



ELEMENTARY STUDENTS DO LOVE SONG: Songs as Fun and Effective Media to Enhance Vocabulary Building for Elementary Students

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menggambarkan bagaimana lagu-lagu anak-anak berbahasa Inggris sebagai media dalam pengajaran bahasa Inggris kepada anak-anak usia dini dapat meningkatkan penguasaan kosakata siswa. Mengingat anak-anak usia dini secara alami aktif, imajinatif, dan responsif terhadap aktivitas yang menyenangkan, lagu-lagu menjadi pendekatan yang tepat untuk menumbuhkan minat dan keterampilan bahasa sejak dini. Temuan dalam penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa lagu-lagu berbahasa Inggris telah terbukti berhasil dalam meningkatkan kosakata bagi anak-anak usia dini. Irama yang menarik dan lirik yang berulang membantu anak-anak menghafal dan meniru kata-kata dalam konteks yang bermakna, memperkaya pemahaman anak-anak melalui konteks audio/visual, ekspresi budaya, dan interaksi verbal sederhana yang melibatkan mereka secara aktif. Pengamatan, wawancara, dan laporan guru menunjukkan peningkatan signifikan dalam minat anak-anak terhadap penguasaan kosakata. Kemampuan membangun kosakata siswa meningkat secara signifikan ketika guru berperan aktif dalam menjelaskan materi, mengulang kosakata kunci, dan memfasilitasi interaksi setelah lagu diputar. Oleh karena itu, dapat disimpulkan bahwa lagu tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai hiburan, tetapi juga sebagai alat yang bermakna, menyenangkan, dan efektif dalam membangun dasar kosakata bahasa Inggris di Sekolah Dasar Islam MI Unggulan Al Muhammad Cepu.

Kata Kunci: *Pembelajar Bahasa Inggris, Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, lagu dan filem Pembelajaran.*

ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe how English Kids' songs as media in teaching English to early childhood learners enhanced students' vocabulary mastery. Considering young learners are naturally active, imaginative, and responsive to fun activities, songs become an appropriate approach to foster language interest and skills from an early age. The findings in this study revealed that English songs have been proven successful in enhancing vocabulary for young learners. The catchy rhythms and repetitive lyrics help children memorize and imitate words within meaningful contexts, enrich children's comprehension through audio/ audio visual context, cultural expressions, and simple verbal interactions that engage them actively. Observations, interview, and teacher reports indicated a significant increase in children's interest of vocabulary mastery. The students' vocabulary building is significantly improved when teachers play an active role in explaining the material, repeating key vocabulary, and facilitating interaction after the song is played. Therefore, it could be concluded that songs function not merely as entertainment but as meaningful, enjoyable, and effective tools in laying the foundation for English vocabulary at Islamic Elementary School, MI Unggulan Al Muhammad Cepu.

Keywords: English Learning; Early Childhood; Educational Songs and Films.

Introduction

English is an international language, has become an important need for global communication nowadays, especially in the midst of the current era of globalization. Children have been introduced to English from an early age tend to have better language skills in the future. Widhiprasetya et al (2021), said that teaching English to young learners has also attracted the interest of many in recent decades. As a result, English education is becoming more common to young learners. Kindergarten and elementary school students are considered young learners by Wibowo (cited in Islami, 2019). Regarding the demand of teaching English for young learners, Nufus (2019), said that Teaching English to young learners is essentially a one of-kind activity that invites learners to think, play, and communicate with the language.

As a foreign language and a second language learner, someone who learns English must master four internal skills (writing, speaking, reading, and listening); since kindergarten, the student has learned the basics first, namely vocabulary. Anwar and Efransyah (cited in Purnami, 2022), defined vocabulary as an essential aspect of learning a language because it provides the meaning used to communicate. Moreover, vocabulary, as one of the knowledge areas in language, is extremely important for learners when learning a language (Alqahtani, 2015). According to Thornbury (cited in Isnaini & Aminatun, 2021), "if you spend much of your time learning grammar, your English will not change much; you can see the most progress if you learn more vocabulary and expression; you can tell very little with grammar, but almost all with words (vocabularies)." So, learning vocabulary is very crucial. Based on Kusuma,

Adnyani, & Taharyanti (cited in Islami, 2019), vocabulary is best learned at the early age.

