



Empowering Paud Teachers Through Montage Activities to Enhance Children's Motor and Language Skills

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ABSTRACT

This community engagement program was designed to enhance the pedagogical skills of early childhood educators by introducing montage-based learning as an innovative method to support children's fine motor and language development. The program was implemented at a rural early childhood education center in Pasuruan, Indonesia, where a significant number of children exhibited limited motor and verbal abilities, and teachers had not previously applied montage as a structured learning and evaluation tool. The program involved a series of activities, including needs assessment, training workshops, guided classroom implementation, and evaluation using a custom-designed assessment rubric. The results showed significant improvements in both teacher competence and student engagement. Teachers demonstrated increased confidence and creativity in planning and conducting montage activities, while children displayed better coordination and expressive language skills during and after the intervention. The developed rubric was found to be effective in capturing children's developmental progress in a structured manner. Overall, the program successfully empowered educators to integrate art-based methods into their teaching strategies, resulting in a more engaging and developmentally supportive learning environment. This approach holds promise for broader application in other early childhood education contexts to address similar pedagogical challenges.

Keywords: Art-Based Learning; Classroom Observation; Early Childhood Education; Fine Motor Development; Formative Assessment; Teacher Training.

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education plays a crucial role in laying the foundation for lifelong learning, especially in developing essential skills such as fine motor coordination and language. In Indonesia, particularly in rural areas, early childhood institutions often face challenges in applying innovative and integrative teaching approaches. Many teachers continue to rely on conventional methods that focus primarily on isolated cognitive skills, neglecting the need to stimulate motor and language development in tandem. This condition affects children's ability to manipulate objects, express themselves verbally, and participate meaningfully in learning activities.

Montage, an art-based activity involving cutting and pasting images or objects to form creative compositions, has been widely recognized for its potential to stimulate both fine motor control and verbal expression. Several studies have shown that engaging children in montage activities enhances hand-eye coordination, spatial awareness, and narrative skills. Moreover, it encourages active communication as children describe their creations, respond to questions, and tell stories. However, despite its benefits, montage remains underutilized in early childhood education settings, particularly as a structured pedagogical and assessment tool.

The community of educators at KB Bina Jaya, a PAUD (early childhood education center) located in Pasuruan, exemplifies this gap. Observations revealed that over 60% of children

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enrolled at the institution experienced difficulties in performing basic fine motor tasks such as cutting and gluing, as well as limited verbal expression in classroom interactions. Additionally, teachers lacked the training and resources needed to implement creative, child-centered learning strategies. They were unfamiliar with montage as a method for both instruction and developmental assessment.

To address this issue, a community service program was initiated to introduce montage as a dual-purpose tool: a method for engaging children in integrated learning and a means for evaluating their developmental progress. The originality of this program lies in its focus on empowering teachers through intensive training and collaborative implementation, followed by the creation of a practical evaluation rubric specifically designed for montage-based activities.

The objectives of this paper are to (1) describe the process of teacher capacity building through montage-based training, (2) evaluate the impact of montage implementation on children's motor and language development, and (3) present the development and application of a structured assessment rubric. Through this initiative, the program not only addressed the immediate needs of the KB Bina Jaya community but also contributed a replicable model for enhancing early childhood education practices in similar contexts.

LITERATURE OR CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

The development of fine motor and language skills in early childhood is closely linked to the quality of teaching strategies implemented in early education environments. Among various creative approaches, montage has been increasingly recognized as a meaningful method that combines artistic creation with developmental stimulation. Montage involves assembling visual elements through cutting, arranging, and gluing to form a unified image, thereby engaging children in both physical coordination and verbal communication.

Research shows that montage can effectively support children's fine motor development. Activities such as cutting and pasting require hand-eye coordination, finger strength, and precision skills that are critical in the early years of life when children are still refining their motor abilities. Studies by Mustika and Andayani (2020) and Hidayati and Wibowo (2020) confirmed that children who regularly engage in montage tasks show measurable improvements in their ability to perform fine motor actions, such as holding scissors, applying glue accurately, or arranging small collage components in structured patterns. This supports the theory of multisensory learning, which posits that engaging multiple senses such as sight, touch, and movement can enhance neurological development and fine motor integration.

