persons with disability in Indonesia seems to be an ongoing effort and there is so much that still needs to be done. Regarding this, a disability rights organisation named OHANA—*Organisasi Harapan Nusantara* Indonesia plays its part. One of the major foci was on advocating the rights of persons with disability per the United Nations convention. Among others, the programmes include comprehensive wheelchair programmes (Ohana Indonesia, 2017). The office located in Yogyakarta is capable of storing, fitting as well as refurbishing hundreds of wheelchairs. The organisation cooperated with international bodies such as the Australian government through AusAID, Ford Foundation, and Disability Rights Fund (Ohana Indonesia, 2017).

With such a growing need to join hands with international bodies and communicate with people from outside Indonesia, the need to be able to communicate in English among OHANA employees also became inevitable. To respond to this need, the Language Centre and the lecturers of the English Language Education Department (ELED), the authors of this article, cooperated with OHANA to conduct language training for the OHANA employees to empower them during their service especially when communicating with their international working partners.

For the authors of this article, this cooperation was one of the few community service programmes involving institutions outside of educational fields (Ermerawati et al., 2022; Nur et al., 2021; Subekti et al., 2023). For example, in 2021, the authors conducted two consecutive community service programmes with a technology-based institution working in the area of tourism. The first programme was to facilitate 25 certified tour guides in making virtual travel videos promoting various tourism destinations (Subekti et al., 2023). The second programme was to facilitate representatives of tourism awareness groups in making village brochures in English promoting the potential of their respective tourism villages (Ermerawati et al., 2022). Many of the authors' community service programmes, in comparison, have been conducted in educational contexts, for example, those involving students (Subekti et al., 2021; Subekti, Ermerawati, et al., 2022; Subekti & Wati, 2019; Susysetina et al., 2022) and those involving junior or senior high school teachers (Subekti, 2020c; Subekti, Winardi, et al., 2022; Subekti & Kurniawati, 2020; Subekti & Susysetina, 2019, 2020; Widiatmoko et al., 2022). For this reason, conducting community service programmes reaching people beyond education institutions was deemed necessary.

Furthermore, conducting such a programme with a partner like OHANA working in advocating the rights of women and persons with a disability not only broadens the spectrum of the community service activities conducted by the ELED of UKDW. It was also slightly in line with the previous empirical studies conducted by some of the authors of this article advocating the importance of equal access to education for persons with disability (Kurniawati, 2020; Sandra & Kurniawati, 2021; Subekti, 2020a, 2020b). Besides, it was in line with one of the core values of UKDW, "Service to the World" (Universitas Kristen Duta Wacana, 2017) mandating that the academic community, including the lecturers, utilises their respective expertise to do good things and share goodness to others and the surrounding.

## **METHODS**

The partner of this community service programme was *OHANA*. Per the institution's website, OHANA is a woman-led organisation. The organisation focuses on the rights of both women and children with disabilities. It also concerns advocacy and community development. The mission of the organisation includes giving concrete problem-solving solutions related to disability rights and gender violence.

To realise these goals, the employees of OHANA would likely need to communicate not only with people from Indonesia but also people from abroad. They also often received foreign guests concerning their fields of work. For this reason, OHANA deemed it necessary for a programme that could empower the employees to better communicate with foreigners relevant to their work.

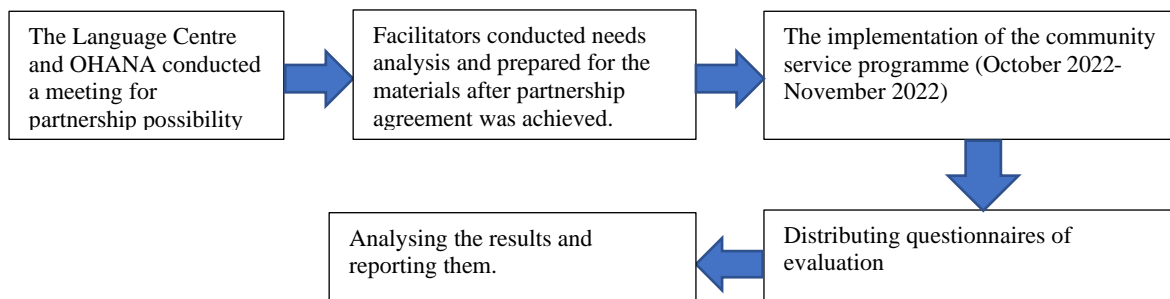
Responding to these needs, the Language Training Centre of UKDW in cooperation with the ELED of UKDW sent an offer for cooperation where the UKDW lecturers conducted a language programme for the OHANA employees. This offer was positively received by OHANA and it was agreed that an English communication empowerment programme would be conducted on-site at the OHANA office based in Yogyakarta. Ten employees of OHANA were registered in this language programme. The programme lasted for around a month and a half from early October 2022 up to mid-November 2022. The programme consisted of ten meetings conducted every Wednesday and Friday, at 13.30-15.00 local time from 5 October

