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Songs for Teaching Vocabulary: English Learning Media for Preschoolers

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Abstract

In terms of language acquisition, preschoolers are associated with the golden age. This led to the awareness of the importance of mastering English as early as possible. Vocabulary learning is an important aspect of learning a language because the basis of language is vocabulary. However, a lack of strategy in introducing English vocabulary is the problem faced by preschool teachers. This study is a literature review that aims to review the use of songs in vocabulary learning for preschoolers. In addition, the success of using songs in English vocabulary learning for preschoolers, which was reported by a lot of studies, is thought to be paramount to discuss. This study refers to 49 references which are books or articles from journals related to the use of songs as a medium in vocabulary learning for early childhood. Therefore, this article is intended to review the use of songs in English vocabulary learning for preschoolers. The English vocabulary, English children's songs, and development of English Vocabulary in preschoolers were presented descriptively. The review concludes that songs can be an alternative media in vocabulary learning for preschoolers.

Keywords: *songs, english learning, early childhood*

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Introduction

Many researchers argue that vocabulary is one of the most important components in learning a foreign language. Vocabulary is needed in human communication since the basis of communication is words. Therefore, having a broad knowledge of words is a must in human communication. Support for the importance of vocabulary knowledge is strongly conveyed by Wilkins (Wilkins, 2017), who states that "Sentences that have good grammar will not be produced if there is no vocabulary needed to convey what they want to say, while without grammar very little to say, without vocabulary nothing to say". In addition, Thornbury (Thornbury, 2002) adds that vocabulary learning is an important aspect of learning a language because the basis of language is vocabulary. In other words, to communicate fluently and smoothly, language learners need to enrich their vocabulary, for vocabulary is the key to communication.

Recent research has shown that vocabulary learning has problems. Among them are the doubt of a lot of English instructors in choosing a suitable method for vocabulary learning

and sometimes do not know where to start to establish an instructional emphasis on learning (Berne & Blachowicz, 2008). Both teachers and students agree that vocabulary mastery is a major factor in language teaching (Walters, 2004). Achieving a satisfactory learning result is the ultimate aim of a teacher's job. However, teachers normally obtain some problems in the learning process in order to get the best result. They have problems about how to teach students to get satisfactory results. The teacher must prepare and find out the right technique, which will be applied to students. A good teacher must be prepared with various techniques and up-to-date. Teachers must be able to master the materials so it can be understood by students, and make them interested and happy in the teaching and learning process. In line with vocabulary learning, teachers should pay attention that vocabulary teaching is something new and different from the students' mother tongue. They should also consider that teaching English to young learners is different from that of adults. They need to prepare good techniques and appropriate materials in order to achieve language learning goals. In addition Afzal (Afzal, 2019) states that language proficiency of foreign language learners and native speakers can be measured by the level knowledge in vocabulary.

Success of using songs in vocabulary learning has been widely reported by researchers. Azmin Md Zamin et al. (Zamin et al., 2020) stated that the use of songs in English class can help students to improve their vocabulary repertoire of verbs. In addition, the use of songs can provide a fun way of capturing new words. Cahyati (Cahyati et al., 2019) adds that, students always ask to sing in the learning process, in addition to make the atmosphere more fun, students can understand the vocabulary in the songs that they sing. In addition, the findings of Suri's research (Suri & Martha, 2012) show that song can improve students' vocabulary and the factors that influence students' increase in their vocabulary are: (1) selection in searching for songs, (2) singing practice in class, and (3) teacher support to students. Thus, it can be concluded that songs have the potential to increase students' vocabulary knowledge.

Early Childhood Education is the earliest level of education in forming the basis of students' language knowledge (Buadanani. & Suryana., 2022; Gitin, 2021). Awareness of the importance of mastering English in this golden age has led to efforts to learn and master the language as early as possible. Therefore, according to Tyaningsih (Tyaningsih & Rachmani, 2016) and Sumarni (Sumarni et al., 2022), English is expected to be introduced in formal educational institutions for early childhood. This is a challenge in itself because English is a foreign language in Indonesia. When a foreign language is introduced to early childhood, special knowledge about how children acquire and learn language is needed, so that an appropriate learning method can be formulated properly.

