

A CASE STUDY OF USING SONGS IN TEACHING ENGLISH VOCABULARY TO YOUNG LEARNERS

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Abstract

The research was an attempted to investigate the song-based activities and stages in teaching English vocabulary through song. Furthermore, it was intended to find out students' responses towards the use of song in learning English vocabulary. This study was qualitative in nature and used a case study as its research design. Furthermore, this study employed three instruments in obtaining the data namely observation, interview and written documents. The participants of this study were twenty students of grade one in one private elementary school in Bandung. The results showed that there were four stages implemented by the teacher: opening, main, follow up and closing stage. In addition, the students showed positive response towards the used of song in learning English vocabulary. The students felt happy and enjoyed during the teaching learning process. Also, by using song, it aided them in understanding English vocabulary even better.

Keywords: teaching vocabulary; song-based stages and activities; young learners

INTRODUCTION

As the importance of English as an international language, it has been taught all over the world even from the very beginning of education. In Indonesia, English is taught as a local subject in elementary school. One of the components that play important roles in English is vocabulary. It serves as the basis for someone in listening, speaking, reading and writing (Richard & Renandya, 2010). In addition vocabulary is the heart of the language. Accordingly, it does not matter how well someone in grammar, pronunciations, and any other elements of a language, without a numerous stock of vocabulary, communication cannot happen in any meaningful way (Nathan, 2013). So, it is natural if vocabulary is taught early to young learners since it helps them to acquire English.

Teaching English vocabulary to young learners sometimes is more challenging than older learners. One of the most reasons is because of young learners' characteristics. Young learners tend to have limited attention span. Moreover they cannot learn better, unless the learning is interesting, meaningful and fun for them (Pinter, 2006). Therefore

teacher needs to apply teaching strategies and techniques that can accommodate young learners' characteristics.

One of the teaching techniques that can be used to teach English vocabulary to young learners is song. Song has long been part of human life. It can be heard everywhere; at radio, television, family occasions such as wedding party, at funerals and so on (Mcdermott & Hauser 2005:29 as cited in Kusnierek, 2016). Additionally, Schoepp (2001) said that, since songs have been part of people language experiences, it can be a great value if it is coordinated with language lesson. He further explained there are three rationales towards the use of song in English language teaching, namely affective, cognitive and linguistic. Firstly, from the affective reason, the use of song is lower students' affective filter which leads to students' positive attitude toward the language. It can happen because song is fun and enjoyable. Next, from cognitive reason, song helps learners to develop automaticity. The nature of song which is repetitive and consistent is helpful in learners' language development process. The last reason is from linguistic perspective. Song provides authentic material

for learners which is important in promoting language learning.

Literary Review

Vocabulary

In general, vocabulary is defined as all of the words that make up languages. Similarly, according to Cambridge Online Dictionary, vocabulary is defined as all the words that exist in a particular language and subject. In addition, Nathan (2013) interprets vocabulary as a list or number of words that people know and use it regularly in daily life. However those definitions are insufficient to cover the complexity of vocabulary.

Vocabulary is divided into two forms; oral and print vocabulary (Lehr, Osbon and Hiebert, 1998). Oral vocabulary is all the words that one recognizes when he listens and speaks, while print vocabulary is all the words that one recognizes when he reads and writes (Lehr, Osbon and Heibert, 1998).

Vocabulary can also be classified into receptive vocabulary and productive vocabulary or often called passive and active vocabulary (Laufer, 1998; Lehr osbon and Heibert 1998; Nation, 2001). Nation (2001) proposes that receptive vocabulary involves the ability to recognize the form of words while listening or reading also retrieving its meaning. Meanwhile, productive vocabulary involves the use of wanting to express a meaning through speaking or writing also retrieving and producing the appropriate spoken or written form (Nation, 2001). Productive vocabulary is sometimes named expressive vocabulary since it is used to express our ideas, ourselves and etc. (Pikulsi and Templeton, 2004). Moreover, according to Lehr, Osbon and Heibert (1998), receptive vocabulary is typically larger than productive vocabulary because it includes the words that are assigned to some meaning but are rarely used in speaking or writing.

Vocabulary is vital in communication because it does not matter how proficient one in grammar and other components of language without a vast stock of vocabulary, communication can break down. This is in line with Folse (2004) who asserts that lack of grammar can limit conversation but lack of vocabulary can stop conversation.

In addition, Sedita (2005) explains that knowledge of vocabulary is important since it encompasses all words that one must know to

access his background knowledge, express his ideas, communicate effectively, and learn new concepts. Further, Nathan (2013) elaborates that it is important to guide learners in building up the vocabulary which further not only plays an important role in their personal life, but also contributes to the social interaction in their society and in career advancement.