2022 up to Friday 11 November 2022. The overview of this empowerment programme can be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1.** The Overview of the Empowerment Programme

No	Day, Dates	Topics
1.	Wednesday, 5-10-2022	Introduction (self-introduction - introducing others)
2.	Friday, 7-10-2022	Family (home, partners, children, pets)
3.	Wednesday, 12-10-2022	Small Talks (weather, food, habits, dress code)
4.	Friday, 14-10-2022	Jobs 1 (job description)
5.	Wednesday, 26-10-2022	Jobs 2 (job responsibilities)
6.	Friday, 28-10-2022	Jobs 3 (sharing working experience on projects)
7.	Wednesday, 2-11-2022	Presentation Preparation 1
8.	Friday, 4-11-2022	Presentation Preparation 2
9.	Wednesday, 9-11-2022	Presentation Preparation 3
10.	Friday, 11-11-2022	Celebration of Learning

At the end of the programme, paper-based questionnaires were distributed to obtain quantitative and qualitative data about the participants' efforts during the programme as well as evaluation of the degree of success of the programme. The sequence of the community service programme can be observed in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** The Sequence of the Community Service Programme

## RESULTS

The first meeting was conducted on Wednesday, 5 October 2022 with a self-introduction and introduction of other people as the topic. A total of 7 participants attended this meeting. In this meeting, the participants did not only learn to use appropriate English phrases but also learned some tips to develop their confidence and skills to express themselves fluently in English as well as organise their thoughts better and express themselves in formal and informal situations. One of the most challenging things to do in the first meeting was the introduction round. On one hand, most of the participants seemed nervous, because they did not like to be in the middle of the attention and sometimes they were so occupied with 'what to say' that they did not listen to others introducing themselves. On the other hand, it was an important part of the meeting because it confirmed who was there and it offered the opportunity to get to know each other better. Also, it was sometimes assumed that the participants knew each other, so they wanted to skip the introduction round. Then, it turned out that the participants still could

learn more things about other participants or they vaguely knew the others but forgot some details. The situation in this first meeting can be seen in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Participants Working on How to Do Introductions

The second meeting was conducted on Friday, 7 October 2022. The topic was family including homes, life partners, children, and pets. A total of seven participants attended this meeting. The goal of the session was to get the participants to use effective English phrases in introducing themselves and their family members orally. To get exposure to how someone introduces their family members, a video titled 'Introducing Family' was played. The participants were assigned to find some pieces of information such as the family members that the speaker mentioned in the video. After the participants described the identity of the family members of the speaker, the facilitator asked one of the participants to show one of their family photos and describe the members. As the participant described the family members, the facilitator drew the family tree on the board so that the other participants noticed all members of the family being described. To add the participants' vocabulary about family members, the facilitator provided a list of useful vocabulary items as well as a worksheet that supported their vocabulary mastery.

To provide the English phrases that could be applied when they were describing their family members, the participants were introduced to ways of describing their parents, siblings, spouse or partner, children, and pets. The phrases were covering how to tell details about family size, number of siblings, marital status, children, occupations, and hobbies. The participants were encouraged to repeat after the facilitator at the presentation stage. Then in the practice stage, the participants were asked to work on the contextual worksheet, describing their family members. To build the participants' confidence in speaking, the facilitator got them to work in pairs and asked them to describe their family members using the worksheet they did previously. At the production stage, the participants were challenged to record their presentation in a one-or-two-minute video blog. One of the moments in this meeting can be seen in Figure 3.



