

Enhancing English Learning for Elementary Students Through Children's Songs

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Abstract. Learning and teaching activities occur almost every day in the classroom between teachers and students. In this context, the process is usually thought of as the teacher delivering material to students while the students listen to the teacher's explanation. Learning in the classroom can occur if an interaction or synergy is created from various factors that support the teaching and learning process such as the presence of teachers, students, curriculum, teaching methods or techniques, teaching media and others. In this case, a learning activity is carried out to achieve learning objectives. This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of using children's songs as a method of learning English in elementary schools. The research method used is qualitative research with a literature study approach. The research results show that the use of children's songs in English learning in elementary schools can increase students' motivation, strengthen their language skills, and facilitate enjoyable learning. Children's songs help students internalize English vocabulary, grammar and intonation more effectively. These findings provide important insights for the development of English language learning strategies that focus on students' active involvement. It is hoped that the results of this research can become a basis for developing a more innovative and student-oriented English language learning approach in elementary schools.

Keywords : Children's Songs, Effectiveness, Elementary School, English Learning

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's era of globalization, it is essential to not only be proficient in technology but also to possess additional skills, one of which is the ability to communicate actively in English. Known for its role as a universal language, English is widely used for international communication. Recognizing its importance in the global context, English is taught in all formal educational institutions in Indonesia, ranging from elementary schools to universities (Bunting et al., 2021).

Numerous challenges arise during implementation, particularly with students' understanding of foreign language courses. Given that English is a foreign language in Indonesia, these difficulties are expected. A foreign language is one that is actively used only in the classroom for teaching and learning purposes (Ibiyemi et al., 2022). This aligns with researchers' definition of a foreign language as one that is not used for communication in the country where it is taught.

To address these challenges and motivate children to learn a foreign language, effective, precise, and engaging teaching methods are essential. Effective learning is characterized by being accessible, enjoyable, and aligned with specific learning objectives.

Consequently, educators need to create a distinctive learning environment. This means that teaching involves more than just having students listen to explanations; it requires providing a stimulating atmosphere where students can actively participate in enjoyable learning activities. Incorporating songs into the classroom is one way to make the English learning environment more inviting and engaging (Stolvoort et al., 2024).

41 Using songs as a learning medium requires careful selection by teachers, considering factors such as the type, difficulty, and meaning of the song, as well as the level and characteristics of the students being targeted. This is crucial because inappropriate song choices that do not align with the students' levels can hinder the effectiveness of the learning process, failing to meet the expected educational objectives (Cockerill et al., 2023). For elementary school students learning English, children's songs significantly enhance language skills by providing a memorable and engaging context for learning. They are particularly effective in improving vocabulary and pronunciation, as the repetitive and melodic nature of songs helps students retain new words and practice sounds and rhythms. Songs also contribute to grammar learning and listening skills, although these areas might benefit equally from other methods like storytelling or interactive activities. In diverse educational settings, songs can be adapted to reflect students' cultural backgrounds or chosen for their universal appeal to create a shared learning experience. While children's songs are highly effective, especially for younger learners, incorporating a variety of methods—such as storytelling, role-playing, and digital multimedia resources—can provide a more comprehensive approach to language acquisition. Research indicates that the benefits of learning through children's songs extend beyond immediate engagement, leading to long-term retention and proficiency. However, integrating songs into the formal curriculum poses challenges, including the need for teacher training and access to diverse resources. To maximize their effectiveness, it is crucial to ensure that songs complement other teaching methods, offering a well-rounded language learning experience that fosters both motivation and proficiency in English.

43 To effectively teach English to elementary school children, teachers need to choose appropriate songs. It is important for teachers to select simple songs that match their students' learning objectives before using them as instructional tools. Additionally, songs with clear lyrics and accurate pronunciation should be preferred. There are numerous English songs suitable for elementary students that can serve as educational media, such as "ABC," "Ten Little Fingers," "Ten Little Indians," "Bingo," "Days of the Week," "Moths," "I Have a Cock," "Wheels on the Bus," "A Hundred Miles," and others.