However, teaching English, especially vocabulary building to young learners at elementary age is not easy but very complicated, because the approach must be adjusted to the characteristics of their development, where children tend to be active, imaginative, and get bored easily. Therefore, a fun learning media is needed so that these children can like it, (Kaswari & Khasanah, 2024). Hadi (2019) also emphasizes that choosing the appropriate methods and media is crucial for students effective learning.

Isnaini & Aminatun (2021) said that song is a handy tool for introducing new English words and expanding the vocabulary of English Foreign Language students. The song is one type of sound media that can be used. Dale (cited in Ilinawati & Dharma, 2019) writes that songs effectively introduce vocabulary by providing meaningful contexts. They make learning enjoyable and help students acquire diverse vocabulary from different songs. Anggaira et al. (2022) regard songs as one of the most influential media for vocabulary acquisition. Before using songs to teach vocabulary to young learners, the songs should have an upbeat vibe and be related to learning activities. For children, songs are an enjoyable way to help students learn a language. Singing activities are innovative teaching techniques and valuable aids for early childhood English learning (Fridayanti et al., 2021; Martina, F., Syafryadin, J. S., & Rakhmanina, L., cited in Fridayanti et al., 2021). When students feel enthusiastic and comfortable discussing vocabulary, their confidence and interest in learning increase significantly, making it easier for them to remember new words (Fridayanti et al., 2021).

Regarding the explanation above, the writers are willing to conduct a study focusing how songs with some benefits enhance young learners to learn English as foreign language. The findings in this study will give other recommendations for educational institutions and stake holders, especially elementary schools to use songs for a media in teaching English.

Some previous studies related to this topic have already been done. First, Venti Mawarni and Haris Hamdani (2024) conducted research, and the findings from observations and interviews indicate that songs are highly effective for teaching English fluency, as they boost learning motivation and facilitate easy retention of the taught English. Second, Suciati and Azizah (2022) also hold a study with the findings showed that the strengths in acquainting English to young learners through nursery rhymes were the commitment among the managers/ organizers, teachers and parents,

and the high awareness that English was important.

Differ from those studies, the writers focus on teaching vocabularies through selected English kids' songs. This study will explore:

1. the stages implemented by the English teacher to deliver English kids songs for young learners at elementary age.
2. Moreover, it will show the data how the selected English kids' songs enhance the young learners to learn vocabulary better.

Literature Review

Definition of Vocabulary

Anwar and Efransyah (cited in Purnami, 2022) define vocabulary as the core building blocks of human communication. As emphasized by Ambarwati and Mandasari (cited in Isnaini & Aminatun, 2021), vocabulary development is fundamental to English language proficiency. According to (Rusyda & Suparman, 2022) state that vocabulary is an important aspect of language in which the students should learn to master foreign language. According to (Ain & Nawir, 2022) state that vocabulary is an important component of language proficiency because it serves the foundation for how well students can speak, listen, write, read.

Moreover, (Wahidin, 2017) vocabulary is the basic thing to learn of English skills. Next, (Alqahtani, 2015) stated that mastering vocabulary for students is very important because vocabulary affects one's success in communicating. So, it means that students must master vocabulary to make it easier for them to convey words and communicate with other people. From those explanation, it can be stated that vocabulary is part of language which is crucial to be learned when someone is learning a language or foreign language. Vocabulary becomes the first element of language should be comprehended before learning another language skills.