**Figure 3.** Participants Working on How to Introduce Their Family Members

Furthermore, the next meeting was on how to make small talk, for example talking about weather, food, habits and clothes. It was conducted on Wednesday, 12 October 2022. A total of six participants plus one guest (a native speaker from the US) attended this meeting. As an ice-breaking, the facilitator asked the participants to sing a song, the song went on like this: *“Our Ohana has many people, and we call them one by one/ and we call them one by one/ and we call them one by one.”* As the participants sang the song, they pointed to one of their friends to tell three facts about him/her. Then, they sang the song again, and the person who just introduced him/herself chose another participant to do the same thing as they did. The chosen participants had to repeat what they just heard about their friend. They sang the song again until all participants got his/her turn. After that, the session continued with the main discussion on making small talk. First, the facilitator led the brainstorming activity. He invited the participants to suggest some ideas on how to start a conversation, keep the conversation going, and end the conversation. Next, the participants watched a video regarding small talk. They wrote down some expressions that could be used to start, maintain, and end a conversation. Finally, the participants practised making small talk in pairs. The topic of the small talk was their hometown. As a warming up, the facilitator asked the participants to ask questions to the guest from the US regarding his hometown. As the closing activity, the guest gave some practical tips on how to make small talk. The facilitator encouraged the participants to keep practising making small talk with their friends.

The fourth meeting was conducted on Friday, 14 October 2022, focusing on the topic of describing jobs or occupations. This topic was of great importance since it linked the previous meetings, which were more oriented towards General English or Survival English, with the subsequent topics which were more inclined towards English for Specific Purposes or English for Occupational Purposes. At the completion of this meeting, not only were the participants expected to functionally describe their jobs and work-related activities but they were also asked to reflect on how their characters and personalities could support the jobs. Therefore, the learning objective of this fifth meeting was formulated as follows: *“Using various English adjectives and phrases, participants can describe their characters, personalities, and jobs/work-related activities”*. Adjectives and common or typical phrases were selected as one of this meeting's main foci because they play a significant role in the building blocks of expressions for describing jobs.

Five participants attended this fifth meeting. The class started with a warm-up session followed by a discussion about a video describing various characters and personalities in

English. While watching the video, the participants jotted down at least one relevant adjective that could describe their characters and personalities. They then in turn practised formulating a sentence to describe their characters and personalities using the adjectives they had identified previously. Next, the participants watched another video entitled "What is your job?" to learn about the phrases and expressions in describing jobs. Shortly afterwards, the facilitator explained how to use the phrases and expressions of describing jobs and followed that up with the discussion question "Do you think that character and personality matter in a job?". Near the end of the meeting, each participant wrote a paragraph answering three questions about his/her character, personality, and job. In the end, they randomly picked and read one of their friends' paragraphs and, without knowing who the writer was, guessed the owner of the paragraph. With this meeting, the participants were trained to not only describe their jobs but also try to understand their friends' characters and personalities, and more importantly understand their own.

The continuation of fourth meeting, the fifth meeting discussed people's responsibilities concerning their jobs or occupations. It was on Wednesday, 26 October 2022. Five participants attended this meeting. The meeting started with a brainstorming activity on the names of occupations. They could easily mention some jobs such as "teachers", "doctors", and "drivers", but they seemed to have difficulty pronouncing some jobs such as "entrepreneurs" and "engineers". This brainstorming stage was meant to facilitate the participants to focus their minds on the topic of occupations. Secondly, they were asked to watch a *YouTube* video and mentioned at least four occupations and the responsibilities of the people working in these occupations respectively. The results were then discussed together.

The sequence of the main activities of this fifth meeting was as follows. The facilitator provided the modelling of how the participants could introduce themselves briefly ("My name is..."), describe their occupations ("I work as..."), and describe how they felt about their occupations ("I love my job because..."). After that, the participants were asked to write a short paragraph consisting of six to seven sentences in which they briefly introduced themselves, the descriptions of their occupations, their responsibilities, and how they felt about what they did. During this period, the facilitator moved around and helped the participants, for example, related to vocabulary and grammar. The participants, then, took a turn presenting their paragraphs. One of these moments can be seen in Figure 4.



**Figure 4.** A Participant Presenting Her Paragraph

Towards the end of this meeting, the participants were invited to reflect on how through their occupations they could help other people. One of the participants wrote, "I love my job because I can provide wheelchairs for people with disabilities, so, they can be independent. They can earn their living." Another with full enthusiasm wrote, "Through my job, I can help persons with disabilities. Not many people are interested in this issue. I do this job because I

had experience discrimination. I do not want other people with disabilities to experience the same thing." This meeting ended with a quote from Steve Jobs, "The only way to do great work is to love what you do."