Method

This study is a literature review that aims to review the use of songs in vocabulary learning for preschoolers. This study explains various aspects related to the use of songs in learning English vocabulary for preschoolers. This study refers to 49 references which are books or articles from journals related to the use of songs as a medium in vocabulary learning for early childhood. Several points discussed in this study, namely; types of vocabulary, the importance of mastering English vocabulary, English children's songs, the benefit of English children songs, and development of English vocabulary on preschoolers.

Result and Discussion

The discussion in this study is several aspects related to the use of English songs in vocabulary learning for early childhood. The discussion is as follows:

English Vocabulary

Vocabulary is the treasury / wealth of words owned by a language (Soedjito & Saryono, 2011, p. 3). When one thinks of vocabulary, they tend to think of the meaning of the word. However, word knowledge involves spelling, pronunciation, morphology, syntax, and depth

of meaning (Carlo et al., 2008). In addition, Pan & Xu (Pan & Xu, 2011) claim that beside phonetics/pronunciation and grammar, one of the requirements in learning a foreign language is the knowledge of vocabulary. Meanwhile, according to Soedjito in Labib (Sajawandi, 2021, p. 18) vocabulary is: 1) all words contained in a language; 2) the word richness of a speaker or writer; 3) words used in a field of science; 4) a list of words arranged like a dictionary accompanied by a brief and practical explanation.

Hiebert and Kamil (Hiebert & Kamil, 2005) define vocabulary as the knowledge that the learners should have about the meanings of words. There are two types of words, oral and print. The oral vocabulary belongs to a set of words for which the learners know the meanings while speaking or reading orally. While, the print vocabulary are the words for which the learners know the meanings when they write or read silently. In addition, the productive vocabulary is a set of words that are well-known and used frequently by the learners in speaking or writing. Then, the receptive vocabulary is a set of words, which are less frequent and for which learners assign meanings while listening or reading.

Meanwhile, according to Christiana Evy Tri Widya hening & Rahayu (T. Widyahening et al., 2021) vocabulary is a collection of words that a person knows and is one of the components of the language system that is important to learn in English. So, it can be stated that vocabulary is the main basis or foundation in foreign language learning, in this case English, as the first foreign language that must be learned and mastered by students at various levels of education. Vocabulary is very important in learning English. To master four skills in English, we need mastery vocabulary first (Gusrayani, 2015; Lube & Nuraeni, 2020). Then, it can be concluded that English vocabulary is one of the language components in the form of all words contained in English and used in the field of science and functions to support fluency in English communicating.

Schmitt (Liu Wen, 2010) classifies vocabulary learning strategies into five taxonomies, namely (1) Determination strategy: finding meaning without the help of expertise; (2) Social strategy: involves interaction with other people; (3) Memory strategy: linking new words with previously known knowledge; (4) Cognitive strategies: manipulating or changing learned words; (5) Metacognitive strategy: involves awareness of the learning process. By combining meaningful strategies and learning media, effective learning can possibly dispel and reduce the failure of vocabulary learning (Rahman & Angraeni, 2020).

Kinds of English Vocabulary

The English component consists of three, namely grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation (Kasihani, 2010, p. 43). Various types of English vocabulary in general include: a) *Question Word*: *Question Word* is a word used to start an interrogative sentence. This word is often used to ask a place, time, thing, person, thing, way and so on. Members of the question word vocabulary consist of 5W + 1H (what, where, why, who, when and how). b) *Pronoun*: Pronouns are the words that are often used to replace nouns. The use of pronouns in English is based on two things, namely gender and also the number of words of the object. For example: I, You, We, They, He, She, and It. c) *Verb*: Verb is a word whose function is to describe the activity or action of the subject. In addition, the verb can also show events or events. Examples of verb are: go, study, eat, come, walk, and sleep. d) *Adjective*: Adjectives are words that are often used in describing nouns or nouns. In addition, pronouns are also in the form of places, people, animals and various other objects. For example: beautiful, handsome, smart, short, and tall. e) *Modal Auxiliary*: This English vocabulary is a verb that is often placed before the main verb. Its function is to give additional meaning to the existing main verb. Usually, this modal auxiliary is used to describe abilities, desires, and needs in a sentence. For example: can, could, may, might, will, would.