Since students will model their language skills based on English songs, it is crucial to select high-quality examples. If a teacher decides to perform the song themselves, it is essential that they provide a positive and accurate model for their students. Furthermore, teaching English to teenagers or adults differs significantly from teaching it to elementary school students. Elementary students have unique characteristics that influence the classroom environment in specific ways.

Before starting the teaching process, educators should understand several key characteristics of children: they need to move around, focus for short periods, learn through experience, have limited ability to plan or control their activities, be unafraid of making mistakes or taking risks, be less self-conscious, focus on the meanings of language, and possess limited life experience. Given these traits, primary school English teachers should utilize English songs as a creative and insightful teaching tool (Murshidi et al., 2023).

The research titled "Enhancing English Learning for Elementary Students through Children's Songs" aims to illustrate effective examples of children's songs for teaching English, highlight the benefits of using these songs for elementary students, and outline the steps for their effective implementation in English classes. This study explores various children's songs, their advantages in facilitating English learning, and practical methods for incorporating them into lessons for elementary school students.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach to deeply understand the phenomenon or issue under investigation. Qualitative research offers a comprehensive and nuanced perspective on human phenomena. Specifically, this study is a form of library research, which involves gathering and analyzing data from various library sources such as books, journals, newspapers, magazines, and documents. The data utilized in this study is secondary, meaning it is derived from previous research rather than direct observation. Data collection is crucial to research success, and in this case, it involves reviewing and analyzing literature. The research process includes searching for relevant journal articles online. Data analysis involves systematically organizing and interpreting the collected information to make it comprehensible and to communicate findings effectively. This research employs a comparative study approach, which involves examining the similarities and differences among the subjects under study (Rios et al., 2024).

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Learning Activities in Class

Every day, teachers and students engage in teaching and learning activities in the classroom. In this instance, teaching content to students while they listen to the teacher explain it is a common understanding of the process (Lu & Murao, 2023). Teachers can use textbooks or other resources that enhance in-class learning activities to explain the subject matter. Teachers can also use a variety of learning resources from their immediate surroundings, such as music, actual items, films, and more, as needed. In short, this process is called the teaching and learning activities process or the learning process at school.

Learning in the classroom can occur if an interaction or synergy is created from various factors that support the teaching and learning process such as the presence of teachers, students, curriculum, teaching methods or techniques, teaching media and others. In this case, a learning activity is carried out to achieve learning objectives. Optimal achievement of learning objectives refers to a condition characterized by achievement maximally learning indicators. To optimally achieve the desired learning indicators, a teacher must create a learning implementation plan. This is done so that learning activities can run systematically and are expected to achieve the desired learning objectives (Yotta, 2023).

A positive learning environment can significantly impact the effectiveness of educational activities by making the teaching process more engaging and less monotonous. To prevent students from becoming bored, it is crucial for the learning process to connect their past experiences with new ones. Therefore, teachers are expected to foster a pleasant atmosphere that helps students link what they have previously learned with new knowledge. Creating such an environment allows students to express themselves more effectively and fully engage in their learning optimally (Ulanska et al., 2021).

To enhance the learning atmosphere and make it more enjoyable for students, teachers can utilize various supporting media, such as photos, drawings, realia, videos, and songs. Additionally, during lessons, incorporating engaging movements and maintaining a friendly demeanor can help capture students' attention and create a more enjoyable learning experience. These strategies are aimed at ensuring the learning process is both pleasant and effective in achieving educational goals.

Effective Learning Activities

Learning activities are viewed as processes involving the interaction or synergy of multiple factors that support teaching and learning, including teachers, students, curriculum, teaching methods, and media. The goal of this interaction is to achieve effective learning outcomes. "Effective" refers to activities that are systematic, well-planned, time-efficient, and consistently executed to produce favorable results. Therefore, effective learning activities are those designed by teachers in a structured, planned, and ongoing manner to reach optimal learning objectives within the available time (Haghverdi, 2021).