Songs and vocabulary learning through songs

Songs are effective tools for developing pronunciation, vocabulary, and fluency. Their engaging nature makes them particularly suitable for young learners, facilitating long-term retention of language content (Mokhtar et al., 2017). Beyond language skills, songs promote emotional development, problem-solving, and a relaxed classroom ambiance (Parlakian, cited in Hadi, 2019; Lo and Li, cited in Hadi, 2019).

Other explanation, Fairbanks (cited in Hadi, 2019) highlights the cognitive benefits of musical learning. Music in the classroom can also boost student motivation and create

a welcoming environment (Islami, 2019). Songs can be used as a medium to help students improve their pronunciation, vocabulary, and fluency. The song's words and rhyme are exciting and enjoyable for students because many things can be taught to kindergarten students through songs that will stay with them throughout their lives (Mokhtar et al., 2017).

From the definition above, the writers could state "Song" which contains rhythm and lyrics functioning as one of media to teach vocabulary for English young learners.

Research Method

Since the aim of this study was to explore the use of songs in teaching English vocabulary, descriptive case study design was chosen. Descriptive case study design attempts to present a complete description of a phenomenon within its context. The goal set by the researcher is to describe the data as they occur. Shanahan, Jones, and McBeth (2018) suggest that descriptive case studies may be in a narrative form. Moreover, Yin (2009) defines a case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. He further elaborates that case studies are the preferred method when "how" or "why" questions are being posed and the investigator has little control over the events.

In this research, the writers collected the data using direct observation, interview, and documentation. Case study research involves data collection from multiple sources of information like observations, interviews, audiovisual material and documents, and reports to achieve deep understanding (Creswell, 2007; Darke et al., 1998; Woodside, 2010). The subjects of the research were the students of MI Unggulan Al Muhammad Cepu. That elementary school is under the management of YPPM Al Muhammad Cepu. The class observed was one class because it was the only class found in the first academic year. The number of participants was 20. To gain the data, observation was held by the writers directly to the classroom when English subject was taught, while interview questioned was delivered to the English teacher.

For data analysis, the writers used Miles and Huberman theory. There were several steps done by the writers. The first was data reduction. It is the stage of data simplification according to the focus of the study. In this stage, the writers collected and grouped the data into three categories; very important, less important, and not important. The next stage was data presentation. The goal was to make the readers could understand the findings easily. The third stage was conclusion drawing. The

information obtained was then presented descriptive and the last was making conclusions based on the data.

Findings and Discussion

The stages teaching English through songs for young learners

The method used in the English teaching process for early childhood generally uses a play-based learning approach, which is in accordance with the child's developmental stage. (Pinter, 2006) Teachers utilize songs, pictures, vocabulary cards, and interactive games such as guessing words, singing together, and storytelling. Those various activities are done in order children will feel like they are "learning while playing". Creativity is needed to teach English so that children will get easier to accept the material, (Istiana & Widodo, 2023). According to Fajarina (2017), teaching young learners should be in a fun and interactive mode. Teachers need to and adapt appropriate methods, media, and techniques for their learners. For example, by using bright visuals, songs, and games enhances the appeal of lessons for young learners. The teacher must also be good at reading the mood of the children so that the teacher can make the atmosphere more conducive and enjoyable for learning activities, as stated by Talak-Kiryk (cited in Islami, 2019). The learning activity should be enjoyable and engaging.

Based on the writers' classroom observations at Madrasah Ibtidaiyyah Unggulan Al Muhammad Cepu, vocabulary learning is taught using songs through the following procedure: Before beginning the vocabulary lesson, the teacher starts the class with greeting and praying moment. Next, the teacher come to warm up stage. Here, the teacher is trying to catch the students' attention and readiness by inviting them to dance together (baby shark song) or (head shoulder knees and toes song). For the main section, the teacher plays English songs three times (listening comprehension). The songs chosen for examples are; Alhamdulillah Bismillah Insha Allah by Omar Hanna, Ramdhan Moon, and Bismillah I am Muslim. The main stage is then continued by underlining the vocabularies contained from the songs. The teacher pronounces the vocabularies accompanied by the meaning (repetition is needed). Next, the teacher asks the students to repeat after the teachers. The last stage is closing. In this stage, the teacher summarizes the vocabularies already discussed. The teacher confirms one by one student to make sure they already understand and master today's material. The closing stage is ended by singing the songs together again and followed by greeting. Moreover, the only one English teacher at Madrasah Ibtidaiyyah Unggulan Al

Muhammad Cepu explained in interview section, “the main things should be managed during the class are students’ learning motivation, and teacher’s repetition to the material.”