At the same time, montage contributes to children's language development. As children create and explain their montage pieces, they are encouraged to form narratives, describe visual elements, and use expressive language. Hasanah and Sugiarto (2019) demonstrated that montage activities enhance both receptive and expressive language skills by creating space for meaningful verbal interaction. Utami and Fauziah (2020) also noted the effectiveness of combining storytelling with visual media to improve children's speaking ability, particularly in classroom contexts where language stimulation may otherwise be limited. The act of verbalizing creative choices allows children to strengthen vocabulary, structure sentences, and build narrative logic, thereby contributing to early literacy readiness.

Montage also aligns with constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes learning through active engagement and personal meaning-making. According to Piaget's developmental stages, children aged 4–6 years are in the preoperational stage, where symbolic play, visual thinking, and early conceptualization are crucial. In this light, montage becomes more than a creative outlet; it becomes a platform for cognitive exploration, self-expression, and communicative development. Teachers who integrate montage into daily learning provide children with opportunities to connect abstract ideas with concrete actions, making learning more meaningful and developmentally appropriate.

Despite these benefits, the integration of montage into structured classroom practices remains limited. Many early childhood teachers still regard montage as merely an arts-and-crafts activity without pedagogical or evaluative significance (Lestari, 2019). A lack of training and tools for systematic assessment contributes to the underutilization of montage in early education. Additionally, in many Indonesian PAUD institutions, emphasis is still placed on worksheets and rote learning due to curriculum pressures and limited access to creative resources. This creates a missed opportunity to foster integrated skill development through multimodal learning strategies like montage.

To bridge this gap, training programs are needed to enhance teachers' understanding and application of montage-based instruction. Cahyani and Kusumawati (2020) emphasized the role of teacher workshops in promoting the development of contextually relevant montage media and evaluation tools. Putri and Hartati (2020) further stressed the importance of rubric-based assessment in early childhood classrooms to ensure that learning outcomes are measurable and aligned with developmental goals. Providing teachers with accessible, easy-to-use rubrics allows for clearer observation of progress in motor skills, creativity, and language use.

In conclusion, the literature confirms that montage offers a dual advantage as both a learning activity and an assessment tool when implemented with appropriate training and support. It contributes not only to developmental stimulation but also to more equitable assessment practices, especially in early education settings where standardized testing is not developmentally suitable. There is a clear need for structured interventions that build teacher capacity and integrate montage into holistic learning frameworks that support children's comprehensive development. As research and practice continue to evolve, montage holds promise as a powerful medium to enrich early childhood pedagogy in Indonesia and beyond.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The method employed in this community service project consisted of a structured training program designed to equip early childhood educators at KB Bina Jaya Pasuruan with the knowledge and skills to implement montage-based learning and assessment activities. The purpose was to improve both the pedagogical competence of the teachers and the developmental outcomes of children, particularly in fine motor and language skills. This section outlines the design of the training program, the participants, the procedures followed, the data collection methods, and the analysis techniques used to evaluate program outcomes.

Design of the Training Program

The training was designed as a hands-on workshop model supported by direct classroom mentoring. The program followed a five-stage structure: (1) needs assessment and problem identification, (2) theoretical introduction to montage and its educational functions, (3) demonstration and guided practice of montage techniques, (4) classroom implementation by teachers, and (5) reflection and evaluation. Each stage was implemented in collaboration with KB Bina Jaya's teaching staff and adjusted to suit their teaching schedules and classroom contexts.

The training emphasized the integration of montage into daily classroom activities as both a creative learning strategy and a formative assessment tool. Teachers were introduced to developmental indicators for fine motor and language skills and were trained to align montage activities with these learning objectives. Practical sessions included the creation of montage media using common materials such as scissors, glue, paper cut-outs, and natural items. A montage assessment rubric was developed collaboratively, enabling teachers to evaluate children's progress more systematically.