To achieve optimal learning outcomes, the focus should be on student-centered learning. This means that the learning process is centered on the students and what educators do to facilitate their learning (Leona et al., 2021). Additionally, it's important to ensure that effective learning strategies are implemented in a way that motivates students to engage in learning independently by using enjoyable and engaging methods.

Engaging learning methods can be implemented by using various supportive media such as photos, images, realia, videos, and songs. Additionally, teachers can enhance the learning experience by using attention-grabbing movements and maintaining a friendly attitude, making the process more enjoyable. To achieve optimal learning outcomes, it is important to apply seven indicators of effective learning: well-organized material, effective communication, mastery and enthusiasm for the subject, a positive attitude towards students, fair grading, flexibility in teaching methods, and strong student learning outcome (Busse et al., 2021).

Effective English Learning

As explained in the previous sub-chapter about effective learning is the essence of learning English Effective is a process of teaching and learning English that allows students to learn the language easily, fun, and to achieve the learning objectives that have been set (Busse, Cenoz, et al., 2020).

Effective application of English learning in Indonesia is very necessary considering that English is foreign language for Indonesians. English as a foreign language not used to communicate in everyday life and only used effectively in the classroom so that the English vocabulary mastered by students in Indonesia is limited. Considering English as a foreign

language that can only be effectively used in the classroom, English teacher must be able to create an atmosphere where students are interested in learning the language.

Various ways can be done to create an atmosphere learn and teach English effectively in a fun atmosphere. One of them is by using learning media that can be found in the surrounding environment such as photos, drawings, realia, videos, songs and others (Busse, Jungclaus, et al., 2020). Apart from that, it is hoped that the English teacher will play the role of being a creator who creates methods, ways of the learning process, a motivator who motivates students to learn, a moderator or facilitator for their students in learning, a source and place to ask questions for their students and lead students in the learning process.

The hope is that by using these methods, students will be motivated to learn English. Consider roles English is very important in the international world, namely as a language that bridges international communities, it is highly hoped that people in Indonesia can master English accurately and fluently.

English Learning Concepts for Elementary Schools

English is a language used internationally as a means of communication between countries. Therefore, people hope Indonesians are able to master the language well and fluently. Because English is very important, English is taught in all formal educational institutions from elementary schools to universities in Indonesia.

Addressing cultural and linguistic differences when implementing children's songs as a teaching tool in diverse educational settings involves either adapting the songs to reflect the students' cultural backgrounds or choosing universally applicable songs. Adapting songs by translating familiar tunes into English or incorporating culturally relevant themes helps students connect with the material on a deeper level, fostering inclusion and cultural appreciation. However, some educators prefer using universally recognized songs to create a shared learning experience.

The effectiveness of children's songs in English learning is particularly notable in improving vocabulary and pronunciation due to their repetitive and melodic nature, which aids memory retention and phonetic practice. Comparative studies indicate that while children's songs excel in these areas, storytelling, role-playing, and digital multimedia resources also offer significant benefits. These methods enhance contextual language use, comprehension, critical thinking, and interactive skills, suggesting that a balanced approach incorporating multiple techniques often yields the best results.

Research supports that the benefits of learning English through children's songs extend beyond immediate engagement, leading to long-term retention and language proficiency. The repetitive nature of songs helps embed language patterns in memory, facilitating recall and use in later education stages. Additionally, songs create a fun and motivating learning environment, fostering a positive attitude towards language learning and encouraging continued study.

Integrating children's songs into the formal English curriculum presents challenges, including the need for teacher training in selecting and incorporating appropriate songs and ensuring content alignment with educational objectives. Access to a diverse range of songs and materials is essential to maintain student interest and address different language learning aspects. Effective implementation requires specific teacher training, professional development opportunities focused on using music in education, and support in creating lesson plans that integrate songs with other teaching methods. Ensuring that songs complement other language learning elements is crucial for providing a well-rounded and effective educational experience.