Specifically, in language learning, vocabulary has long been acknowledged to be strong predictor in reading comprehension. It means that the more vocabulary that a learner knows, the easier he comprehends the text. Moreover, vocabulary also serves as basis for determining how well learners in speaking, listening, reading, and writing (Richard and Renandya, 2010).

Teaching English to Young Learners

Teaching English to young learners have been popular even long before the theory of the younger the better in learning English was pronounced. First of all, it is important to define what the young learners are. According to Pinter (2006) young learners are the children from five to fourteen years old. Whereas, Stern and Weinrib (1977) defined young learners as the children between age of five to ten years old and are in primary or elementary school. Furthermore, Yuliana (2003) explained that the definition of young learners is mainly based on the years spent in primary or elementary stages of formal education before transition to secondary school

Because of the age range covered by the term young learners is quite wide, Pinter (2006) proposed two ends continuum— younger learners and older learners— which can serve as teacher initial guidance. The general descriptor can be seen in the Table 2.

As can be seen from the table, it is obvious that teaching English to young learners will not be the same as teaching English to adults. Adult learners can think abstractly. They can compare pattern and linguistics form that are similar or different in their mother tongue and in other language. Furthermore they can guess unknown words based on their knowledge of world and even have various strategies to help them to memorize and rehearse patterns (Pinter 2006). In contrast, children cannot think abstractly. Children will only pick up and

learn English if the teaching learning process is fun and is taught in meaningful context (Pinter, 2006). Thus, teaching English to young learners requires teacher to be creative in using or creating one or some various

strategies and techniques that can make the teaching learning process fun and meaningful for the children while also considering young learners characteristics.

Table 2. Characteristics of younger and older learners

Younger learners	Older learners
Children are at pre-school or in the first couple of years of schooling. Generally they have a holistic approach to language, which means that they understand meaningful message but cannot analyse language yet. They have lower levels of awareness about themselves as language learners as well as about process of learning. They have limited reading and writing skills even in their first language. Generally they are more concern about themselves than others. They have limited knowledge about the world.	These children are well established at school and comfortable with school routines They show a growing interest in analytical approaches, which means that they begin to take an interest in language as an abstract system. They show a growing level of awareness about themselves as language learners and their learning. They have well developed skills as readers and writers. They have a growing awareness of others and their viewpoints. They have a growing awareness about the world around us.
They enjoy fantasy, imagination, and movement	They begin to show interest in real life issues

The use of song as technique in teaching

Song is defined as a short piece of music with words that are sung (Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary 3rd). Song can be found everywhere; in the canteen on the road, at the church, at the television, at the radio and many more. Song or music has been part of human life since long ago. Though, song has also been used in education, include in the

language teaching, especially in English vocabulary teaching.

According to Millington (2011) if one wants to use song in teaching vocabulary to young learners he must develop the song as learning task. The following are the framework of the song-based learning that was proposed by (Millington (2011).

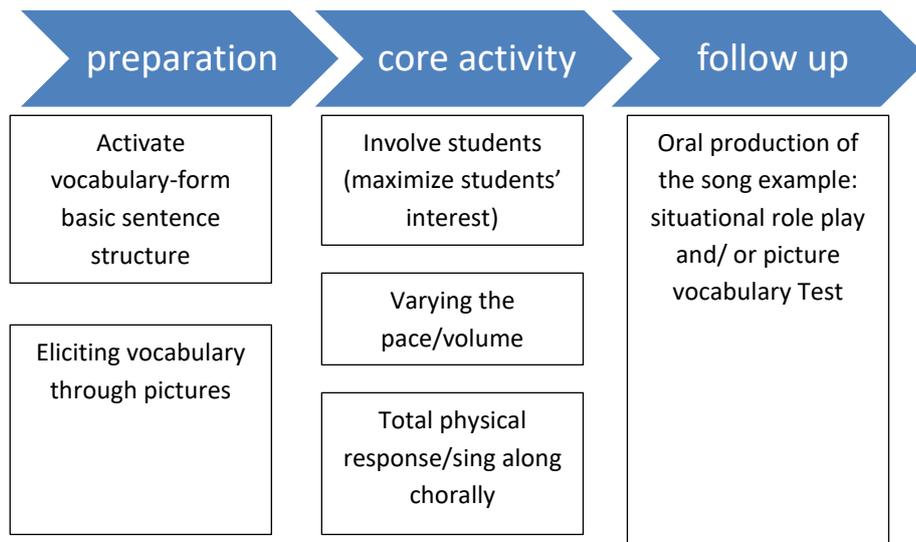


Figure 1. Framework of the song-based learning

Previous study

There have been many researchers who investigated the use of song in teaching

English vocabulary (Devi, 2011; Burhayani 2013; and Zhogi and Shoari 2015). The findings showed that the use of songs is

proved to be advantageous in teaching English, particularly to increase the vocabulary of young learners.