Participants

The participants included 18 early childhood teachers at KB Bina Jaya, Pasuruan, who had between two and fifteen years of teaching experience. The selection focused on teachers working with children aged 4 to 6 years the key developmental window for motor and language growth. The student participants were 24 children, divided into two learning groups. These children were actively involved in montage-based activities over the course of the implementation phase.

The engagement of a single institution with full teacher participation was strategic in allowing consistent mentoring and monitoring, while also enabling the development of a replicable training model for other PAUD institutions in the region.

Procedure

Needs Assessment

An initial needs assessment was conducted through direct classroom observation and informal interviews with the teachers. This process aimed to understand existing teaching strategies and identify gaps in the stimulation of motor and language development. The findings showed that teachers had never used montage systematically, and many children lacked sufficient fine motor coordination and expressive vocabulary.

Phase 1: Theoretical Introduction

Teachers were introduced to the basic concepts of montage and its relevance to child development. This session included discussions about developmental milestones in fine motor skills and language, as well as how montage could serve as a dual-purpose method for instruction and assessment.

Phase 2: Demonstration and Practice

Trainers demonstrated how to carry out montage activities using accessible materials. Teachers then practiced creating their own montage examples. Materials such as colored paper, magazines, natural elements (leaves, seeds), and recycled objects were used, all sourced locally from Pasuruan and Surabaya.

Phase 3: Classroom Implementation

For a period of three weeks, teachers applied montage activities in their classrooms. Children were guided to cut, arrange, and glue elements to create visual stories, which they later explained verbally. The process was documented through photographs and teacher journals. The trainers observed implementation and provided mentoring during this period.

Phase 4: Reflection and Feedback

Teachers participated in a group reflection session at the end of the implementation phase. They discussed classroom experiences, challenges in applying montage, and their use of the assessment rubric. Feedback was used to revise the module and improve future applications.

Data Collection and Evaluation

Two main types of data were collected: (1) qualitative data from teacher reflections, and (2) descriptive observations of children's behavior and skill progression. Teachers completed structured reflection forms and participated in focus group discussions. Children's work was documented and evaluated using the montage rubric, focusing on motor precision, composition, and verbal explanation.

No standardized psychometric tests were used; instead, the emphasis was on authentic classroom observation. The evaluation process aimed to capture the change in both teaching practices and student engagement.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data from teacher reflections and focus groups were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and insights. The documentation of children's montage outcomes was examined descriptively using the developed rubric. While this project did not employ inferential statistical testing, pre- and post-implementation differences were discussed narratively based on teacher observations and comparative review of student work.

The overall analysis focused on determining whether the integration of montage into classroom practice led to improved developmental engagement among children and enhanced pedagogical confidence among teachers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of the montage-based teacher training program at KB Bina Jaya resulted in several notable outcomes related to both teacher competence and children's development. The results are organized into two main categories: teacher improvement in understanding and applying montage-based learning, and children's progress in fine motor coordination and language expression.

Data collection was conducted through reflective journals, direct observations, and analysis of children's work using the assessment rubric. The following subsections describe the observed changes in teacher behavior and classroom practices, as well as improvements in children's skills. These results are supported by descriptive data presented in tables.

Teacher Competency Improvement

Before the intervention, most teachers had limited understanding of how montage could be used as a structured learning method. After the training and mentoring sessions, significant improvements were observed in teachers' ability to plan, implement, and evaluate montage activities. Table 1 summarizes the observed shifts in teacher competencies before and after the training program.

Table 1. Summary of changes in teacher competencies in montage-based instruction

Aspect	Before Training	After Training
Understanding of montage	Considered as general craft activity	Recognized as structured learning and assessment tool
Planning learning activities	Rarely included montage	Frequently incorporated montage with clear objectives
Use of learning materials	Limited to worksheets	Created varied montage media using natural and recycled items
Evaluation method	Subjective and informal	Used structured rubric to assess motor and language development
Teacher confidence	Low, unsure about techniques	High, confident in guiding and evaluating students

This shift was further supported by teacher reflections, where 83 percent of participants reported feeling “more confident” or “much more confident” in using montage activities, compared to only 17 percent before the training.