However, a study by Wu & McMahon (2022) highlights specific considerations that English teachers need to pay attention to when teaching the language to elementary school children, namely:

- a) Limited vocabulary. Don't rely on that word just say it.
- b) Play with language. Through fun activities like playing, children have a great ability to absorb language.
- c) Class diversity. Because of the concentration and attention of low children, then it is a must for a teacher create diversity, whether in the form of activities, speed, organizations, media, or others.
- d) Routine. Children become aware of the rules and situations.
- e) Collaboration. Most children want to share with other children around them, and sit with others to collaborate.

From the explanation above it can be concluded that teaching English for elementary school level students is different from level junior high school, senior high school or university. Teaching English to elementary school students does not just mean conveying material to students and students listening. If this is done, children will feel bored and tend not to pay attention to the teacher's explanations. Teachers should be more creative in managing the class, such as teaching in a fun way by utilizing media that can be found in the surrounding environment, whether in the form of songs, realia, videos or

making variations in terms of teaching activities, for example using interesting teaching techniques so that it allows children to pay attention to the teacher and are motivated to learn English on their own (Griffiths, 2022).

In addition, teachers who teach elementary school students must pay attention to the generally shared characters of elementary school children into 2 groups. The first group is 5-7 years old and the second group is 8-10 years old. The characteristics of the first group are talking about the activities they do, telling experiences or information they hear, planning activities, using logical reasoning, and interacting directly with other people. Meanwhile, the characteristics of the second group are distinguishing between fact and fiction, always asking questions, making decisions about their own learning, and having clear preferences for activities they like and don't like (Haghverdi, 2021).

A foreign language teacher, in this case English, should know the characteristics of the students he wants to teach so that he can adjust the learning model, media, class management system (Made et al., 2022).

The Importance of Using Songs in Language Learning English for Primary School

Learning media is everything that is used for channel messages and can stimulate students' thoughts, feelings, attention and will so that they can encourage the learning process. In other words, learning media can motivate students to participate actively and be interested in participating in teaching and learning activities well. In this case, learning media has two important roles, namely:

- a) Using media as a tool to aid in the learning process, media is utilized to make instructional content simple for students to understand and help them meet learning objectives.
- b) The use of media as a resource for learning, specifically as a source of information for the learning process.

There are various types of learning media that can be used as support in the learning process and teaching activities, for example songs, videos, pictures, photos, realia, cassettes, CDs etc. In this case learning media divided into 6 types, namely text, audio media, visual media, motion projections, artificial/miniature objects and humans are included includes teachers, students, or experts/experts in certain fields/materials (Busse, Cenoz, et al., 2020).

Six different media kinds can be employed for teaching and learning activities, according to the explanation above. Songs or audio media are regarded as a useful tool for

energizing students during learning and teaching activities when it comes to primary school-aged youngsters studying English. A collection of words performed and accompanied by specific musical instruments is the song's essence.

Several advantages of teaching English using chants are as follows:

- a) Through songs it will motivate children to enjoy learning more English.
- b) By singing, children become happy and find it easier to learn understand the teaching material presented.
- c) Teachers may make kids happier and more motivated to study hard by incorporating music and different learning activities into their lessons. They can also make the material easier for kids to understand. Children feel happy, do not feel bored, and are interested in participating in the learning process.

Considering the above, song media is considered to have many positive sides that can be utilized for English language learning in general and for elementary school level in particular.

Concept of Teaching English Songs for Elementary Schools

A song researcher advised instructors to select simple songs that align with the curriculum before utilizing them as a teaching tool in elementary schools. The selected songs must also have well pronounced lyrics that may be heard. Naturally, student must choose the best model as they will be taking instances of these tunes. It's crucial to make sure the instructor sets a positive example for his students if they're going to sing along.

The following is an example of language learning steps English using songs:

- a) Introducing songs to children should start by providing an initial explanation about the theme of the English song they will sing.
- b) The instructor leads the class in singing the song and invites them to listen.
- c) The teacher leads the class in singing songs in either a fast or slow rhythm.
- d) The song was accurately translated into Indonesian by the teacher and students.
- e) The teacher and students translated the song into Indonesian correctly.
- f) Students are selected by the teacher to perform English songs in front of the class in groups or individually.

