

Teaching English Young Learners Through Song: An Engaging and Effective Approach

Venti Mawarni 1 * Haris Hamdani 2

¹STKIP Kusuma Negara, Jakarta, Indonesia

²Universitas Bhayangkara Jakarta, Indonesia

*venti@stkipkusumanegara.ac.id

Abstract

Young learners often find it challenging to learn foreign language, especially in English, due to their active developmental phase. Thus, discovering effective methods for teaching English fluency using songs is crucial. This study aims to explore the use of songs in teaching English fluency by teachers at Kubah Rahmatan Charity Institution. To address the research questions, classroom observations and interviews with English teachers were conducted. The subjects of this study was divided into three groups namely Starter, Jumper and Flyer groups. The findings from observations and interviews reveal that teachers effectively use songs to teach English fluency, following appropriate stages that help children recognize and remember vocabulary or grammar in each session. The students displayed high enthusiasm and active participation when learning vocabulary and grammar through songs. The results indicate that songs are highly effective for teaching English fluency, as they boost learning motivation and facilitate easy retention of the taught English, thereby achieving the teaching objectives successfully

Keywords: Teaching, English, Song, Young learners

INTRODUCTION

English is a globally recognized language and widely learned as both a foreign and second language by people all over the world. (Isnaini & Aminatun, 2021) highlight its role in facilitating personal and professional aspirations worldwide. Consequently, English has become a core subject in many educational institutions.

The trend toward early English education, as noted by (Widhiprasetya, 2021), has led to its integration into institution curricula. Effective language teaching, according to Bennion (Burbano, 2015), involves habit formation, knowledge acquisition, value inculcation, and interest development. (Nufus, 2019) emphasizes the importance of creating engaging language learning experiences for young learners, focusing on communication and critical thinking rather than strict grammar rules.

Research indicates that early language exposure enhances pronunciation and fluency, fostering a more native-like accent. Young learners are typically categorized into two groups based on age: 5-7 year olds (level one) and 8-9 year olds (level two) (Scott

and Hartina, 2019). Kindergarten students, generally aged 5-7, often have limited foreign language exposure (Fajarina, 2017). Both kindergarten and elementary students are considered young learners (Wibowo, 2019).

Motivation is crucial for effective English language teaching, especially among young learners. It fosters enthusiasm and comprehension (Sadirman and Maryanto, 2014). High levels of motivation are characterized by diligence, perseverance, curiosity, goal orientation, and a positive learning attitude (Maryanto et al, 2014).

Given the rapid development of children's language skills between the ages of one and five, as highlighted by Hurlock, English language instruction has been introduced as early as kindergarten. Vocabulary acquisition is a cornerstone of language learning during this period, with children rapidly expanding their lexical knowledge. As emphasized by Ambarwati and Mandasari (cited in Isnaini & Aminatun, 2021), vocabulary development is fundamental to English language proficiency.

Proficiency in English necessitates mastery of writing, speaking, reading, and listening. A strong vocabulary is instrumental in comprehending and producing language across all modalities. Despite its significance, many learners struggle with vocabulary retention. Islami (2019) underscores the importance of vocabulary fundamentals, while Anwar and Efransyah (cited in Purnami, 2022) define vocabulary as the core building blocks of human communication.

Vocabulary is a critical component of language acquisition (Alqahtani, 2015). Thornbury (cited in Isnaini & Aminatun, 2021) emphasizes vocabulary over grammar as the key to language improvement. Early vocabulary development is particularly beneficial (Kusuma, Adnyani, & Taharyanti, cited in Islami, 2019). To optimize learning, teachers should employ engaging methods and create stimulating classroom environments (Nurlaili, Nurani, & Yohana, cited in Islami, 2019).

Research indicates that learners are more engaged and retain information better when learning is enjoyable (Jones, cited in Fridayanti et al., 2021). Songs can introduce new vocabulary and expand word knowledge (Isnaini & Aminatun, 2021).

Music significantly enhances the learning environment, boosting student motivation and creating a positive atmosphere (Islami, 2019). 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). Fairbanks (cited in Hadi, 2019) highlights the cognitive benefits of musical learning.

For young 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). According to Batista (2013),

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. According to Mafulah & Hariyanto (cited in Fitria, 2021), several factors should be considered when selecting songs for language learning, especially vocabulary. The songs should contain familiar vocabulary and cheerful content, align with learning objectives, and be suitable for the students' grade and ability level. Hadi (2019) emphasizes that choosing the appropriate methods and media is crucial for effective student learning.