A research regarding to the use of songs in increasing young learners' English vocabulary was carried out by Devi (2011). In her study she found that the use of song can increase young learners' vocabulary. Moreover she explained that, song helps the students to understand the meaning of the words easier and memorize the vocabulary. She further claimed song as a motivating and enjoyable aid to learn language.

A similar study concerning to the use of songs to improve young learners' vocabulary was conducted by Burhayani (2013). By using experimental method she found that the use of song had a positive effect in improving young learners' vocabulary. She believed that such improvement can be made because of the use of song can make the students enjoyed the learning process and help them in remembering the new words.

Another similar research regarding to the effectiveness of songs on young learners' vocabulary performance was done by Zhogi and Shoari (2015). Same with Burhayani's research, they found that the use of song had a significant effect on young learners' performance. Furthermore, they explained that song creates relaxed atmosphere and decreases anxiety so that the learners feel free and have no burden on their memory in learning process.

Therefore, based on findings of several studies discussed above, it can be assumed that the use of song is very beneficial in teaching English, especially in increasing young learners' English vocabulary.

METHOD

Research design

This study was qualitative in nature. Qualitative study is defined as a study which investigates the quality of relationships, activities, situations, or materials (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). Since it focuses on the quality of certain activity, the data of qualitative study are commonly in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers. These include interview transcripts, filed notes, photographs, audio recordings, videotapes, diaries, personal comments, memos, official

records, textbook passages, etc. (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012).

In order to achieve the purposes of the study, a case study was employed as its research design. A case study is used to investigate the phenomenon to answer specific research questions that seeks different kinds of evidence in order to get the best possible answer of the research questions (Gillham, 2000). The reason of using this method is to get an in-depth understanding of how song is utilized in teaching English vocabulary to young learners and also to reveal their responses towards the use of song in the process of teaching and learning English.

Site and Participant

This study took place in one private primary school in Bandung. The institution was chosen because it was located near to the researcher's place, so it is easily accessed. Furthermore a class in grade one which consist of twenty four students were involved in this study.

Data collection

The data of this study were collected through three instruments including, observation, interview and written documents.

Data Analysis

After the data that were collected from observation, interview, and written documents, they were analyzed and presented in a form of descriptive explanation.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Song based stages and activity

The results of the study showed that there were some simple activities discovered in the classroom based on the theme. And there were two themes captured in the observation included; *parts of body* and *my pets*. The activities included choral singing, games and vocabulary test.

The teacher divided those activities mentioned above into four stages; opening activities, main activities, follow-up and closing activities. Below is the chart of the teaching English vocabulary through song to young learners based on the lesson plans implemented during the observation.

The stages and the activities implemented in SDIT At-Taqwa were quite similar to the stages and activities that Milington (2011) used on his research about how to use song effectively to teach English to young learners in which he divided the activities into three stages, namely preparation stage, core stage and follow up stage. The stages that were implemented by the teacher during the observation will be discussed in different section.

Opening Activities

In the opening activity the teacher invited the students to sing good morning song. Actually, singing good morning song and the goodbye has been a routine in their English lesson. It has function to prepare students to learn as well as arousing students' motivation to learn English. In the next activity the teacher introduced the new target vocabulary by using some pictures and writing the words on the whiteboard. Along the way, the teacher asked some questions to make sure the students know about the meaning of the words. Excerpt 1 is teacher and students' interaction in introducing some words.

