



Teaching Vocabulary to Young Learner Through Song and Movement

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to describe the use of songs and movement in teaching vocabulary to young learners. Vocabulary is a crucial component of language development, yet many young learners find it challenging. This study describes how combining songs with physical movements can make learning vocabulary more enjoyable and effective. By associating vocabulary with actions and music, students are able to understand more and retain vocabulary. The research includes a review of previous studies and how the song and movement were implemented in a classroom setting. This study employs a qualitative research approach taken from field note to describe the process of teaching vocabulary through the song and movement. The results showed that song and movement is very effective for helping students learning English vocabulary. Students also enjoyed the lessons more, showing higher engagement and enthusiasm in teaching learning process. The study also discusses practical challenges, such as selecting age-appropriate songs, ensuring activities align with curriculum goals, and addressing varying learning needs. The discussion highlights the challenges vocabulary learning to young learners, the advantages of songs and movement, and step-by-step strategies for integrating this media in the classroom. These findings offer valuable insights for teachers to get more ideas in teaching vocabulary to young learner.

KEYWORDS: Song and Movement, Vocabulary, Teaching Vocabulary, Young Learner

1.0 INTRODUCTION

English is one of the subjects contained in the elementary school curriculum in Indonesia. One of the purpose of English subjects in elementary school focusing on language component, which is vocabulary. One of the language component that must be mastered by elementary school students or young learners is vocabulary. As a language component, learning vocabulary is a crucial part of language development for young learners, yet many children find it difficult to learn and remember new vocabulary (Purwanti, 2020). Teaching vocabulary to young learners involves introducing words in a way that helps children understand and remember them by connecting them to objects, sounds, and experiences in their everyday lives. Learning vocabulary, however, can be challenging for many young learners, especially focused on meaning. This study conducted in an elementary school in Nganjuk revealed that students often struggle with learning vocabulary and using them correctly in sentences. This difficulty is evident when children are asked to form simple sentences or describe common objects, as they frequently mix up word meanings and find it hard to use vocabulary in context (Purwanti, 2020).

When the researcher did Kampus Mengajar Program in one of elementary school in Nganjuk. The researcher found problems when she taught English material specifically on teaching vocabulary. The students got difficulties in vocabulary although researcher had given explaining about it. Some of them tried to get new words but still cannot pronounce correctly. The others often struggle to understand and remember new words, especially when they don't have familiar examples or contexts to connect with them. Some of them tend to have shorter attention spans, so they may quickly lose interest in repetitive vocabulary drills, which can make it harder for them to fully learn new words. Pronouncing new words can also be challenging, especially when they come across sounds that don't exist in their first language, leading to confusion or frustration if they struggle to remember or pronounce these words. Additionally, as concrete thinkers, young learners might find it difficult to grasp abstract words or complex sentence structures. These obstacles can lower their confidence, making them less willing to engage in language activities. Therefore, effective vocabulary teaching for young learners should use engaging, hands-on methods that connect words to familiar objects and actions, provide ample practice, and create a positive, supportive environment to build confidence and encourage active involvement. In other hand teacher just used one method to teaching vocabulary for them. It had made them did not expand their interest. The teacher did not use other methods which match to the student who has those problems above. One of the media that researcher used to teach vocabulary to young learner are song and movement.

Young learners, especially those in elementary school, tend to be highly active and benefit from learning methods that involve play and physical activity (Piaget, 1962). Song and movement offer a dynamic way to engage students' natural energy while making vocabulary learning more enjoyable. Songs provide rhythm, repetition, and melody, which help students internalize new language patterns effortlessly. Studies have shown that music facilitates memory retention, making it easier for children to recall words and phrases learned through songs (Paquette & Rieg, 2008). When combined with physical movement, such as gestures or actions linked to vocabulary, learning becomes a multisensory experience that taps into different areas of the brain, further enhancing retention and understanding (Asher, 2009). By incorporating movement, teachers can increase student engagement and make learning more interactive. Moreover, research shows that movement stimulates cognitive processes that are critical for memory and recall, making it a powerful tool for vocabulary instruction (McGregor, 2007).

