

VOCABULARY ACQUISITION FOR YOUNG LEARNERS THROUGH SONGS

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Abstrak

Teaching English for Young Learner has been broadly discussed in many academic writings. Young learner is closely regarded to have a massive memory which can be potentially filled by any information. This potential age makes linguist attract to know more about how a language can be absorbed by children. Many theories are then occurred which are mostly stated that even a foreign vocabulary is possible to be learnt by the children. However, different place may give a different result. By this point, here, the writer was interested in identifying further information how the vocabulary acquisition in young learners. The place taken in this study was one of kindergarten in Banda Aceh which had nine classes, and each class consisted of 20 children. The choice was referred to the some conditions which made the researcher interested, namely, most of the students were not from local area where most people spoke Acehness language; and most of the students had not ever been aboard nor stayed in a country where English was spoken. The result shows that most of teacher used song to introduce the foreign vocabulary to the children. The children would sing the song and dance together by acting out what the lyrics if the song stated. The atmosphere of the classroom was encouraging.

Keyword : *Vocabulary Acquisition & Young Learner*

A. Introduction

Many writings have discussed a lot about the importance of English as international language, especially for country where English is as foreign language. For that reason, it is believed that English should be introduced since young. Uchida (2001) states that most of experts' opinions agree that children can learn multilingual most easily up until the age of three. In addition, Krasen (1975: 10) explains since it is developing rapidly, child's brain differs to an adult, in which the brain has twice as many connections (synapses) as an adult. Other expert, Brotherson (2005), argues that the major time for language learning is they were born up to 10 years of age. Children are learning language during this entire period. However, the prime time for language learning is the first few years of life.

In addition, Read (2003: 10) declares that teaching English for kindergarten students should be considered some conditions for helping children to learn. The learning should be interesting, enjoyable, relevant active, experiential and memorable and social for them. He also suggests that the seven Rs -Relationship, Rules, Routines, Right, Responsibility, Respect, and Reward- provide an integrated framework for managing children.

Concerning to the teaching process, Brown (2001: 87-90) states that there are five things

given to help teacher in teaching children, namely intellectual development, Attention Span, Sensory input, Affective factors, and Authentic, Meaningful language.

However, since theory may not meet the practice properly, there are still many problems which probably found by kindergarten teacher. As Vernon (2003) states that most of children have very short attention spans. They also forget things quickly. Also, Cameron (2003) says that at an earlier age, children may not bring automatic improvements to proficiency levels, unless teacher education and secondary language teaching both adapt to meet the challenges of the new situation.

Anticipating those problems, Vernon (2003) provides some solution in which the teacher should change the activities every 5-10 minutes. Teacher may not bore to repeat, review and revise. Using short games to review vocabulary and using chants, rhymes and songs can also be useful. These are great for movement and frequent repetition of vocabulary and phrases. Focusing on vocabulary building and the acquisition is important here.

Medina (2000) says that music is important in growing and developing process of a child's vocabulary mastery. By singing a song, children can express their feelings, communicate and play together with their friends. Using chants rhymes and songs are great for movement and frequent repetition of vocabulary and phrases. Additionally, in choosing a song, as Tada (2000) suggests, a teacher should consider some criteria not only which can help in growing and developing children' physic, intelligence, emotion and social aspect, but also that departs from the ability that has possessed by children: the pronunciation, intonation and lyrics.

A bi-lingual copywriter, expert author and photographer specializing in business, travel, food and education-related writing in South America, Prof. Larry M. Lynch (2012) wrote nine reasons in which songs can work exceedingly well in the foreign language classroom. The first reason is that songs almost always contain authentic, natural language. Of course songs can also go to the other extreme by using overly crude, foul or otherwise objectionable language. With careful screening, an extensive library of usable songs for language learning can be compiled. The second reason is that variety of new vocabulary can be introduced to students through songs. Songs are almost always directed to the native-speaking population so they usually contain contemporary vocabulary, idioms and expressions. The third reason is that songs are usually very easily obtainable. By downloading in all but the most obscure languages, it is no reasons to say that teacher get stuck in finding a song. Forth reason is that songs can be selected to suit the needs and interests of the students. In English especially, so many songs are available that selection of songs with suitable themes, levels and vocabulary is not at all difficult. Fifth reason is that