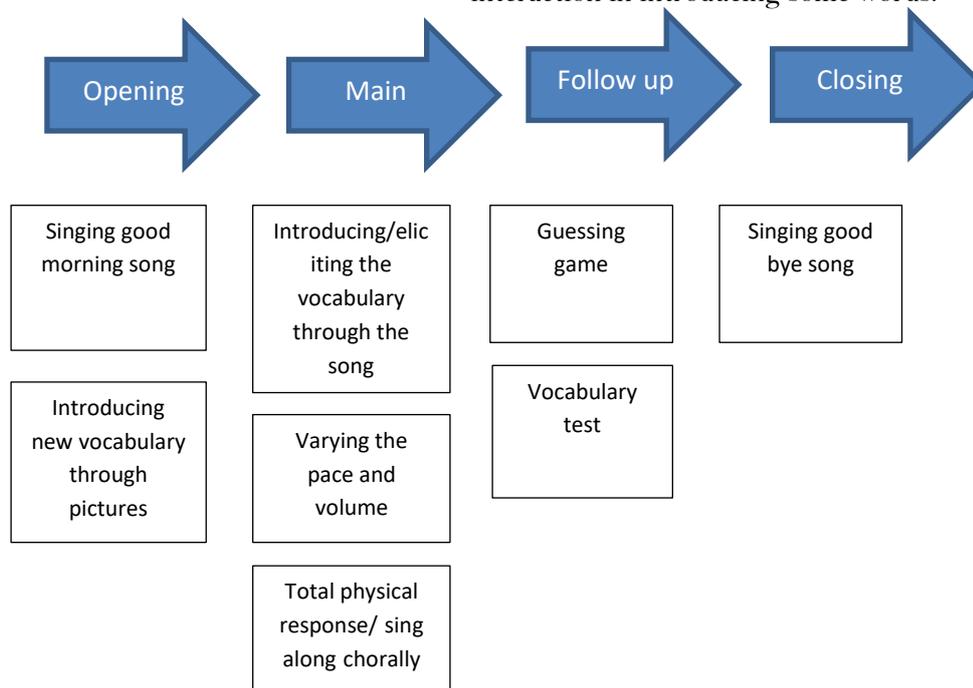


Figure 2. Song-Based stages and Activities SDIT At-Taqwa

Excerpt 1

Speaker Interaction

T: Shoulders. [writing the word shoulders on the whiteboard]. Jadi ini adalah shoulders [pointing the shoulders in the picture]. Coba repeat after me. Shoulders!
Ss: Shoulders..
S5: Brothers..
T: Bukan brothers tapi shoulders...
S5: Brothers ehh shoulders [jokingly]
T: Good. Next...

Main activity

In the main activity both from the first and the second observation was mainly choral singing. However before the choral singing the teacher gave an example first. After the students seemed to master the song the

teacher asked the students to sing with some variation in the move/ pace and volume. Excerpt 2 is teacher and students' conversation in the main activity.

Excerpt 2

Speaker Interaction

T: Fast, let's sing it fast, kita nyanyi yang cepat. Gerakanya berarti harus cepat juga.
S15: [sitting down]
S5: Mikail, stand up, belum beres...
S15: [Standing up]
T: Ready ya?.. are you ready?
Ss: Yess...
T & Ss: [Singing head and shoulders fast]

Follow up activities

In this stage, there were two activities captured in both first and second observation; a guessing game and vocabulary worksheet.

Those two activities were used by the teacher to as a follow-up from the main activities. According to Millington (2011) the follow-up stage should attempt to build on the successful completion of the core stage—main activities. He further said that follow up activity could be used to develop written production. Below are excerpt between the teacher and students in the follow up activity in the second meeting.

Exercpt 3

Speaker Interaction

T: Good. Very good. Now, im going to give you this exercise. Latihan dulu. Latihan dulu. Write your name first [distributing the worksheet] share it, share it, kalau ibu bilang share it bagikan ke belakang.

Ss: Kebelakangin..kebelakangin.

T: Kebelakangin ya [still distributing the worksheet]. Bagi ke teman-temannya...harus dapet semuanya..

S13: Ibu ini kasih nama binatang?

T: Yes, write the name of the pet. Tulis nama binatang, jadi kalian harus milih...[inaudible]

Ss: [doing exercise]

Closing Activity

In this activity the teacher ended the lesson by singing goodbye song with the students. Furthermore the teacher asked the students to review the lesson at home.

Students' response towards the use of song in learning English vocabulary

The results showed all of the students being interviewed were happy about the use of song. They were happy because they were enjoyed the singing activity. Additionally, four of the students said that they didn't overcome difficulty in the teaching and learning process. However, there two students claimed that they had few difficulties. Moreover all of the students admitted that the use of song in the learning process can help them in better understanding the vocabulary. Then from the two songs being taught, the students mostly prefer the song about pet. Finally, all of the students still hoped that the teacher can continue teaching using song.

From the results discussed above, it can be concluded that the use of song in teaching English vocabulary through young learners

had a positive response from the students. This confirms the results from the previous study.

CONCLUSIONS

This study was concerned with the stages and activities based on song that were implemented in young learner's English classroom. Moreover the study was also focus on the students' response towards the use of song in their English classroom.

There are four stages of using song in teaching vocabulary to young learners found in this study, covering opening, main, follow up and closing stages. The opening includes singing good morning song and the introducing new vocabulary. While in the main stage the activity was mainly choral singing. Next follow up stages covers a guessing game and vocabulary worksheet activity. The last activity was closing in which the lesson ended with goodbye song. Those stages were similar with Millington (2011) stages in using song as task in learning English.

Students' response towards the use of song was positive. This happened because the use of song make the students feel more relaxed and enjoyed the teaching and learning process better. Song also helps the student to learn English vocabulary better than conventional method.

This study was far beyond perfect. There are some limitations found in this study. It included time limitation and budgetary.

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