Incorporating songs and movement to teaching vocabulary not only makes learning more interactive but also supports different types of learners. According to Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences, children have varied learning preferences—some may be auditory learners who benefit from songs, while others may be kinesthetic learners who thrive when they can physically interact with their learning material. By combining music and movement, educators can reach a wider range of learners, making vocabulary lessons more inclusive and effective. This multisensory approach to learning is especially important in elementary education, where engaging students through a variety of stimuli can significantly enhance learning outcomes. Based on those explanation, teaching vocabulary to young learners through song and movement can be one of method to build enthusiasm and enjoyable to learn vocabulary.



2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. VOCABULARY

Vocabulary is the collection of words that a person understands and can use in communication. It includes words we recognize and understand when we hear or read them (receptive vocabulary) and words we can use actively in speech and writing (productive vocabulary) (Nation, 2001). Having a strong vocabulary is essential for effective communication because it helps us describe ideas, express thoughts clearly, and understand what others say or write (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2013). Learning vocabulary means more than just memorizing definitions—it involves knowing how to use words in real situations. Stahl and Nagy (2006) explain that effective vocabulary learning requires seeing and using words in different, meaningful ways. As vocabulary grows, people can understand more complex ideas and express themselves better, making it a key skill for success in reading, writing, and everyday communication (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998).

Vocabulary in the context of young learners, refers to the body of words that children understand and can use in both oral and written communication. It includes both receptive vocabulary, which consists of words they comprehend when listening or reading, and productive vocabulary, which consists of words they are able to use actively in speaking or writing (Nation, 2001). A strong vocabulary foundation is essential for young learners, as it supports language development and is closely tied to their reading comprehension and overall academic success. Early vocabulary acquisition also plays a critical role in helping children express thoughts and feelings, understand stories and instructions, and engage in social interactions, all of which are fundamental in the early stages of learning (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2013). Building vocabulary for young learners requires strategies that go beyond rote memorization, as children are more likely to remember and use new words when these are introduced in meaningful, engaging contexts. According to Cameron (2001), young learners benefit from multisensory approaches, such as associating words with images, actions, or familiar experiences, which aid in retention and understanding. Effective vocabulary teaching at this age involves playful, repetitive exposure to words in a variety of situations, which helps deepen their grasp of meanings and usage. Research suggests that vocabulary instruction in early childhood should leverage these natural learning inclinations, as young children are still developing the cognitive structures needed to process language abstractly (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998).

2.2 TEACHING VOCABULARY

Teaching vocabulary involves helping learners acquire and effectively use words for communication in both oral and written contexts. It requires more than introducing definitions; teaching vocabulary involves presenting words in ways that support understanding and long-term retention. According to Graves (2006), successful vocabulary instruction combines direct teaching of specific words with strategies to help learners independently grasp word meanings in various contexts. This approach equips learners not only to remember new words but also to apply them appropriately in sentences, stories, and everyday conversation, enhancing their overall language skills.

Effective vocabulary instruction emphasizes active, engaging methods, such as using visuals, storytelling, and real-life contexts to make words meaningful and relevant to learners (Beck,

McKeown, & Kucan, 2013). Stahl and Fairbanks (1986) suggest that repeated exposure to vocabulary in different contexts helps deepen understanding and improves recall. Additionally, research highlights the importance of encouraging learners to explore word meanings and relationships, which fosters independent word-learning strategies and develops a richer vocabulary over time. Ultimately, teaching vocabulary is about equipping learners with the tools to expand their language skills, promoting confident and effective communication.

2.3 YOUNG LEARNER

Young learner, generally defined as children between the ages of 4 and 12, are at a unique developmental stage where they rapidly acquire foundational skills in language, cognition, and socialization. This age group is marked by a natural curiosity, enthusiasm for discovery, and an eagerness to engage in active, hands-on learning experiences. They tend to be concrete thinkers, meaning they often understand and remember new information best when it is presented in ways that connect to their real-world experiences (Piaget, 1952). Learning for young children is most effective when it is playful and visually stimulating, as their cognitive abilities are still developing. Consequently, young learners benefit from sensory-rich activities that allow them to explore language and concepts through pictures, objects, sounds, and movements (Pinter, 2006).

