

Applying English Songs To Children In Second Language Acquisition

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Abstract: This research explores the use of English songs as an aid in second language acquisition (SLA) among children. Utilizing a qualitative method with a case study approach, this study observes the responses and language progress in a group of young children learning English through songs as a whole, to provide a comprehensive understanding. The results show that English songs significantly improve children's listening skills, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Through a fun and interactive approach, songs help children overcome emotional barriers in learning a new language, creating a supportive and less stressful learning environment. Additionally, the rhythm and repetition in songs facilitate the memorization and understanding of new words and phrases. The study also found that children are more motivated and show greater interest in learning English when using songs. Therefore, the application of English songs is recommended as an effective strategy for teachers and language instructors to support second language development in children. This study underscores the importance of innovation in language teaching methods and supports the use of musical media as an educational tool that positively impacts children's linguistic development.

Keywords: Children, Songs, Second Language Acquisition.

INTRODUCTION

In the context of linguistics, language acquisition encompasses the study of first language acquisition, second language acquisition, and foreign language acquisition, each utilizing different methods in the process of mastering a language (Irawan, 2019). Besides using appropriate methods, there are also several factors that can influence language acquisition in children. For instance, first language acquisition in children is influenced by their surrounding environment, especially their parents. Similarly, second language acquisition is more easily mastered with the support of parents and the surrounding environment.

In second language acquisition, various factors influence the language acquisition process. These factors include motivation, attitude, age, intelligence, aptitude, cognitive style, and personality (Khasinah, 2014). However, beyond these factors, the media used for learning the second language also plays a significant role, especially in learning English,

which is considered an international language. English, as a global language, has become an urgent necessity to master, particularly in the era of globalization.

The process of second language acquisition (SLA) is a broad and continually evolving field of study, with various teaching methods being explored to enhance learning effectiveness. One prominent method in recent decades is the use of English songs as a teaching aid. Songs have their own appeal because they can create an enjoyable and motivating learning environment, especially for children.

Children have different cognitive abilities compared to adults when it comes to language acquisition. Research shows that music and songs can help strengthen memory, increase vocabulary, and facilitate the natural mastery of grammatical structures. Singing can also help in practicing correct pronunciation and intonation, two important components in communicating in a second language.

Despite the many identified benefits, the application of songs in English language teaching in Indonesia is still limited and often suboptimal. Many teachers have not fully grasped how to effectively utilize English songs in the teaching and learning process. Furthermore, there is a lack of research focusing on how these songs can specifically influence second language acquisition among children in Indonesia.

This research aims to examine the application of English songs in the process of second language acquisition in children. Specifically, this study will:

1. Analyze the impact of using songs on the development of children's English language skills.
2. Explore the perceptions of teachers, students, and parents regarding the use of songs as a teaching aid for language.

Thus, applying English songs in second language acquisition for children is not only an effective method but also enjoyable and beneficial. Through this approach, it is hoped that children can develop their language skills in a natural and enjoyable way, fostering an interest and love for the English language.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

Second language acquisition (SLA) refers to the process by which people learn a language other than their native language. Additionally, second language learning is the process of internalizing and understanding a second language after one has mastered the first language (Journal, 2018). Language acquisition is very similar to the process children use in

acquiring their first and second languages. It requires meaningful interaction in the target language (natural communication) where speakers focus not on the form of their utterances but on the messages they convey and understand. Error correction and explicit teaching of rules are irrelevant to language acquisition (Brown and Hanlon, 1970; Brown, Cazden, and Bellugi, 1973), but caregivers and native speakers can modify their speech directed at language acquirers to help them understand, and these modifications are considered helpful to the acquisition process (Snow and Ferguson, 1977). It has been hypothesized that there is a fairly stable order of acquisition of structures in language acquisition, that is, one can observe clear similarities among language acquirers regarding which structures tend to be acquired earlier and which tend to be acquired later (Brown, 1973; Dulay and Burt, 1975).

In Indonesia, learning English is one of the mandatory subjects. This fact is evident with the inclusion of English subjects at every level of education in Indonesia, from elementary school, junior high school, high school, to university. The acquisition of a second language in children often follows a different path compared to adults. Most of us believe that children are better than adults at learning a second language (Jannah et al., 2022). Children tend to be more proficient in acquiring a new language because of their neuroplasticity and the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH), which suggests that there is a window during early childhood when language acquisition occurs most naturally and efficiently. Furthermore, children are much better at mimicking new sounds compared to adults, which makes them sound more fluent in the new language they are learning (Nurul Fitria et al., 2023). Young learners are more likely to acquire pronunciation and intonation similar to native speakers. Factors such as age, the quantity and quality of language exposure, and the context of language learning (formal education vs. naturalistic environments) significantly impact their language development. Children also benefit from interactive and immersive environments that allow them to use the language in meaningful and practical ways.