There are several things you need to pay attention to when using songs as a medium for learning English, namely the songs taught has a slow tempo. On the other hand, if the tempo is fast should be repeated several times, starting with the same tempo a bit slower

than the actual song and adapted to the child's mastery level, pronunciation, easy rhythm and aimed at language learning goals for elementary school children. After finishing singing English songs together, students are given practice by completing incomplete song lyrics so that they can train their memory sharpness in remembering foreign language songs (Leona et al., 2021).

²⁹ In this instance, teaching with songs can enhance four language skills: speaking when students are asked to sing along with the teacher, reading when the teacher and students correctly interpret the song in Indonesian, and listening to the teacher sing the song for the first time. This means that before interpreting the lyrics in Indonesian, students read the lyrics in English. Writing is when students are given practice by completing incomplete song lyrics so that they can train their memory sharpness in remembering foreign language songs (Haghverdi, 2021).

Effective Songs for Language Learning English for Elementary Students

⁴⁴ Given that English is considered a foreign language in Indonesia, it is not used in daily communication and is typically confined to classroom activities (Jannah et al., 2020). This necessitates an effective learning strategy, prompting a comparison of various methods, including the use of children's songs, storytelling, role-playing, and digital multimedia resources. Children's songs are particularly effective due to their repetitive and melodic nature, which aids memory retention and phonetic practice, making them especially beneficial for vocabulary acquisition and pronunciation. However, other interactive methods such as storytelling and role-playing offer significant benefits by enhancing contextual language use, comprehension, and critical thinking skills. Digital multimedia resources, with their visually stimulating and interactive content, cater to various learning styles, further enriching the learning experience.

Comparative studies indicate that while children's songs have unique advantages, a balanced approach incorporating multiple methods often yields the best results. Research suggests that the benefits of learning English through children's songs extend beyond immediate engagement, promoting long-term retention and language proficiency. The repetitive nature of songs helps embed language patterns in memory, facilitating recall and use in later stages of education. Additionally, songs create a fun and motivating learning environment, fostering a positive attitude towards language learning and encouraging continued study. Evidence from various studies indicates that students who learn through

songs often show improved language skills and maintain their interest in learning English as they progress to higher education levels.

However, integrating children's songs into the formal English curriculum presents several challenges. Teachers need training in selecting and effectively incorporating appropriate songs into their lessons, ensuring that the content aligns with educational objectives and is age-appropriate. Access to a diverse range of songs and related materials is essential to keep students engaged and address different aspects of language learning. Effective implementation requires specific teacher training, professional development opportunities focused on using music in education, and support in creating lesson plans that integrate songs with other teaching methods. Ensuring that songs complement other elements of language learning is crucial for providing a well-rounded and effective educational experience.

Children are known to need to move around a lot, be able to focus for brief periods of time, learn by experience, not yet be able to control and plan activities, not be afraid to take risks or make mistakes, pay little attention to themselves or their actions, pay attention to language meanings, and have limited life experience. Therefore, in order to accomplish purpose learning, selecting the appropriate learning support media is crucial. One of them is the use of songs as a learning media. The essence of the song itself means a group the words are sung and accompanied using musical instruments certain. The work can be written, some in sound form and usually accompanied by instruments.

ABC Songs, Bingo, Months, Days of the Week and others are songs that are effectively used in learning English for elementary school because they are in accordance with the principles of using children's English songs for elementary school. Elementary school are in their golden age so they are more adept at absorbing new things, including learning English. The type of song is suitable for elementary school level children, for example the pronunciation is good and the vocabulary is easy to pronounce (Lu & Murao, 2023). These songs are not extremely tough because learning English, particularly for young children in elementary school, emphasizes the introduction of fundamental instructions and the ability to name items or things in their environment (vocabulary).