However, young learners also face unique challenges due to their shorter attention spans and emerging capacity for abstract thought. They may struggle to focus on tasks that lack engagement or seem disconnected from their interests or everyday lives. According to Cameron (2001), repetition, familiar contexts, and structured activities are crucial in helping young learners retain new information, as these strategies reinforce memory and understanding. Additionally, young learners often require a supportive environment where they feel encouraged and comfortable to experiment with language, even when making mistakes. Teachers of young learners, therefore, play a crucial role not only in introducing foundational concepts but also in creating a safe, stimulating environment that builds their confidence and fosters a lifelong love of learning. In this research, the term "young learners" specifically refers to students in the first and second grades of elementary school, typically ranging in age from 6 to 8 years old.

2.4 SONG AND MOVEMENT

Song and movement is an media that combines music and physical activity to enhance learning experiences for young children. This media typically involves singing songs that incorporate rhythm, melody, and repetitive lyrics, along with corresponding movements or gestures that reinforce the concepts being taught. Integrating song and movement is particularly effective for young learners, as it aligns with their natural inclinations toward play and exploration. Engaging in this way not only makes learning enjoyable but also facilitates memory retention; the combination of auditory and kinesthetic experiences helps create stronger neural connections in the brain (Hansen, 2012).

Incorporating song and movement into educational practices promotes language development, motor skills, and social interaction among children. Songs introduce new vocabulary and concepts, while movement encourages physical expression and helps children grasp these ideas more concretely (Cameron, 2001). Additionally, group singing and movement activities foster a sense of community and cooperation, allowing children to engage positively with their peers.



Research has demonstrated that using music and movement as part of learning supports cognitive, emotional, and physical development, making it a valuable tool for educators working with young learners (Hall, 2016). By creating an interactive and stimulating learning environment, song and movement contribute to the holistic development of children.

2.5 THE ADVANTAGES OF TEACHING VOCABULARY THROUGH SONG AND MOVEMENT

Teaching vocabulary through song and movement offers numerous advantages for young learners, enhancing both their language acquisition and overall learning experience. One of the primary benefits is that songs create a positive and engaging atmosphere in the classroom. When children sing and move, they are more likely to enjoy the learning process, which can lead to increased motivation and participation. This joyful environment helps reduce worried with learning a new language, making it easier for students to undertand new vocabulary. Additionally, the rhythmic and repetitive nature of songs aids in memorization, as catchy melodies and rhymes make it easier for children to recall words later on (Novakid, 2023; Burhayani, 2013).

Another significant advantage is that incorporating movement alongside singing enhances kinesthetic learning which is crucial for young children who often learn best through physical activity. Engaging the body while learning vocabulary helps solidify understanding and retention of new words. For example, actions associated with song lyrics can reinforce meanings and provide context that makes vocabulary more relatable. This multisensory approach caters to various learning styles, allowing all students—regardless of their language proficiency levels—to participate actively in the lesson (Manthei, 2024; Ilinawati & Dharma, 2019). Overall, teaching vocabulary through song and movement not only enriches the learning experience but also fosters a fun and enjoy for learning language among young learners.

2.6 THE STEPS OF TEACHING VOCABULARY THROUGH SONG AND MOVEMENT

1. Preparation and Selection of Songs

Choose age-appropriate songs that incorporate the target vocabulary. The songs should be catchy, simple, and relevant to the learners' interests. For instance, songs about animals, colors, or daily routines are often effective for young learners as they relate to their everyday experiences (Djamereng, 2020). In this case, one of the song that researcher choose is “Head and Shoulders”.

2. Introduction to Vocabulary

Before playing the song, introduce the new vocabulary words. Use the movement that related to the vocabulary. For example touch head and shoulders when introduce part of body.

3. Listening, Singing Along, and Combine with Movement

After that, play the song for the young learner while encouraging them to listen carefully. After a few listens, invite them to sing along. Repetition is crucial; singing the song multiple times helps reinforce vocabulary retention. Encourage young learner to express themselves through gestures or movements that correspond to the lyrics, enhancing their connection with the words (Ilinawati & Dharma, 2019). Integrate movement related to the vocabulary being taught.

4. Reinforce Learning

After singing, engage young learner in activities that reinforce the vocabulary learned through the song. This could include games like matching words with pictures or creating sentences using the new vocabulary. Such activities provide opportunities for practical application and further solidify their understanding (Ilinawati & Dharma, 2019).

5. Review and Assess

Regularly review the vocabulary through interactive activities or quick assessments to gauge retention and understanding. Encourage young learner to share their favorite parts of the song or demonstrate their learned vocabulary through creative expressions such as drawing or acting out scenes.