The Important of Mastering English Vocabulary

Vocabulary is one of the most important language components. Without vocabulary, people will not be able to say anything. People with broad vocabulary mastery have better language skills than people with little vocabulary mastery. Mastery of a broad vocabulary contributes significantly to almost all aspects of language (Nathalie Wijaya, 2015; C. E. T. Widyahening & Sufa, 2022). Moreover, in order to be able to express ideas and understand others, an adequate vocabulary is needed because it is the basis of learning foreign language (Kuśnierek, 43 C.E.; Nuraeningsih, N. & Rusiana, 2016). A language learner cannot communicate effectively without knowing enough vocabulary (Bahrami et al., 2019). This means that vocabulary is the first step to be taught before teaching other aspects of the language.

Teaching vocabulary should be a top priority in teaching English. Learners or students must be trained properly to increase vocabulary knowledge. At the initial level of learning English, it is better to teach vocabulary than grammar, and learners or students can learn grammar when looking for the meaning of words in the vocabulary if the learner or students have a proper or sufficient vocabulary base (Susanto, 2017). Without vocabulary, skills of language learning including listening, speaking, reading and writing cannot be successfully achieved. Therefore, we cannot deny that vocabulary learning plays a very important role in second language learning and a large vocabulary will help learners improve their language proficiency (Liu Wen, 2010).

Ur (Ur, 1995, p. 3) writes that words carry meaning. If a person wishes to communicate, lexis and the minimum knowledge of grammar is useful, not conversely. Due to the knowledge of vocabulary the potential user of a language is capable of communicating. Within reading activities, students would not manage to understand a text, if they did not acquire enough vocabulary items. Beglar and Hunt (Beglar & Hunt, 2000) divide the program of learning vocabulary into three general categories. Unintended learning is the first category, in which words are learned as a by-product of other unintentional activities, such as reading and listening. The next one is intentional or direct learning by investigating the learners' vocabulary needs and prescribing them a certain list of words to develop their linguistic knowledge. The last category is based on learners' independent strategy development. It is done by exercising guessing the meaning of different words from both linguistic and social contexts as well as enabling learners to use dictionaries.

English Children Song

Vocabulary learning provides learners with an opportunity to use that language and communicate with others (Sa'd, S.H., & Rajabi, F., 2018). One way to help learners to achieve this goal is learning vocabulary through songs. Songs have an important role in the development of children learning a second language (Rohmah & Indah, 2021). Song is the way to attain student's attraction in practicing their mastery in English (Hadi, 19; Hasmalena, et al., 2022) Endraswara (Endraswara, 2009) proposed that the so-called children's songs are songs that are cheerful and reflect noble ethics. Children's songs are songs that are usually sung by children, while children's songs contain simple things that are usually done by children. Children's songs are part of popular culture and pop songs with a child's feeling.

There are several choices of songs used: 1) songs must be related to education; 2) songs that have simple lyrics; 3) Songs that are not in the rock class (Nurhayati, 2009). Teaching English for young people may be easier by using the media of songs because most of them like to sing and listen to English music, until memorized. After all, it is often played continuously. Songs are really loved by children and teenagers because live songs make everyone happy and cheerful. Song overcomes someone who is emotionally dissipated because of the touch of beautiful music and the song is also often used by young people if they want to travel by vehicle for not getting bored on the road. Songs are needed both externally and internally (Fitrianto Samah, 2021).