Furthermore, the next three meetings, the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> meetings, were intended to prepare the participants for the final presentation in the 10<sup>th</sup> or the last meeting of the language training programme.

The sixth meeting was conducted on 28 October 2022. A total of ten participants attended the meeting. The topic of the discussion was how to share work experiences on a project. The meeting started with a review of the previous lesson. The facilitator asked the participants to introduce their job, job responsibilities and their workplace. After that, the facilitator added more materials, namely how to describe their jobs in more detail and how to use *-ing* and *-ed* adjectives to talk about their feelings related to their jobs, for example, "My job is *satisfying*. I am *satisfied*.", "My job is *challenging*. I am *challenged*.", and "My job is *exhausting*. I am *exhausted*." The next activity was to watch a video about how to describe jobs.

The purpose was to enlarge the participants' vocabulary and expressions related to their occupations. As a follow-up activity, the facilitator gave several guiding questions that can be used to share their experiences working on a project, for example "Was the project challenging, rewarding, or stimulating?", "What was your role in the project?", "What did you do?" To close the meeting, the facilitator asked the participants to share their work experiences on projects. Finally, the facilitator summarised the lesson and motivated the participants to keep using their English.

The seventh meeting was conducted on Wednesday, 2 November 2022 and attended by seven participants. In this meeting, the participants were prepared to do a presentation about personal information, family, job, and job responsibilities. The objective of the meeting was to help the participants make a presentation draft for their final project presentation. The meeting started with a brainstorming activity asking the participants to share about projects they were involved in. The participants were given some questions to discuss in groups. The questions were 1) "Share the experiences on the project you have been involved in?" 2) "Who was involved in the project?" 3) "What was your role in the project?" 4) "When did the project take place?" and 5) "How did you feel about the project?" After the participants had finished sharing and discussing the project they were involved in, the facilitator asked the participants to reflect on how they structured their presentation when they shared their experiences on the project they were involved in. Then, the facilitator explained to the participants about the structure of a presentation and the language expressions they could use when doing a presentation. After discussing the meaning of some language expressions with the participants, the facilitator assigned the participants to make a presentation draft by filling in a template. The participants were asked to write down some important points in all parts of the presentation, i.e., introduction, body, and conclusion. Towards the end of the meeting, the facilitator reminded the participants to complete the presentation draft and be ready to practice the presentation in the following meeting.

The eighth meeting was conducted on Friday, 4 November 2022 and attended by seven participants. Continuing the presentation preparation in the previous meeting, the participants shared their presentation drafts with the facilitator and other participants then received some constructive comments. After that, they revised their works and were assigned to practice presenting in pairs as well as giving feedback to each other. To provide some practical tips for an effective presentation, the facilitator asked the participants to watch a short video on *YouTube* titled "How to Deliver an Effective Presentation" and list some tips that they would use for delivering their project presentation. The facilitator also highlighted that with good preparation and planning, the participants, as the presenters, would be more confident and less nervous. They would have control of the audience and the presentation, so the presentation could be delivered with ease. To conclude the session, the participants were asked to rehearse as many times as possible since rehearsal is a vital part of presentation

preparation. The rehearsal was aimed to make the participants more familiar with their materials, enable them to identify weaknesses in their presentations and become an opportunity to practice difficult pronunciations.

Furthermore, the ninth meeting was conducted on Wednesday, 9 November 2022 and attended by four participants. This meeting was the last presentation preparation session. At the beginning of the meeting, the participants were asked to do a brainstorming activity by answering two questions related to doing a presentation 1) "What are you confident in?" and 2) "What are the challenges in doing a presentation?" The participants were asked to think about the answers and go around the class to share their answers with other friends. The activity, then, was followed by the main agenda of the ninth meeting which was practising the final presentation by using the presentation draft they made previously. The participants were given some time to do a presentation in front of the other friends. Whilst one participant was presenting, the others were asked to provide written feedback by using a template provided by the facilitator. The written feedback consisted of 1) the strengths of the presentation, 2) the things to improve, 3) suggestions, and 4) words of encouragement. Each participant was encouraged to give each other written feedback on each participant's presentation. The feedback was aimed to allow them to improve and revise their presentation to perform better in the last meeting of the programme.