Benefits of Using Children's Songs for Learning English for Elementary Students

Songs, originating from written works played with accompaniment, are widely used by teachers due to their effectiveness as a learning medium. Songs have a profound impact, eliciting strong emotions such as sadness, happiness, excitement, and others,

which can enhance memory retention unconsciously and make learning feel less rigid and more natural (Murshidi et al., 2023). Songs are particularly beneficial in teaching English as they inspire students to learn and engage them in a dynamic and enjoyable way (Yuliarini, 2022). The process of language acquisition involves learning various sounds with meaning, and songs play a significant role in this by creating an engaging classroom environment (Yotta, 2023). When children enjoy the songs, they participate with joy and enthusiasm, indirectly learning in the process. Songs can motivate students to learn a foreign language and even help them learn English online automatically, turning singing into a playful activity rather than a traditional teaching tool. This joy and satisfaction from singing encourage children to study more diligently and practice the lesson material presented by educators more quickly. Singing also trains children's abilities in listening, singing, and creativity, making it a multifaceted educational tool.

Evidence suggests that the benefits of learning English through children's songs extend beyond immediate motivation and engagement, leading to long-term improvements in language proficiency. Songs help embed language patterns in memory, facilitating recall and use in later stages of education. This method fosters a positive attitude towards language learning, encouraging continued study and maintaining student interest as they progress to higher education levels. However, integrating children's songs into the formal English curriculum presents challenges. Teachers need training in selecting appropriate songs and incorporating them effectively into lessons to align with educational objectives. Access to a diverse range of songs and related materials is essential to keep students engaged and address different aspects of language learning. Effective implementation requires specific teacher training, professional development opportunities focused on using music in education, and support in creating lesson plans that integrate songs with other teaching methods. Ensuring that songs complement other elements of language learning is crucial for providing a well-rounded and effective educational experience.

Effective Steps in Using Children's Songs for Learning English for Elementary Students

Using songs as a learning medium requires following specific steps to effectively integrate them into teaching and learning activities. If these steps are not properly implemented, the learning objectives may not be fully achieved (Siregar, 2020). Therefore, teachers need to consider several factors when using songs as a teaching tool. These factors include the type of song, the number of students, the nature of the learning activities

involving songs, and the characteristics of the students, especially when working with elementary school students. The following are the necessary steps to consider:

- a) Establishing the context: The teacher should start by clearly explaining the objectives and providing background information.
- b) Teach key terminology: Use visual aids, gestures, dolls, and imitations to thoroughly teach important vocabulary.
- c) Practice rhythms and notes: Have students sing or listen to recordings to practice specific rhythms and notes, ensuring they understand them.
- d) Conduct additional listening exercises: Engage students in more in-depth listening activities.
- e) Focus on pronunciation: Ensure students can clearly identify stressed words, syllables, and intonation patterns.
- f) Encourage practice: Ask students to learn the song by listening, repeating, and practicing singing it. Encourage the use of facial expressions, body language, and other techniques.
- g) Provide song lyrics: Offer the song texts as written notes. However, the teacher does not need to give out these notes immediately but can incorporate them into detailed and engaging learning exercises.
- h) Compare with native language: Have students compare the song with similar forms in their mother tongue or the national language.
- i) Group and individual performances: Encourage students to perform the song in groups, individually, and collectively.

4. CONCLUSION

Integrating children's songs into the formal English language curriculum in elementary schools presents several challenges and considerations. One primary challenge is ensuring that the songs align with the curriculum goals and learning objectives. Songs must be carefully selected to reinforce vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation that are relevant to the students' level and curriculum requirements. Additionally, ³⁴teachers need to be aware of the diverse cultural backgrounds of their students, as songs may need to be adapted to be culturally sensitive and inclusive.

Another consideration is balancing the use of songs with other instructional methods. While songs can enhance engagement and motivation, they should complement rather than replace other key components of language learning, such as reading, writing,

and direct grammar instruction. To effectively implement this method, teachers require specific training and resources. Professional development programs can help educators understand how to integrate songs into lessons strategically, select appropriate materials, and assess their effectiveness. Resources such as song libraries, lesson plans, and teaching guides are also crucial for providing structured support. Ensuring that these resources are aligned with curriculum standards and learning objectives can help integrate children's songs seamlessly into the broader language learning framework. Future research should continue to explore these aspects, including the impact of songs on different language skills and diverse student needs, to refine best practices and support teachers in creating a balanced, effective learning environment.

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