3.0 METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research to describe the process of teaching vocabulary through the song and movement. The purpose of qualitative research is to provide description of behaviors within a particular context. Data collection involves several methods: implementation of teaching vocabulary through song and movement which assess student engagement, interaction, and the learning process impact on motivation, vocabulary development, and relevant learning documents, such as lesson plans, field note, and assessment are analyzed to describe the implementation of teaching vocabulary to young learner through song and movement.

This research was conducted at SDN 3 Katerban which located in Katerban Village, Baron, Nganjuk from August 14 to December 1 2023. The researcher chose this school because it coincided with the time of Kampus Mengajar 6 Program. The subject of this reseach include teacher and students, with 9 students in first grade and 12 students in second grade. In this research, the researcher has a role as a teacher who teach vocabulary using song and movement to young learner. By leading students in singing and moving, the teacher models the vocabulary words in a lively and memorable way, helping students associate words with actions and rhythms. This approach also allows the researcher to observe how students respond to each word, noting which terms they engage with most and which may need further reinforcement. The teacher's role includes selecting age-appropriate, match with the material songs and designing movements that match the vocabulary, which helps reinforce language learning in a multisensory format.

4.0 FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The process of teaching vocabulary to young learner through song and can be outlined in several engaging steps. First, the teacher should prepare and select song which is appropriate to young learner. These songs should be catchy, simple, and relevant to the young learner interests, as themes like animals, colors, or daily routines are relatable and easy to connect with their everyday experiences. In this case, one of the song that teacher choose is "Head and Shoulders". Once the song is chosen, the teacher introduces the new vocabulary, pairing each word with a movement that represents its meaning. For example, while introducing body parts, the teacher might touch their head or shoulders as they say the words, helping learners link the terms with actions. After this



introduction, the teacher plays the song for students to listen and encourages them to sing along after a few listens. Repeating the song multiple times strengthens their memory, while adding gestures or movements allows learners to physically connect with the words and build a deeper understanding. Following the singing, young learner can engage in activities that reinforce what they've learned, like matching words with pictures or using the vocabulary in simple sentences, which helps apply their knowledge in a practical way. To solidify retention, teachers regularly review the vocabulary through quick, interactive assessments, encouraging learners to share their favorite parts of the song or express their understanding creatively, such as through drawing or role-playing the vocabulary words.

The findings of this research show that song and movement can help to teach vocabulary to young learner. Young learner were enthusiastic about singing the song in a loud and rather loud voice. At each meeting the children experienced an increase in the pronunciation and meaning of vocabularies in English. In every meeting young learner can pronounce themselves correctly without being guided by the teacher. This indicates that the repeated concrete activities in learning English through song and movement really help young learner in vocabulary. While the results demonstrate clear benefits, implementing song and movement in vocabulary instruction also presents challenges. Selecting suitable songs and creating movements that accurately represent vocabulary can be time-consuming and may require creativity and planning from the teacher. Additionally, aligning these activities with curriculum goals is essential to ensure that vocabulary instruction is not only engaging but also educationally valuable. The researcher suggest for future research might focus on refining this approach to address these challenges by exploring a wider range of songs and movement or developing resources to support teachers in integrating this media naturally into their existing curriculum.

In conclusion, the use of song and movement for teaching vocabulary offers significant advantages for young learners, combining enjoyment with effective learning. This study provides evidence that young learners benefit from a multisensory approach, supporting not only vocabulary retention but also the development of positive attitudes toward language learning. With careful selection of songs, meaningful integration of movement, and regular reinforcement, song and movement can be a powerful tool for vocabulary instruction in early education settings.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The study found that song and movement is very help teaching vocabulary to young learner. It makes vocabulary easier to remember and the lessons more enjoyable. By using songs and movement, teacher can make learning more fun and enjoyable. Songs bring rhythm and repetition, while movement lets young learners connect words with actions, which helps them remember better. This media matches young learners' needs, allowing them to learn through sounds and actions, and encourages them to participate actively. Moreover, using song and movement creates active classroom atmosphere, helping young learner feel more confident and reducing the bored of learning vocabulary. In conclusion, song and movement is a useful media for teachers, supporting young learners' vocabulary and overall development in an engaging way.

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