It is generally assumed that young children can "pick up" a second language without much effort or systematic instruction. However, becoming proficient in a language is a complex and demanding process that takes many years. As with other types of learning, children will vary greatly in terms of pace. The speed of language acquisition is influenced by both internal factors within the child and the child's learning environment. These factors include the child's personality, language aptitude, interest, and motivation. Interacting with the quantity and quality of language input and opportunities to use it will ultimately affect the child's level of fluency (Espinosa, 2014). Second language acquisition is a complex and challenging process, especially for children. Various methods and approaches have been

developed to help children learn a second language. One effective method to enhance children's second language proficiency is through the use of songs. These songs are not only enjoyable and engaging but also have great potential in supporting language learning.

English Songs

Essentially, a song can be defined as a short piece of music, usually with words. According to Hornby (1990), "A song is a piece of music with words that are sung." In studying songs and songwriting, there seems to be a common thread in the basic components of successful songs. These components are melody, beat and rhythm, chords, genre and style, concept and story, hook, song sections, arrangement, duration, and lyrics (Steve, 2014). The most common discussion people have about songs is their words. The words in a song are called lyrics. Lyrics describe the concept, theme, and/or title of the song. Lyrics can include a series of verses, long sections of the song that tell a story, or they can contain lyrics from a foreign language vocabulary intended for language learning through songs.

According to Brewster et al. (2002: 162), the benefits of learning English using songs are linguistic. Songs provide a rich source of linguistic input and can make the learning process enjoyable and engaging. Music and rhythm aid memory retention and pronunciation, making it easier for children to remember new vocabulary and grammatical structures. In this context, songs become a medium for introducing a new language, as well as reinforcing grammar and vocabulary. Moreover, the repetitive nature of songs allows for ample practice and reinforcement of language elements. Several studies have shown that incorporating songs into language lessons can enhance listening skills, increase motivation, and foster positive attitudes towards language learning. Through songs, children are exposed to authentic language use, which can enhance their overall communicative competence. English songs offer various advantages in the learning process. Through simple and repetitive lyrics, children can enrich their vocabulary and better understand grammatical structures. Additionally, these songs often contain stories or themes that can stimulate children's imagination and interest, making the learning process more enjoyable and effective.

Methods for applying songs in teaching, such as encouraging children to sing along, are effective ways to introduce them to new sentence structures and comprehension. Using songs with memorable lyrics can be a good starting point. In an educational context, teachers can integrate English songs into various learning activities, such as sing-alongs, role-playing, or creating song-based games. This approach not only helps children master English but also develops their social and emotional skills through cooperation and interaction with peers.

From previous research discussing the application of English songs to children in second language acquisition, an article by Fachraini et al. (2017) shows that using English songs and videos improves early childhood students' vocabulary, with 64% pronouncing the English alphabet correctly in the first cycle, 80% naming English nouns correctly in the second cycle, and 88% using nouns in simple English sentences in the third cycle. This indicates that the application of English songs to young children positively impacts their English language skills. Research shows that music and songs can enhance listening and pronunciation skills, which are essential components of second language acquisition. Children exposed to songs in the target language tend to have better pronunciation and quicker comprehension of the language. Additionally, using songs can reduce anxiety and increase learning motivation, as children feel more relaxed and entertained.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a project aimed at providing a qualitative perspective using a case study approach on a particular issue. The purpose of this study is to examine the application of English songs in the process of second language acquisition in children. Observation and interviews are the data collection techniques used in this research. The participants are kindergarten children, as well as their teachers and parents, to answer the research questions. Data collection will be conducted over one semester, beginning with observations of the application of English songs already implemented in the school. Following this, interview sessions will be conducted with representatives from one of the teachers, students, and also the students' parents. The researcher will then analyze all data obtained from observations and interviews, presenting it in descriptive text.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research examines the application of English songs in the process of second language acquisition in children. The findings of the qualitative data analysis in this study indicate that there is an impact or influence from the use of songs as a teaching aid on the development of English language skills in children. The table below presents the results of the observations and interviews conducted. It contains observations and questions regarding the application of English songs in the process of second language acquisition in children.

1. Observation

Table 1. Observations on the application of English Songs to children

NO	INDICATOR	SUB INDICATOR	RESULTS
1	Student Engagement	Number of students actively participating in songs	The majority of children are very active when singing English songs at school, such as singing together, mimicking song movements, and showing enthusiasm.
2	Student Response to Songs	Emotional Response of Students	After 1 semester of implementing these activities, it is evident that children feel happy and respond positively, such as continuing to sing the songs outside the classroom during other activities.
		Students' Ability to Follow Song Lyrics	Children's ability in acquiring song lyrics is very good; they can already follow the lyrics and rhythm of the songs. Even after 1 month of implementing these activities, they have started to memorize and understand the songs little by little.
3	Teacher-Student Interaction	Students' Response to Teacher's Invitation and Guidance	The majority of students respond positively to the teacher's invitation. They might be confused at first but still try to follow the instructions. However, after a few sessions, the children begin to memorize and respond very positively. They sing enthusiastically, follow the movements well, and become more familiar with the vocabulary in the songs.
		How Teachers Introduce Songs and Their Meanings	The teachers at the school have a method for introducing songs and their meanings. They first sing the song for the students to listen to, and then the children are gradually encouraged to sing along. Over 1-2 weeks, the teacher will introduce a new song that will be sung together every week. As the weeks go by, the number of foreign language songs to be sung will increase. In the following weeks, after introducing the song, the teacher will help the children understand it better by asking about the vocabulary in the song and having the children guess the meanings in the foreign language or vice versa.