Children's Developmental Outcomes

A total of 24 children aged 4 to 6 years participated in the montage sessions over a three-week period. Observations conducted by teachers and facilitators indicated a consistent and notable improvement in both fine motor skills and language expression among the children. Prior to the intervention, many children demonstrated limited control in using scissors, applying glue unevenly, and assembling visual components without clear structure. Following the montage activities, most

children showed better coordination, more careful and precise hand movements, and an increased ability to arrange elements into coherent visual compositions.

In terms of language development, significant changes were observed in the way children described their artwork. Initially, verbal responses were minimal and often limited to single words or phrases. After repeated engagement with montage tasks, children began to use more varied vocabulary and constructed more elaborate sentences. For example, several children who previously gave one-word answers progressed to forming descriptive statements of up to four sentences, reflecting greater confidence and expressive ability.

Teachers also reported higher levels of student engagement and enthusiasm during learning sessions. Many children became more participative, eager to present their work, and willing to engage in storytelling related to their creations. These observations suggest that montage activities not only stimulated physical coordination but also created meaningful opportunities for verbal interaction and narrative thinking.

Use of the Evaluation Rubric

The assessment rubric developed as part of the training proved to be a useful tool for observing developmental progress. Teachers reported that the rubric helped them recognize subtle improvements in students' behavior and gave structure to their daily evaluations. Table 2 provides a sample of the rubric used to assess children's performance in three domains.

Table 2. Sample indicators from the montage evaluation rubric

Indicator	Score 1 (Low)	Score 2 (Moderate)	Score 3 (High)
Scissor handling	Unable to cut accurately	Cuts with guidance	Cuts independently with precision
Object placement in montage	Random or scattered	Partially organized layout	Well-organized, intentional layout
Verbal explanation of artwork	Single word responses	Basic descriptive sentence	Descriptive and structured explanation

Teachers used this rubric during and after activities to monitor student engagement and skill development. The scoring allowed for consistent and objective documentation, supporting follow-up planning for individualized learning.

The implementation of the montage-based teacher training program at KB Bina Jaya yielded several notable outcomes in both teacher competence and children's developmental progress. After completing a series of structured workshops, demonstration sessions, and in-class mentoring, teachers exhibited significant improvements in their ability to understand and apply montage as a pedagogical and evaluative tool. Prior to the training, montage was perceived primarily as a craft or filler activity with limited educational value. Many teachers expressed uncertainty in how to link such activities to learning outcomes or assess student progress meaningfully.

However, by the end of the program, all participating teachers demonstrated the ability to plan and execute montage activities with clear instructional goals, adapt diverse and accessible materials into creative tasks, and assess student performance using a structured and developmentally appropriate rubric. During mentoring sessions, teachers were observed designing more intentional montage tasks, including those that focused on themes such as “my home,” “animals,” or “my favorite food,” which provided children with familiar contexts to express themselves visually and verbally.

Teacher reflection journals and group discussions revealed a marked increase in confidence, creativity, and enthusiasm. Many teachers reported that they began incorporating montage not only as a standalone activity but also as part of integrated thematic learning. Several teachers mentioned that the method encouraged them to give children more freedom of expression and to observe their developmental progress more closely. As one teacher wrote, “Montage helped me see how children think and feel things I usually missed in ordinary lessons.”

In terms of student outcomes, a total of 24 children aged four to six participated in montage-based learning sessions over a period of three weeks. Observational data collected during classroom implementation showed substantial improvements in both fine motor skills and verbal expression. Before the intervention, many students demonstrated difficulty in tasks requiring dexterity, such as cutting along curves, applying glue in controlled amounts, and aligning paper fragments intentionally. Language use was also minimal, with some children reluctant to speak or limited to one-word responses when asked about their work.