grammar and cultural aspects can be introduced through songs. Excerpting cultural elements is usually a possible, but often overlooked aspect of using songs. The sixth reason is that time length is easily controlled. Teacher should aware about the time they have whether an hour, 30 minutes, or only 15 minutes or so, a song can be used in the course of a planned lesson. Seventh factor is that students can experience a wide range of accents. A good thing about songs is that you can expose the students to many different kinds of English. The eighth reason is that song lyrics can be used in relating to situations of the world around us. Songs have been used as vehicles of protest for civil rights, workers' rights, even prisoners' rights along with an untold number of other causes. The ninth reason is that students think songs are natural and fun. They provide enjoyable speaking, listening, vocabulary and language practice both in and out of the classroom.

Regarding to the vocabulary itself, teacher should avoid abstract concepts and focus on concrete items that children understand and relate to. Teacher may starts with familiar topics such as colors, numbers, greetings, animals, fruit, food and drink, families, body parts, shapes, clothing, the weather, days of the week and everyday sentences and phrases. Bringing in real objects whenever possible, such as clothes to dress up in, props for acting out little plays or stories; will also be interesting for them.

Besides, Uchida (2000) suggests that color posters are a great physical warm-up booster. Consonant and Vowel Charts also can help teachers reinforce phonics. The Body Chart is a good follow-up after singing "Head & Shoulders." Opposites Posters are often children's first exposure to adjectives; Animal Posters (both farm and zoo) can help them learn the names of all their favorite animals. And in each classroom, posters not only decorate the rooms but are also used as instructor's tools for warm-ups, teaching new concepts, reference and review. For example, there are ABC Posters which teach alphabetizing, initial letter sounds and vocabulary expansion.

As the fact sometimes may be quite different from the theory, it is interesting to know more deeply about how the vocabulary acquisition for young learners through songs is. Here, the writer would like to choose one of kindergartens in Banda Aceh as the place of the research.

The similar research had ever been done by many writers from different countries. One of them is done by Robyn Margaret Trinick (2011), had written about "Sound and Sight: The Use of Song to Promote Language Learning General Music Today". This article explores whether purposeful application of song can add a new dimension to existing language programs, offering a meaningful and engaging context for learning. Through an analysis of a range of literature, key elements and principles relating to the affective, sociocultural,

cognitive, and linguistic benefits and issues of song for language learning are identified and discussed. Potential ideas for establishing a singing environment are suggested.

Another writer, Clàudia Ylla Esteve (2016), had written a study entitle “Very Young Learners’ Vocabulary Development in English: A Case Study with 4 and 5 year-old Children”. The study was based on how young learners acquire the vocabulary of a second language through being exposed to some specific words in four different sessions, which are all related to the topic of animals. In order to do so, three vocabulary tests were carried out. She conducted the research by giving an initial vocabulary test to check students’ previous knowledge of the words. The test was given after every session to see the difference after being exposed to the words, and a Delayed Vocabulary Test, to observe the words that children recognized and remembered in relation to the initial test. Results suggest that time is an influential factor in vocabulary acquisition, especially with very young learners.

In addition, Davood Madani and Mahboobeh M. Nasrabadi (2017) had also written about “the Effect of Songs on Vocabulary Retention of Preschool Young English Language Learners”. The study was an attempt to investigate the effectiveness of teaching English vocabulary through song to preschool young English Language Learners in Aligoodarz, Iran. The participants of the study consisted of 103 preschool young learners, who were divided into two groups of experimental group and control group. The experimental groups were consisted of 62 young learners and the control groups were consisted of 51 young learners at the age of six. The experimental groups were instructed using song and the control groups were instructed using non-song methods. Twenty sessions were spent working on teaching vocabulary for each group. Before starting the treatment, an interview was done as a pretest by the teacher to confirm that learners did not have any prior knowledge of English. After finishing the treatment, the post-test was administered by the teacher to measure the amount of learning vocabulary items in each group. The data then was analyzed using the SPSS. The findings revealed that the experimental group improved significantly in terms of vocabulary retention compared to control group.