I chose this topic because songs can boost student motivation since they are fun and popular, especially among young learners. Using the right approach to teach English enhances children's ability to remember words easily, making songs an ideal medium

RESEARCH METHOD

The researcher conducted a qualitative study using a case study approach to explore the use of songs in teaching English vocabulary at Kubah Rahmatan Charity Institution. This research method was chosen to explain how songs can facilitate vocabulary learning. Qualitative research aims to investigate and understand the meanings individuals or groups ascribe to social or human issues. The research process involves developing questions and procedures, collecting data in the participants' environment, analyzing the data inductively to build general themes, and interpreting the data's meaning. The final written report's structure is flexible and emphasizes an inductive style, individual meaning, and the complexity of situations (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

A case study seeks to understand the defining characteristics of a particular system and describe events or processes within that system (Creswell & Poth, 2016). This study focuses on the process of vocabulary acquisition by students through songs. The researcher concentrated on teaching and learning vocabulary through songs in this qualitative research

This research was conducted at 'Kubah Rahmatan Charity Institution located at Jl. Baung RW 02 Kebagusan, Pasar Minggu, Jakarta Selatan. The subjects of this study is 50 students with two English at 'Kubah Rahmatan Charity Institution, students of beginner A and the students of beginner B, which consists of 3 groups namely Starter, Jumper and Flyer groups.

The instruments in this study were video recorders and voice recorders. In collecting data in the field, researchers took several steps. First, the researcher prepared a checklist of observations and field notes. Second, during observation, the researcher

carried out a checklist process and field notes to obtain information about using songs to teach English vocabulary. Third, the researcher prepares a list of questions the teacher will ask to support the observation results. Fourth, the researcher asked the English teacher for groups *Starter, Jumper and Flyer groups* for help to be interviewed while recording the sound. Finally, the researcher analyzes all the information findings that the researcher needs

To gather the necessary information to answer the research questions, this study employed the following methods:

1. Classroom Observations

Observing how the teacher uses songs to teach English vocabulary and monitoring students' behavior to assess their motivation and ability to remember new vocabulary.

2. Interview with the Teacher

Conducting interviews with the English teacher to supplement classroom observation data. The questions asked include:

- a. How can songs be used effectively to teach vocabulary?
- b. Can songs foster student motivation?
- c. What obstacles are encountered when using songs for teaching, and how can they be overcome?
- d. Do songs make it easier for students to memorize new vocabulary?
- e. What steps are involved in introducing new vocabulary using songs?

In analyzing the data, the researcher applied Fitria's (2021) theory of teaching vocabulary using songs and Maryanto et al.'s (2014) motivation theory. The data analysis involved: (1) Identifying the steps the teacher takes in teaching vocabulary using songs. (2) Identifying students' activities during the learning process, focusing on their participation and behavior. (3) Comparing the observed teaching and learning process with expert theories. (4) Comparing students' activities (participation and behavior) with motivation features as described by experts. (5) Concluding whether using songs to teach vocabulary at Kubah Rahmatan Charity Institution encourages students to learn vocabulary effectively