According to Pamadhi (Pamadhi, 2011, p. 25) music for children is adapted to the characteristics of children. Their music must be adapted to the child's development in terms of biology, soul, thinking power, and children's interests, namely: 1) Short melodic and rhythm patterns, easy to remember, which at times are very useful to be developed (improvised), changed, updated, repeated according to the child's ability and creativity; 2) Contains other musical elements, such as tempo, dynamics, sounds, and musical expressions that can be processed and expressed/replaced. This provides an opportunity for children to gain experience in processing musical sounds. The examples include: children try to play music at high speed, low speed, strengthen, soften, and imitate animal sounds.

English songs play a magical role in teaching new vocabulary and they should be used as a type of supplementary materials in teaching (Malekian, 2016). Songs are viewed as one of the most effective ways for vocabulary learning (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2020; Setiawan, 2019). In order to use songs for English in learning process effectively, there are several things that must be considered, including; (1) the ability of student, (2) kind of song, the song should have correct pronunciation, (3) difficulty level of the song. Songs can be categorized into activity songs, animal songs, counting songs, food songs, learning songs, lullaby, patriotic songs, parody, sport songs, traditional songs, and so on.

Before using songs for teaching, it is better if the teacher considers some frameworks. Brewster (Brewster et al., 2002) suggests to use the following framework: 1) Create a context, the purpose and background information should be explained beforehand; 2) Songs important vocabularies should be introduced using some suitable media, for instance, visual aids, actions/movements, real thing or imitation objects, dolls, and so on; 3) Teach the vocabulary that is considered important in advance by using visual aids, actions/movements, real thing or artificial objects, dolls, and so on; 4) The activities of follow-up listening should be performed; 5) Checking the pronunciation, in terms of intonation, stressed words or syllables; 6) Let the students listen, repeat, and practice singing and learning the song. Ask them to use body movements, facial expressions and so on; 7) Provide the text of the song. Package the song into a nice and learning-oriented activities. For instance, students can change the version of the song into their own, listen and complete the omitted part of the song, select songs, create words from 2 different songs, match pictures with writing, and so on; 8) ask them to make comparison with the same kinds of songs in their native and national language; 9) Let the students perform what they have created not only individually, but also in pairs or in groups.

The Benefit of English Children Song

A lot of studies claim that speaking and pronunciation skills can be improved through songs. The suitable song should be chosen to make sure that it will contribute to the language learning improvement (Morales, 2008). In addition, Walker (Walker, 2006) suggest use songs for an important technique in the improving vocabulary, grammar, listening, and speaking. Then, Wrenshall (Wrenshall, n.d., p. 43) said; "there is also plenty of evidence that song help memorization, and the rhythm and rhyme of the lyrics can certainly help vocabulary as well." Songs also give students the opportunity to enrich vocabulary by vocalizing the language (Burhayani, 2013). Using songs and movement is one of the best ways to ensure that second- and foreign-language classrooms demonstrate all these qualities (Safitri & A., 2018; Shin, 2017).

In terms of creating an interesting learning atmosphere, Purwaningsih (2017) states that English teachers and linguists agree that song can support to create an active, creative, and fun learning. Singing and music can be applied in the learning process used as a helpful technique. Moreover, children's cognitive ability can also be developed by Music that contains various elements. Then, the hearing sensitivity can be trained by the pitch of the song. Furthermore, the children can make a difference in the internal rhythms and the motor skills through the changes of music rhythm (for example, when combined with movement exercises according to the lyrics).

Furthermore, there are many advantages of teaching English using songs. They are; 1) songs will motivate children to have more fun in English learning; 2) During the learning process, the children are able to grasp the learning material easily through singing. The choice of songs and movements created by teacher, which is suitable with the early childhood's developmental age will give a significant result on a successful English learning process; 3) singing and various learning activities, educators can foster children's interest to be happier and more active in learning, and can even make it easier for children to understand the teaching material presented; 4) A happy and active learning process can be achieved; 5) teaching rhymes and songs in Primary Education to the students may be beneficial for them both inside and outside the school. It also provides an excellent opportunity to increase the skills of students in the area of foreign language through the follow-up activities of writing, reading, or practicing the skills taught in class. Since Songs and music can be used to support listening activity. This strategy can give various advantages to the children.