Finally, the last meeting of the whole programme was the Celebration of Learning. A total of seven participants attended this 10<sup>th</sup> meeting, in which the participants were expected to present the individual presentation they had prepared. To add to all that they had learned, several phrases were introduced to enable the participants to demonstrate their positive attitude in listening to others' presentations. Therefore, after each very successful presentation, they all eagerly complimented the presenters with "Good job!"; "Thank you for sharing about your family!" and "Congratulations on your big progress!" Indeed, each of the participants was able to share about themselves, their family, as well as their jobs and their responsibilities in OHANA. After each presentation, spontaneous questions and answers in English followed, confirming how well they had learned about all the materials during the training programme. Despite the success of each participant, everyone agreed and cheered on a particular participant to whom all agreed to give tribute in terms of the biggest progress he had made. Said all, "He was not able to utter a word in English in the first meeting!" This certainly was the highlight of the training! One of the triumphant moments in this celebration of learning can be seen in Figure 5.



**Figure 5.** A Participant Demonstrating His Successful Learning in Front of the Class

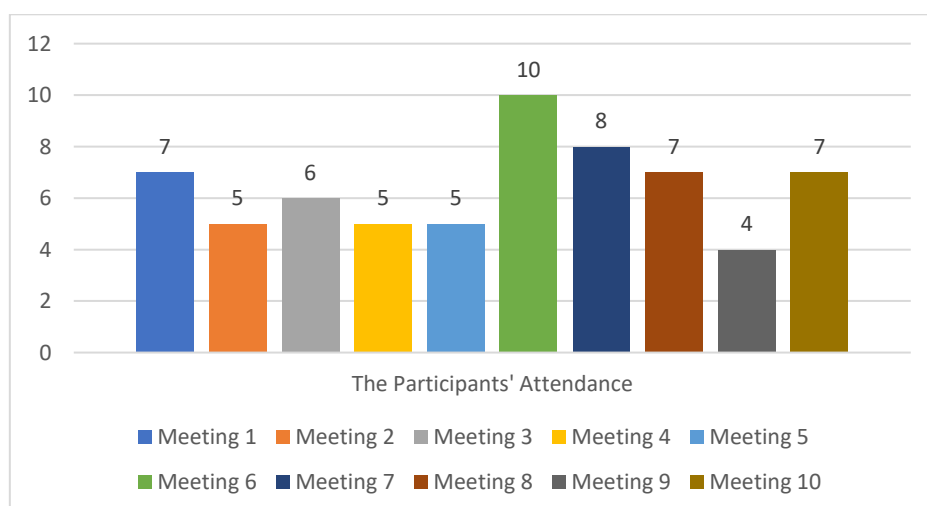
## **DISCUSSION**



The English empowerment programme was generally conducted in Communicative Language Teaching. This can be seen from the sequence of the activities with the presentation-practice-production (PPP) sequence (Anderson, 2016; Ellis, 2013). In the PPP sequence, during the presentation stage, the facilitators become the informants or the source of information. In the practice stage, the facilitators act as the conductors whilst in the production stage they become the guides (Anderson, 2016). This method was deemed appropriate for this programme because of several reasons. First, the limited number of meetings and the limited duration of the programme did not allow for sufficient language exposure to the participants. This was coupled with the participants' busy schedules as social workers providing service to countless people, including those with a disability, coming to the OHANA office. Hence, giving them modelling in the presentation stage and practice led by the facilitators in the practice stage may help them understand the materials better and give them more confidence in the production stage.

Despite being conducted amidst the participants' busy schedules, the programme could empower them in speaking up about social issues related to gender inequality and persons with disability. For example, a participant with full enthusiasm wrote an English paragraph during the 6<sup>th</sup> meeting, "Through my job, I can help persons with disabilities. Not many people are interested in this issue. I do this job because I had experience discrimination. I do not want other people with disabilities to experience the same thing." It can be seen that this participant was eager to tell how she felt concerning her occupation and how it was related to herself. Through the English language, which is an international language widely spoken in the international community (Gunantar, 2016), these social workers could communicate their programmes and make them heard by international communities, who in turn may provide more support and do cooperation with them.