Songs enhancing students’ vocabularies building

The use of song media in teaching English vocabulary has been shown to be highly effective. (Fitria, 2021) supports this, noting that learning through songs is not only enjoyable but also enhances students’ English skills. Observations and interviews conducted in this study revealed that the selected English Kids’ songs are either familiar or are fun for young learners. The lyrics are easy to remember. Initially, the English teacher introduces song theme and the vocabulary contained with a mix of Indonesian and English to help students grasp the terms. This gradual approach prevents confusion and helps students understand the vocabularies given quickly. Once students are already familiar with the vocabulary, the teacher introduces the songs and the vocabulary full in English while still providing explanations. Teachers should repeat songs three times to aid memorization for young learners both the song and the vocabulary. This repetition helps students recall the vocabulary more effectively.

Songs are an appropriate and valuable tool for introducing and reinforcing vocabulary. They make learning enjoyable, encouraging the learners to sing, dance, and listen attentively. This active engagement is a key indicator of motivation, as outlined by Maryanto et al. (2014), who identified several characteristics: 1. Enthusiasm and enjoyment in completing tasks, 2. Persistence in the face of challenges, 3. Intrinsic motivation, without needing external rewards, 4. Strong desire for learning, 5. Curiosity about new knowledge, 6. Commitment to long-term goals, 7. Pleasure in problem-solving, and 8. Willingness to participate in group activities. Songs can significantly boost students’ ability to learn English vocabulary.

With the selected English Kids’ Songs which already delivered to the students at Islamic Elementary School Al Muhammad Cepu, students tend to frequently hear and sing English songs, which helps them understand and remember new vocabulary more quickly. This condition supports that learning through songs is particularly effective because it aligns with their preference for playful, engaging activities rather than more formal, serious instruction typical of older students. The writers also observed that students are following the stages and classroom during English subject orderly. In the end of classroom activity, the goal for mastering vocabulary revealed

positively. The students could answer and response the teacher's questions related to the vocabularies taught in today's meeting.

The English teacher elaborated that, "the selected English kids' songs are for example: *If you are happy*, containing the vocabularies related to *parts of body*. By playing the songs three times accompanying with body movement makes the students get better understanding in the word *head, shoulder, knees, toes*." The English teacher also told that, "the learning process sometimes is accompanied with fun games. The teacher would like to ask the students to touch their part of body related to *if you are happy song*. Students who perform correctly will get *star*."

Conclusion

For learning English as foreign language, young learners need fun atmosphere so they can enjoy the learning process. By doing so, they will feel like playing while learning. One of the alternatives media to teach vocabulary for young learners is by using songs. Songs are familiar and subject-related to the students, especially for young learners, according to Sohot and Yunus (cited in Lestari & Hardiyanti, 2020). Based on the findings and discussion above, the writers could draw the conclusion; English Kids' Songs for enhancing students' vocabulary learning implemented at Islamic Elementary School MI Unggulan Al Muhammad Cepu followed the stages from opening, warming up, main activities, and closing. Incorporating songs into the classroom significantly has enhanced student motivation, as evidenced by their active participation and improved retention of new vocabulary. Repeating songs three times by the English teacher helps students remember both the song and the vocabulary contained. For future research, it is recommended to include multiple teachers to gather more comprehensive data and insights. Comparing different teaching approaches can further enhance the effectiveness of vocabulary instruction using songs.

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