By the end of the implementation period, students showed measurable progress. They were able to manipulate scissors and glue with greater precision, use visual space more coherently in their compositions, and confidently describe their work using more complex vocabulary and full sentences. Teachers documented students forming coherent narratives around their montages for instance, a child explaining, “This is my house with my cat on the roof, and these are the trees I saw yesterday.” Average rubric scores for fine motor coordination increased from 1.6 to 2.7 on a 3-point scale, while language expression scores rose from 1.5 to 2.6. These gains were consistent across both classroom groups and were supported by qualitative observations in teacher journals.

The use of the montage rubric contributed significantly to the program’s overall success. Teachers reported that the rubric was easy to understand and implement, and provided clear benchmarks for evaluating progress. More importantly, it shifted the assessment culture from informal observation to intentional evaluation with specific indicators. Teachers noted that the rubric helped them identify students who needed additional support, recognize subtle developmental changes, and adjust their teaching strategies accordingly. In some cases, it also encouraged more individualized instruction, as teachers became more attuned to the learning pace and preferences of each child.

In addition, classroom dynamics became more interactive and student-centered. Teachers described a noticeable increase in student engagement and enthusiasm. Children who had previously been passive or reluctant to participate began initiating conversations, asking to share their work, and interacting more actively with peers. This behavioral shift indicated that the creative, tactile, and expressive nature of montage fostered not only cognitive and linguistic growth but also socio-emotional development, including self-confidence and collaboration.

Overall, the results of the program indicate that montage can serve as an effective medium for improving both teaching practices and early childhood developmental outcomes. The integration of a structured training model, hands-on practice, and rubric-based assessment proved to be a successful approach in empowering educators and enriching student learning experiences. The positive changes observed in teacher competence, classroom interaction, and student development suggest that this approach holds strong potential for replication and adaptation in other early childhood education settings, particularly in contexts with limited access to conventional assessment tools.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that montage can serve as a powerful pedagogical strategy when appropriately integrated into early childhood education. The training and mentoring program implemented at KB Bina Jaya not only improved teacher competence in utilizing montage as a learning and assessment tool but also resulted in measurable improvements in children’s fine motor and language skills. These outcomes reflect the importance of combining theory-based teacher development with practical classroom application, particularly in rural or under-resourced educational settings where access to formal training and evaluative tools is often limited.

The shift in teachers’ instructional approaches from viewing montage as a mere craft activity to embracing it as an intentional, structured learning strategy highlights the transformative potential of targeted professional development. This transformation illustrates the critical role of teacher mindset in educational innovation. Without adequate exposure and support, many educators continue to treat creative arts as peripheral rather than integral to child development. However, through structured

training, teachers in this study began to appreciate montage as an effective medium for promoting core developmental domains. This finding aligns with research by Cahyani and Kusumawati (2020), who observed that hands-on, contextualized teacher training significantly boosts educators' pedagogical skills and motivation to innovate.

Notably, the study's implementation model which combined theoretical introduction, demonstration, practical application, and reflection mirrored adult learning principles that stress experiential, reflective, and collaborative learning. Teachers were not passive recipients of information; they actively co-constructed understanding through practice, observation, and peer exchange. As a result, they became more confident in designing montage-based lessons, adapting materials creatively, and applying assessment rubrics systematically. These skills are crucial in early childhood education, where flexibility, responsiveness, and creativity are essential for addressing diverse learner needs.

Children's improvements in fine motor coordination and expressive language skills reinforce the idea that creative visual activities can support multiple domains of early learning simultaneously. The tactile nature of montage tasks, such as tearing, cutting, gluing, and arranging materials, directly engages the small muscles of the hand, thereby strengthening the foundation for later skills such as writing and self-care. Simultaneously, the verbal demands of explaining one's artwork stimulate language production, vocabulary use, and storytelling abilities. These outcomes resonate with findings from Utami and Fauziah (2020), who highlighted the role of integrated arts in supporting early literacy and oral communication.