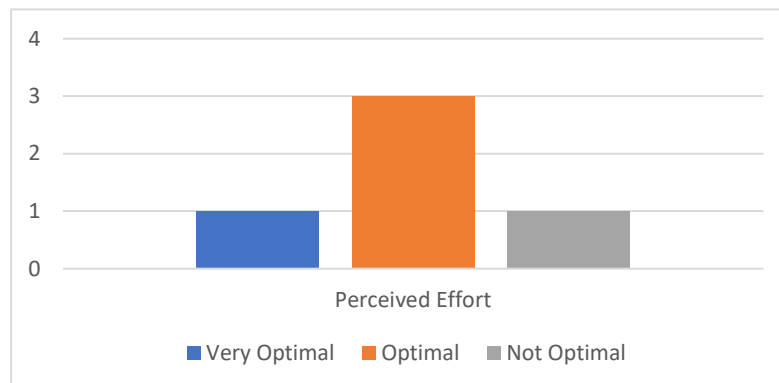
The implementation of this language programme faced challenges. The busy schedule of the participants made it difficult for them to always attend all the programmed ten meetings. This can be seen from the relatively low attendance rate. The first meeting was attended by seven participants, the second by five participants, the third by six participants, the fourth by five participants, the fifth by five participants, the sixth by ten or all the participants, the seventh by eight participants, the eighth by seven participants, the ninth by four participants only, and the last meeting by seven participants. The data on the attendance rate can be seen in Figure 6.



**Figure 6.** The Attendance Rate

Furthermore, from ten participants registered in the programme, five filled out the evaluation questionnaire on their perceived effort in the programme and the quality of the programme. That only half of the total participants filled out the questionnaire was attributed

to the fact that in the last meeting of the programme, coincidentally several OHANA employees had field duties outside the office. On the perceived effort during the programme, the results can be seen in Figure 7, where one participant reported her effort had been very optimal, three others reported theirs had been optimal, whilst the other reported her effort to be not optimal.



**Figure 7.** The Participants' Perceived Effort during the Programme

Despite the different efforts of the participants, all of them reported that the materials helped them improve their English and that they obtained new knowledge during the programme. They also considered the teaching techniques used by the facilitators good and interesting. They also perceived that the materials were relevant to their job responsibilities at OHANA. Qualitatively, regarding the perceived relevance and the overall quality of the programme, some participants, CG, LN, and WW, commented:

*"The training is very relevant considering that we often deal with guests from abroad." (CG, translated)*

*"(The programme) compels me to speak English a lot." (LN, translated)*

*"(After) the material is conveyed and (it is) directly followed with practice." (WW, translated)*

Despite the generally positive feedback, some participants commented that in the next programmes, the schedule of the training should be arranged in such a way that there would be no conflicting schedules and all the participants could join the training.

Several aspects can be highlighted regarding the implementation of this programme. First, language programmes involving adult learners as the participants inherently posed challenges. The relevance of the programme would be the key factor (Slaouti et al., 2013). If they do not see the relevance of the language programme to their needs, they may not be sufficiently motivated. However, appropriate scheduling could also be a similarly important factor in this case. In this respect, whilst the OHANA employee participants may be willing to join the programme, when it clashed with their work schedule, no matter how motivated and interested they were in joining the programme, they would skip it for their immediate need. Second, it is important to give a 'good' language experience for the attending participants by providing them with as much talking time as possible (Jacobs & Hall, 2002) because outside the training they may not have such opportunities. In this respect, the programme may to a certain extent have been successful. Nevertheless, the use of modelling where the facilitators explained the language focus of the day before the participants did the language production, if not carefully managed, may have taken too much time supposed to be allocated for the talking time of the participants.

## CONCLUSION

Several conclusions can be drawn from this community service programme. First, the methods of material delivery were deemed suitable considering the participants' level and their limited exposure to English. Second, the attendance rate was low attributed mostly to the conflicting schedule in which some participants had work-related things to do at the same time as the scheduled meetings. Furthermore, despite the low attendance rate in general, the attending participants were eager to participate in the meetings and use English as extensively as possible.

Finally, the following recommendations can be considered for future programmes. First, in a community service programme involving adult participants with very tight schedules, it is important to have a certain degree of flexibility in scheduling both from the part of the facilitators and the partner institutions. That is to ensure that all the participants willing to attend the programme can take optimal benefits from it. Secondly, considering that the line of work of the participants is in advocacy for women and persons with disability, future programmes can be tailored in such a way to focus on more relevant issues such as discussing various disabilities, comparing services for persons with disability in Indonesia and abroad, as well as incidents of violence against women in Indonesia and abroad. Such a selection of topics may stimulate the participants to share their work-related thoughts.

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