4	Language Development	Vocabulary Development of Students After Listening to Songs (New Words Learned, Pronunciation Errors, etc.)	The stage of vocabulary development in students after listening to songs improves. Initially, many students may mispronounce words, but after the teacher corrects their pronunciation, they improve and find it easier to memorize vocabulary using songs.
		Students' Ability to Understand Song Lyrics (Answering Questions About Song Content, Explaining Lyric Meanings, etc.)	The students' ability to understand and recognize the lyrics or vocabulary of the songs they sing has advanced. They can answer questions about the content of the song, such as identifying that the song is about animal names in English or fruits, and other topics. Additionally, the students can respond when the teacher conducts quizzes about vocabulary that needs to be translated into English or other languages.

2. Interview

Table 2. Perceptions of the use of songs as a language teaching aid.

NO	QUESTIONS		ANSWERS
1	Teacher	What do you think about the children's reaction to using English songs at school?	The children are quite enthusiastic during the singing activities using English songs. Although sometimes there are children who may get bored or feel lazy to sing, we usually persuade them to join the activity.
2		How effective do you think English songs are in aiding second language acquisition for students?	In my opinion, the use of English songs is very effective and helpful for children. During my time teaching here, the children enjoy singing the most, and implementing English language learning through songs is very effective for young children.
3	Student	How do you feel when listening to English songs in class?	I'm really happy because I have memorized all the songs.
4		Do English songs make you more excited to learn English? Why?	Yes, because I like singing. At home, I also like to sing with my older sibling.
5		Do you find it difficult to understand the lyrics of English songs? If so, which part is the most difficult?	Yes, because reading them is hard.

6	Parent	Do you have any suggestions for other parents who want to support their children in learning English through songs?	My suggestion is that parents at home can occasionally invite their children to sing in English. They could also further introduce English children's songs, as there are many apps or YouTube videos with English children's songs. Parents could encourage or get their children used to listening to English songs at home because the environment has a significant impact.
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Table 3. The impact of using songs on the development of children's English language skills.

NO	QUESTIONS		ANSWERS
1	Teacher	Have you seen an improvement in the children's English skills after using this method? If so, which aspect has developed the most (vocabulary, pronunciation, comprehension, etc.)?	Alhamdulillah, since I have been using this method with the children at school, I have seen an improvement, especially in their vocabulary. Because we introduce a lot of vocabulary to the children through songs, they have shown significant development in this area.
2		Are there any specific aspects of English (e.g., pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar) that are particularly helped by the use of songs?	Since at our school we introduce a lot of English vocabulary through songs, the children's vocabulary has greatly benefited from using songs. As for grammar, we only introduce it and do not emphasize it much. For pronunciation, some children still struggle with English words, but little by little, we can see improvements in their pronunciation.
3	Student	Do you think English songs help you learn English? How?	Yes, because I have memorized all the songs that the teacher taught us. I also often answer when the teacher asks, "What is this in English? What is that in English?" I memorize them because the teacher makes us sing the songs every week, so I end up memorizing them.
4		What part of English do you find easier because of listening to songs (e.g., new words, pronunciation)?	New words.
5	Parent	Have you seen an improvement in your child's English skills since they started listening to English songs?	Alhamdulillah, my child has always liked listening to foreign songs played by their older sibling at home, so when learning English at school, they enjoy it quite a lot, and they often sing the songs at home as well.

6		Are there specific aspects of English that you think are greatly helped by the use of songs, such as the four language skills?	Vocabulary and pronunciation have improved, although there are still many pronunciation mistakes, but the use of English songs at school has significantly helped.
7		How effective do you think the use of songs is as a learning tool in helping children master English as a second language?	In my opinion, the use of English songs is very effective as a learning tool that helps children, especially young children. It helps them develop a love for and willingness to learn English, so that when they grow older, they can improve their English even more.

3. Documentation



Picture 1. Activities to apply English songs to children

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings presented in the research, conclusions can be drawn regarding the application of English songs in the process of second language acquisition in children. This study demonstrates that there is an impact and influence from using songs as a language teaching aid on the development of English language skills in children. Through observations in schools and interviews with participants, it was found that songs as a learning tool not only make learning more enjoyable and engaging for children but also help them in memorizing new vocabulary, understanding sentence structures, and improving pronunciation. Additionally, the rhythm and repetition in songs assist children in internalizing language

naturally and efficiently. Observational activities revealed increased learning motivation and active participation in school when this method was applied. Interviews with parents also indicated the importance of the surrounding environment in the development of English language skills in children; children in supportive family environments are more likely to use English at home and show increased confidence in communicating in English. These findings align with second language acquisition theories that emphasize the importance of engaging and meaningful designs or methods in the learning process. Therefore, the application of English songs can be considered an effective and enjoyable method in supporting second language acquisition in children.

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