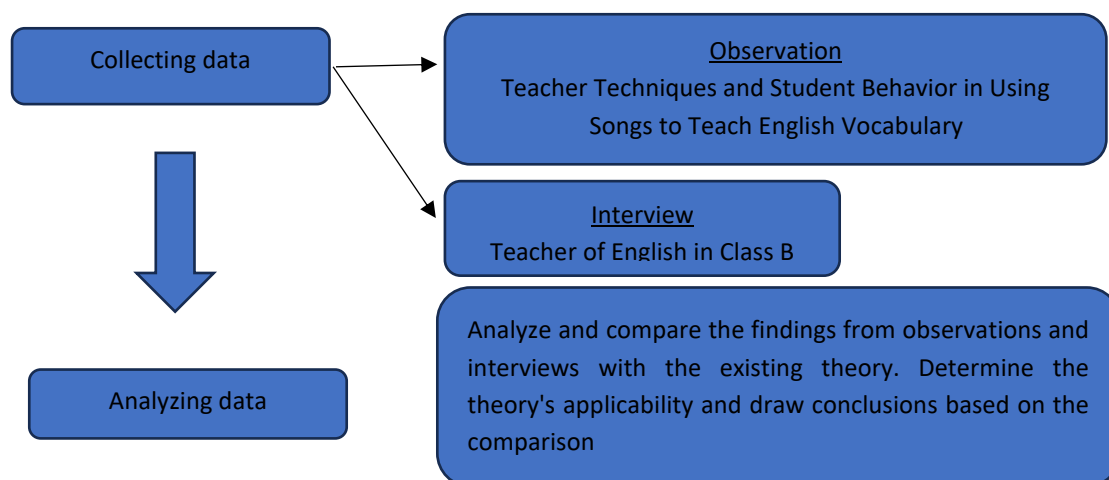


Figure 1. Research Methodology at Kubah Rahmatan Charity Institution.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Some examples of the song's vocabulary, grammar and dialogues

Bismillah (I am a Muslim)	Ramadan Moon I Look I See	Twinkle Twinkle Little Star
Vocabulary: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We • Things • Do • When • Need • With • Etc 	Vocabulary: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tonight • Bright moon • Pray • In the sky • Fast • Ready • Etc 	Vocabulary: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twinkle • Star • Shine • Often • Peep • Wonder • Etc
Grammar: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present Simple Tense : "I am a Muslim, the things I say, In everything I do every day." 	Grammar: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present Continuous Tense: "We are waiting for the moon." • Simple Present Tense: "Ramadan is here." 	Grammar: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple present tense: How I wonder what you are" • Articles: The song uses the indefinite article "a" ("a diamond in the sky") and the definite article "the" ("the world," "the sun").
Dialogues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student A: "What do you say when you start something?" • Student B: "I say 'Bismillah' because I am a Muslim." 	Dialogues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student A: "What do we do during Ramadan?" • Student B: "We fast and pray." 	Dialogues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student A: "Hi! Do you like looking at the stars?" • Student B: "Yes, I love how they twinkle in the night sky."

Songs activities for Teaching English

1. Listening Comprehension: Play the song and ask students to listen carefully. Then, ask questions about the lyrics to ensure they understand the content.
2. Vocabulary Matching: Create flashcards with vocabulary words from the song and their meanings. Have students match them correctly.
3. Fill-in-the-Blanks: Provide students with the song lyrics with some words missing. Ask them to fill in the blanks as they listen to the song.
4. Role-Playing: Have students act out dialogues from the song, using the vocabulary and grammar points learned.
5. Writing Exercise: Ask students to write a short paragraph about Ramadan using the new vocabulary and grammar points.

RESULT

The results were gathered through observations and interviews, detailing how English vocabulary is taught using songs at Kubah Rahmatan Charity Institution. The findings also illustrate how songs can motivate students at Kubah Rahmatan Charity Institution to learn English vocabulary. The research results, based on these observations and interviews, are presented below:

Methods for Teaching English Vocabulary Using Songs at Kubah Rahmatan Charity Institution

Based on observations at Kubah Rahmatan Charity Institution, English vocabulary is taught using songs through the following procedure:

Before beginning the vocabulary lesson, the teacher starts the class with the following initial steps:

- 1) Praying: "Peace be upon you, and Allah's mercy and blessings."
- 2) Greetings: "Good morning, students. How are you today? Are you ready to learn?"

Following these initial activities, the main class activities are as follows:

Table 2: Classroom Main Activities

Warm-Up	First, the teacher captures the students' attention by creating a positive and engaging atmosphere in the classroom. This helps students become interested, focused, and happy. The teacher accomplishes this by encouraging students to dance and sing along to their favorite songs or by revisiting songs from the previous week to refresh their memories.
Main Section	The teacher initiates the learning process by introducing new vocabulary from textbooks, integrating singing to make the material more engaging. While singing, the teacher assesses which students are actively participating and grasping the material. To support and motivate students, various resources are used, including visual aids, motor activities, audio materials, and worksheets
Closing Moment	At the end of the lesson, the teacher wraps up the class by inviting students to sing the farewell song. This signals to students that the lesson is over. The teacher then apologizes to the students for any disruptions and concludes with a final greeting

Based on the interview with the teacher, the researcher identified the following methods for teaching English using songs at Kubah Rahmatan Charity Institution:

1. Song Selection: The teacher chooses songs that are familiar to the children or are enjoyable, with upbeat or slow tempos that make the children happy. The lyrics are simple and easy for them to remember. Songs that will be used in this research are :
 - a) Bismillah (I am a Muslim) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y4mx3Fi8Zw0>