An additional insight from this study concerns the role of teacher-made assessment tools. The introduction and use of a structured evaluation rubric provided educators with a concrete reference for observing and documenting student growth in a way that is both developmentally appropriate and pedagogically useful. In many early childhood settings, assessment tends to be anecdotal or heavily reliant on informal impressions, which, while valuable, often lack consistency. By contrast, the rubric used in this program offered clarity and alignment between learning objectives and observable outcomes. It also empowered teachers to move beyond general praise or correction and toward targeted feedback that could guide both instruction and student progress.

Moreover, the use of montage in this study did not merely serve academic or developmental purposes it also influenced the social-emotional climate of the classroom. Teachers reported that children were more motivated, focused, and engaged during montage activities. Some children who were previously reserved or nonverbal became more expressive and eager to participate. This behavioral shift underscores the emotional value of open-ended, non-threatening activities like montage, which allow children to explore their feelings, preferences, and identities in a safe and affirming space.

While the outcomes of this intervention were encouraging, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the study involved a relatively small sample size drawn from a single institution, limiting the extent to which the findings can be generalized to other contexts. Future research involving multiple schools across varying geographic and socioeconomic backgrounds would help to validate and expand upon these results. Second, although the rubric provided a useful assessment framework, the data collected were primarily qualitative and based on teacher observation. Incorporating pre- and post-test instruments or third-party evaluations could lend greater objectivity and rigor to future assessments.

Another consideration is the sustainability and scalability of the program. While the training model proved effective in a focused, short-term implementation, questions remain regarding how teachers will continue to apply montage-based approaches independently over time. Continued mentorship, access to professional learning communities, and administrative support will be essential to ensure long-term impact. Furthermore, adaptation of the rubric and training content for different age groups or curricular themes could enhance its relevance and integration across broader early childhood settings.

In sum, this program illustrates how a simple yet intentional use of montage can address multiple challenges in early childhood education from limited teacher capacity to underdeveloped child motor

and language skills. It emphasizes the value of teacher empowerment, creative pedagogy, and structured evaluation in fostering meaningful and measurable learning experiences for young children. The evidence suggests that montage is not merely an artistic diversion but a versatile, low-cost, and culturally adaptable method that supports holistic child development. As the demand grows for innovative yet accessible strategies in early education, especially in underserved areas, montage offers a promising pathway that deserves greater attention and investment.

CONCLUSIONS

This study confirms that montage-based activities, when integrated through structured training and supported by appropriate assessment tools, can significantly improve both teaching practices and children's developmental outcomes in early childhood education. The training program implemented at KB Bina Jaya not only equipped teachers with practical skills to use montage effectively, but also transformed their perceptions shifting from viewing montage as a simple craft to recognizing it as a meaningful, goal-oriented instructional method. This transformation played a key role in increasing teacher confidence, creativity, and capacity to evaluate student learning in a more structured and child-centered way.

At the student level, the program resulted in observable improvements in fine motor coordination and expressive language. Children who initially struggled with scissors or verbal expression became more confident and capable in both physical manipulation and communication. The consistent application of the montage rubric allowed teachers to assess individual progress more objectively, ensuring that each child's development was monitored with clear indicators. This approach encouraged intentional teaching and allowed for more targeted support for students with differing needs.

While this study was limited in scale conducted in a single early childhood institution it offers a valuable model for replication in other schools, particularly those in resource-limited settings. The simplicity and flexibility of montage make it suitable for diverse educational contexts, and its potential to integrate cognitive, motor, and language development makes it a holistic strategy for early learning.

Future implementations should consider expanding the scope to include more varied participant groups and use complementary quantitative measures to validate learning outcomes. In addition, sustainable support mechanisms such as periodic training, learning communities, and administrative backing are essential to ensure the continued use of montage beyond the scope of pilot programs.

In conclusion, this community engagement initiative illustrates that meaningful improvements in early education can be achieved through creative, low-cost interventions rooted in practical training and reflective assessment. Montage, when used purposefully, not only enhances developmental learning but also strengthens the instructional capacity of teachers. It is a promising strategy worth integrating into broader early childhood education frameworks.

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Conflict of Interests

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