Specifically in Indonesia, there are also some writings about such the study. One of them is Yuliana (2003) written about “Teaching English to Young Learners through Songs in Teaching English to Young Learners”. She assumed that English has become a trend nowadays. Since children have their own way of learning, the teaching process should be suited with the nature of the children themselves. In the study she used music and songs in order to show that through songs, children could enhance their language skills, such as speaking, listening and writing.

Another writer, Cicih Kurnia (2017), also conducted a study about the similar case which entitled "Increasing Young Learners' Vocabulary Mastery by Using English Songs". She conducted the research to increase the young learners' vocabulary mastery in b class of *Tungga Dewi* day-care. The methodology was applying the classroom action research. The teaching technique using songs were implemented through teaching and learning activities in two cycles of classroom action research. Each cycle of classroom action research was planning, acting, observing and reflecting. In this research, instruments to gather the data were field notes and observation checklists. Field notes and observation checklists were applied to take the data during the teaching learning process. The data would be analyzed in order to solve the problems. Songs were applied in the activities of the first cycle of classrooms action research. The result of the first cycle was not quite successful because the average of post -test score in cycle one was 37,8. Therefore, the second cycle was conducted based on the result of the first cycle. Songs were combined the body movement in second cycle of the classroom action research. The result of the second cycle was successful because the average of post-test score was 77,78. As a conclusion, it can be concluded that the implementation of English songs could help to increase the young learner's vocabulary mastery.

B. Discussion

The data were taken by observation list in which researcher, as the observer, notice teacher activities in the classroom during the teaching-learning process. The points that the researcher pointed out were whether the teacher introduced English vocabulary, whether the vocabulary would be repeated for the next day, and whether the teacher used songs, music or dance in encouraging the vocabulary acquisition.

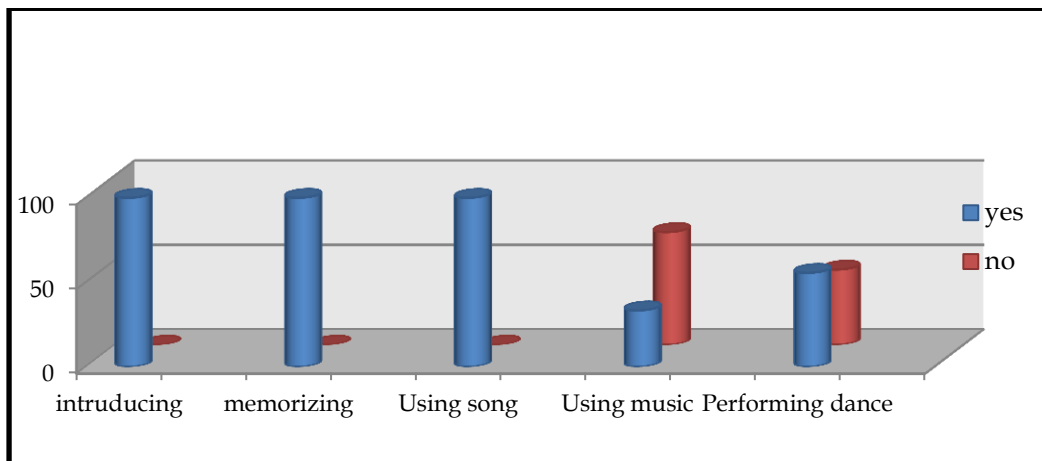
Some teachers also combined the song with a special movement concerned to the lyrics of the song. By dancing, it was hoped that the children would be more enthusiasm and attentiveness in performing the activity. Also it would be useful for their memorization.

Besides, the writer also conducted an informal interview with the teachers. The interview was aimed in order to get a deep explanation towards what the researcher got during the classroom observation. It was found that some teachers only did very few strategies. Firstly, it was due to the teacher qualification. Since none of the teacher had special trainings that added their knowledge about the strategy in teaching children. Secondly, it was due to the limited facility that the school had related to the English material for children. And the last one, they had no special instruction from the government about in what case that the children should be thought about English.