- b) Ramadan Moon | I Look I See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fm7DrLOc9U4>
 c) Twinkle Twinkle Little Star <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yCjJyiqpAuU>
2. Introduction to Songs: Initially, the teacher introduces songs with a mix of Indonesian and English to help the children understand the terms better. Starting with full English songs may confuse the children, but a gradual introduction with both languages aids comprehension. As the children become more accustomed, the teacher gradually transitions to full English songs, providing explanations as needed.
 3. Teacher's Mood: The teacher's mood is crucial; a positive and enthusiastic attitude is important as children can sense the teacher's emotions. A good mood helps keep the children engaged and motivated.
 4. Repetition: When teaching vocabulary through a song for the first time, the teacher repeats the song about three times to help children remember it. Repeated exposure helps children internalize both the song and the associated vocabulary

How Songs Can Motivate Students at Kubah Rahmatan Charity Institution to Learn English

During the learning process, students are enthusiastic and engaged, actively participating and following directions while listening attentively to the teacher. They enjoy learning English through singing and dancing, demonstrating high motivation to acquire English fluency

DISCUSSION

Based on classroom observations and interviews with the teacher, the following conclusions can be drawn:

Teaching English Vocabulary Through Songs at Kubah Rahmatan Charity Institution

Teaching English vocabulary through songs simplifies the process for educators by making it more engaging and enjoyable. According to Fajarina (2017), teaching young learners should be a fun and interactive experience. Teachers need to understand their students' characteristics and needs to effectively select and adapt methods and techniques. Using bright visuals, songs, and games enhances the appeal of lessons for children.

To create a positive and enjoyable classroom environment, teachers should maintain a professional and cheerful demeanor, even when they are not in the best mood. A teacher's positive attitude can influence students' mood and engagement, while negativity can disrupt the learning process. Effective emotional management and the ability to read and respond to students' moods are crucial for maintaining a conducive and enjoyable learning atmosphere, as noted by Talak-Kiryk (cited in Islami, 2019).

The use of song media in teaching English vocabulary has been shown to be highly effective. Songs make learning vibrant and interactive, as both teachers and students actively participate in singing. This approach not only makes learning enjoyable but also facilitates easier understanding and retention of new vocabulary. (Fitria, 2021) supports

this, noting that learning through songs is not only enjoyable but also enhances students' English skills.

Observations and interviews reveal that the songs selected by the teacher are either familiar to the children or are fun, with lyrics that are easy to remember. Initially, the teacher introduces songs with a mix of Indonesian and English to help students grasp the terms before moving on to full English songs. This gradual approach prevents confusion and helps students understand more quickly. Once students are familiar with the vocabulary, the teacher introduces full English songs while still providing explanations.

Teachers should repeat songs about three times to aid memorization of both the song and the vocabulary. This repetition helps students recall the vocabulary more effectively. When engaging in question-and-answer activities, presenting questions in a sing-song tone can enhance enthusiasm and engagement compared to traditional questioning methods.

How Songs Can Motivate Students at Kubah Rahmatan Charity Institution to Learn English Vocabulary



Figure 2. Preparation for an English lesson

Songs can significantly boost students' ability to learn English vocabulary. Children frequently hear and sing English songs, which helps them understand and remember new vocabulary more quickly due to their familiarity with these songs from a young age. For students, 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.

Songs are a valuable tool for introducing and reinforcing vocabulary. They make learning enjoyable, encouraging students 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 of motivated learners:

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
8. Willingness to participate in group activities



Figure 3. Children's dance and role-play to a song



Figure 4. The awarding of prizes and gifts to the children

These traits can help identify whether a student is motivated to learn. Motivated students tend to engage actively and joyfully in their learning, leading to better achievement of educational goals.

This study's findings align with previous research, which shows that using songs to teach English vocabulary in students is effective. Students who learn vocabulary through songs are more motivated, leading to better retention and an increase in their vocabulary. This supports the findings of Mokhtar et al. (2017), who observed that incorporating English songs into vocabulary instruction helped improve students' English vocabulary progressively.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion drawn from examining how English vocabulary is taught using songs at Kubah Rahmatan Charity Institution reveals that songs are an effective tool for teaching vocabulary. Incorporating songs into the classroom significantly enhances student motivation, as evidenced by their active participation and improved retention of new vocabulary. Repeating songs three times helps students remember both the song and the vocabulary it contains.