Particularly in the case of young and elementary learners, music has been used widely to teach important concepts in a fun way by second language teachers. One of the many benefits of using music and songs in teaching English is that teachers can acquire the focused attention of learners as well as keep them excited for learning (Kumar et al., 2022). There are a lot of advantages of using songs for preschoolers as a learning reference. According to Brewster et al (Brewster et al., 2002, p. 162), the advantages of using songs are: first of all, it is a linguistic resource. It means that it can be used both as a tool of introducing as target language and as media for the reinforcement of its grammar and vocabulary. It provides the recognizable language of the student in a new and fun form. The occurrence of language repetition can be presented naturally and fun. All integrative language skills, including improving students' pronunciation skills can be developed. Secondly, it is an affective/psychological resource. It means that the song supports not only a fun learning situation, but also the positive attitude and self-confidence towards the English language. Students think that it is no more a scary or threatening subject. Third, as cognitive resource, songs help to create memory, concentration and coordination. Song can function as a tool to interpret meanings; therefore, it makes students become more sensitive to rhyme.

Another advantages of teaching English using songs that proposed by Andayani (Andayani, 2022): a) Through songs will motivate children to be happier to learn English (Purwanti, 2020); b) By singing children become happy and it is easier to understand the teaching material presented. The teacher's ability to choose songs and create movements that are appropriate for the child's developmental age will also impact the success of the English learning process in early childhood; c) Through singing and various learning activities, educators can foster children's interest to be happier and more active in learning and even make it easier for children to understand the presented teaching material; d) Children are made happy, not bored, and interested in participating in learning.

Development of English Vocabulary on Preschoolers

It is very important for children who are learning English to understand and improve their vocabulary because the more vocabulary they master, the better they will understand the meaning of English words. Thus, the teacher's role is needed in guiding and teaching the vocabulary to preschoolers. A teacher must know what vocabulary to teach so that it can be easily understood. According to Lelawati, Dhiya & Mailani (Lelawati et al., 2019), there are three steps in teaching vocabulary mastery, namely: 1) Presentation Techniques, this stage is an important stage that must be introduced to children about new vocabulary. As an educator, the teacher must know appropriate vocabulary teaching techniques; 2) Practice Techniques, in the practice stage, educators can give assignments that can help preschoolers remember and master English vocabulary in the long term; 3) Media, Media is the main instrument in the teaching and learning process that is used to attract the interest and attention of preschoolers

and convey information easily. Therefore, teachers must use interesting media and facilitate teaching activities.

The targets for achieving the criteria in the development of language vocabulary in early childhood are 1) Communicating non-verbally through signs, movements and expressions. 2) Join in informal conversations about experiences and follow the rules of the conversation. 3) Using language to express needs, ideas and feelings. 4) Begin to recognize rhymes, rhyme sounds in familiar vocabulary, join rhyme games, and imitate rhyming songs or poems. 5) Begin to retell the content of the story. 6) Begin to pay attention to the initial sounds of familiar vocabulary by noticing that the pronunciation of some words begins the same way. 7) Shows steady progress in conversational vocabulary. 8) Answer the questions correctly. 9) Focus on the speaker. 10) Listen and engage in conversation with friends.

Conclusion

Vocabulary learning is an important aspect of learning a language because the basis of language is vocabulary. However, many teachers have problems in choosing the suitable strategy for vocabulary learning and sometimes do not know where to start to establish an instructional emphasis on the learning. Songs are viewed as one of the most effective ways of vocabulary learning. Hence, the choice of the songs should consider that the songs must be related to education, have simple lyrics, and not in the rock class. For preschool children, the use of the songs provides many paramount benefits.

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