Table 1 General Activities of English done in the Classroom

No	Items		Respondents									Total	Percentage %	
			R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9		yes	no
1	vocabulary introduction	Yes	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	9	100	
		No										0		0
2	vocabulary memorization	Yes	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	9	100	
		No										0		0
3	Using song	Yes	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	9	100	
		No										0		0
4	Using music	Yes						√		√	√	3	33,33	
		No	√	√	√	√	√		√			6		66,67
5	Performing dance	Yes					√	√	√	√	√	5	55,56	
		No	√	√	√	√						4		44,44

Note: R1 = a teacher of A1
 R2 = a teacher of A2
 R3 = a teacher of A3
 R4 = a teacher of A4
 R5 = a teacher of B1
 R6 = a teacher of B2
 R7 = a teacher of B3
 R8 = a teacher of B4
 R9 = a teacher of B5



Generally, the teaching of English for children at that school had been good as the early introduction of English for children. However, the strategy run during the teaching learning process was still much depended on the teachers' creativity themselves. For example, in using music, only some of them who brought their own facilities (audio-video record) in order to get the class more interesting for the students. The same condition also happened to dance performance. The teachers should find out their own creativity to create suitable movements so that the students encourage acting out the performance.

C. Summary

Robledo (2011) states that all parents know that a quiet, gentle lullaby can soothe a fussy baby. As adults, a magnificent symphony can make us swell with excitement. But music also can affect the way we learn. Music is one of the few activities that involve using the whole brain. It is inherent in all cultures and can have surprising benefits not only for acquiring language, improving memory and focusing attention, but also for physical coordination and development.

Music encourages learning and enhances communication. In recent years, we've learned a lot about how the brain develops. During the first years of life, those brain cells form connections with other brain cells. Over time, the connections we use regularly become stronger. Children who grow up listening to music develop strong music-related connections that in turn strengthen their language skills.

Music plays a very important part in learning both our native language, as well as additional ones. As children, we can imitate the rhythm and musical structure of our mother tongue long before we can say the words. Most of us are able to remember several songs and nursery rhymes we learned as children. Music helps us retain words and expressions much more effectively. The rhythms of the music, as well as the repetitive patterns within the song, help us memorize words. Bilingual children, in particular, can benefit from singing songs in their second language. Even if most of the words are unfamiliar at first, mimicking the words in a song can help children practice producing sounds in the new language. Eventually the sounds give way to actual understanding as the song is practiced over and over again.

Exceptional musical ability is common among multilingual individuals. Likewise, musical people have increased aptitude in foreign language learning due to their superior ability to perceive, process, and reproduce accent. Understanding how music can help with language learning is important, as when listening to music, following the lyrics and

melody and/or rhythm requires both sides of our brains to be active, making it easier to remember information that's simply read. Some people believe to do several things in encouraging their children to be active at school, such as Playing music for the kids by keeping the volume moderate; singing to the kids, even young babies can recognize specific melodies once they've heard them.; Singing with the kids by setting words to music actually helps the brain learn them more quickly and retain them longer; starting music lessons early since *most* four- and five-year-olds enjoy making music and can learn the basics of some instruments; Encouraging your child's school to teach music which can stimulate the brain, at least briefly. Over time, music education as a part of school can help build skills such as coordination and creativity. Learning music helps your child become a well-rounded person.

Specifically, this study is very important to give some significance for the better of educational system in the future refers to teachers aware of the basic theory of teaching English to children and the fact of the practice in reality suited with the environment of where the children grow up. Therefore, teachers would be well facilitated with a good concept of theories for the better future.

Besides, the findings of the study would provide information for English teachers at Junior Kindergarten about the implementation of teaching English to children effectively in the learning-teaching process. In addition, this study attributed teachers and parents with fundamental concepts of children's natural and interesting way of learning language. Teachers as well as parents would also be aware of the potential period of the children in learning language.

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