Initially, songs in a mix of Indonesian and English are introduced, with full English songs introduced later. This approach helps students gradually adapt to English vocabulary. Choosing upbeat and cheerful songs, sung slowly at first, facilitates better understanding and enjoyment. Young learners, who thrive in a fun and engaging environment, are more likely to embrace learning when it involves activities they enjoy, such as singing.

This study illustrates that songs not only make learning English vocabulary easier and more enjoyable but also highlight the importance of the teacher's role in maintaining

a positive learning atmosphere. A teacher's ability to gauge and influence students' moods can significantly impact their engagement and behavior, as students in a good mood are more likely to participate enthusiastically and positively affect their peers.

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

REFERENCES

- Alqahtani, M. (2015). The Importance of Vocabulary in Language Learning and How to be Taught. *International Journal of Teaching and Education*, III(3), 21–34. <https://doi.org/10.20472/te.2015.3.3.002>
- Anggaira, A. S., Aryanti, N., Suryadi, S., & Tusriyanto, T. (2022). Songs for Teaching Vocabulary: English Learning Media for Preschoolers. *Jurnal Obsesi: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 6(6), 6069–6078. <https://doi.org/10.31004/obsesi.v6i6.3254>
- Batista, S. J. (2013). *Shakespeare: The Late Plays*. United Kingdom: Bloomsbury Publishing
- Burbano. (2015). , 13(3), 1576–1580.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2016). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*. Singapore: Sage publications.
- Fajarina, M. (2017). Mastering Teaching English for Young Learners. *Wacana Didaktika*, 5(01), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.31102/wacanadidaktika.5.01.1-11>
- Fitria, O. R. (2021). The Important Role of English Songs in Learning English for Young Learners. *Jurnal Dieksis*, 1(1), 13–18.
- Fridayanti, A., Tahrun, & Mulyadi. (2021). Increasing Kindergarten Students' Vocabulary and Learning Interest Through English Kids Songs at Palembang Paramount School. In *Proceedings of the International Conference on Education Universitas PGRI Palembang(INCoEPP 2021)*, 565(INCoEPP), 684–687. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.210716.128>
- Hadi, M. S. (2019). The Use of Song in Teaching English for Junior High School Student. *English Language in Focus (ELIF)*, 1(2), 107. <https://doi.org/10.24853/elif.1.2.107-112>
- Hartina, S. (2019). Teachers' Techniques in Teaching English to Young Learners. *Indonesian TESOL Journal*, 1(1), 78–88. <https://doi.org/10.24256/itj.v1i1.538>
- Ilinawati, I., & Dharma, Y. P. (2019). Improving Students' Vocabulary Through Songs. *JEES: Journal of English Educational Study*, 1(2), 66–70. <https://doi.org/10.31932/jees.v1i2.329>
- Islami, F. T. (2019). *Using Song as a Media in Teaching Vocabulary to Young Learners Based on Total Physical Response (TPR) Method*. Undergraduate Thesis. Bandung: Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia.

- Isnaini, S., & Aminatun, D. (2021). Do You Like Listening to Music?: Students' Thought on Their Vocabulary Mastery Using English Songs. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Learning (JELTL)*, 2(2), 62–67.
- Maryanto, L., Ninik, S., & Mugiarto, H. (2014). Meningkatkan Motivasi Belajar Siswa Melalui Layanan Penguasaan Konten dengan Teknik Bermain Peran. *Indonesian Journal of Guidance and Counseling - Theory and Application*, 2(3), 1–8.
- Mokhtar, M., Mayuasti, M., & Ikhsan, M. K. (2017). The Implementation of English Song in Building English Vocabulary at Murni Kindergarten Padang. *Tell-Us Journal*, 3(1), 25–35. <https://doi.org/10.22202/tus.2017.v3i1.2520>
- Nufus, T. Z. (2019). Teaching English to Young Learners in Indonesia (Pros and Cons). *English Language in Focus (ELIF)*, 1(1), 65. <https://doi.org/10.24853/elif.1.1.65-70>
- Purnami, N. L. S. W. (2022). Fun Activities to Teach Vocabulary for Young Learners: a Library Research. *E-Link Journal*, 9(1), 19. <https://doi.org/10.30736/ej.v9i1.609>
- Widhiprasetya, G. A., Mujiyanto, J., & Sutopo, D. (2021). The Effectiveness of Children YouTube Songs and Flashcard Games to Teach Vocabulary to Kindergarten Pupils. *English Education Journal*, 11(4), 528–538. <https://doi.org/10.15294/eej.v11i1.48838>