

Improve Understanding of English by Using Music for Elementary School Students

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to discuss about how to improve students' understanding of English using music. The method used in data collection is a journal review. Various media and methods can be used to improve students' understanding of English and one of them is music. Music is one of the media that is useful for developing children's understanding of the English language. Different types of music can be used. By using music students can easily understand and understand English.

Keywords: *English Language; Elementary School; Song*

1. Introducing

Education for children is very important. Because basically children have a high curiosity about something they do not know. Language education in children plays an important role in their development and growth. With language they can talk, tell stories, and even sing. Because language education in children is easier than giving education related to logic. With this, English education is also included in the language education that must be given to children.

In Indonesia itself, in the latest curriculum, namely the 2013 curriculum, the position of learning English is not clear whether English is a compulsory subject, local content or extracurricular. In Permendikbud no. 18A/2013 regarding the implementation of the 2013 curriculum which contains five guidelines, there is no position or position for learning English. If English is to be applied as compulsory learning, local content and extracurricular, it is necessary to understand the principles that build English learning which includes cognitive, socioaffective, and linguistic principles. In addition, it is also necessary to understand the purpose of learning English in elementary schools, including as a medium for getting to know cultures, practicing communication and stimulating self-confidence in students speaking English and encouraging children to know various new knowledges.

At this time English should not be underestimated [1]. This is because of the importance of English. Many parents want to teach their children English from an early age, it is not easy to teach English to children. At the basic level, children's English learning is only limited to introduction or the basics and they can be taught in a fun way. We as educators teach them very basic things first, for example the letters of the English alphabet, numbers, various fruits, various animals, various colors, and a few simple and easy conversations (such as Good morning , How are you, How do you do, etc.). English lessons need to be applied from an early age, because by learning English from an early age, it is easier for children to develop English when the child is a teenager, namely when the child enters elementary school, junior high school or to a higher level, the English taught by the teacher will stick to his memory and difficult to forget, compared to children who are not taught English when he was in kindergarten or PAUD. The active role of

parents is very much needed in this case, in other words, parents are required to know a little about English so that they can buy books on basic English and teach it to their children at home.

In a study conducted by the author, it was found that learning English using textbooks alone was deemed less than optimal in improving students' understanding of learning English. Students will only be fixated on the material in the book so they cannot explore other materials.

The learning carried out by teachers in general is still centered on the teacher (teacher centered), so it is very influential on the learning outcomes of students. Improving the quality of learning should be carried out in an effort to fulfill the needs of students to live in society during times of competition with foreign nations that have begun to penetrate Indonesia, where foreign nations have taken advantage of creativity and innovation. In the field of education, teachers must be able to educate the next generation of the nation who have the ability and skills, one of which is good communication skills in this case is the mastery of foreign languages [2].

The use of methods and media in the delivery of English as a foreign language must be chosen properly [3]. Media and methods in learning will affect how students learn in class as well as students' understanding of learning English. The right media will have an impact on the achievement of learning objectives. Moreover, currently students are more active than teachers (student centered learning). The use of appropriate media and methods will foster student interest and motivation in learning.[4]

Learning media in general is a tool for teaching and learning process. In addition, learning media are everything that can be used to stimulate the thoughts, feelings, attention and abilities or skills of the learner so that it can encourage the learning process. A teacher must take advantage of learning media. Because, one of the main functions of learning media is "as a teaching aid that also influences the climate, conditions, and learning environment that is arranged and created by the teacher." (Azhar Arsyad: 2008). In addition, learning media is able to stimulate all senses. Furthermore, Arsyad explained, "the more senses that are used to receive and process the information, it is understood and can be maintained in memory. Thus, students are expected to be able to receive and absorb easily and well the messages in the material presented. (Azhar Arsyad: 2008).

2. Discussion

1) English Language

English is a foreign language that is designated as an international language, which means that English is used in almost all fields. English is also a world language, which is used to communicate globally. There are even some countries that make English the official language of their country. English (English Language) is the official language of many Commonwealth countries and is widely understood and used. English is spoken in more countries in the world than any other language. English is considered to have one of the most difficult spelling systems in the world. The written description of the English language is not written in letters for two reasons:

- a. The pronunciation of the words has changed and extends slightly from the sound.
- b. Some spelling rules are taken from several foreign sources that have been perpetrated.

English is used as the official language of instruction from 42 countries in the world and is a very popular language that has been studied by 1.5 billion

people and is ranked first of the 7 languages in the world that are most studied in addition to French, Mandarin, Spanish, German, Italy, and Japan [5]. In Indonesia, English is the second language after Indonesian. Mustafa (2007) states that a second language is a language that children learn after their mother tongue. Usually, this second language is obtained formally through schools and other institutions such as courses and others.

2) Children's Language Development

A normal child acquires his first language in a relatively short time, which is approximately when the child is 2-6 years old. Chomsky argues that it is not because the child gets a stimulus (stimulus) alone, then he makes a response, but because every person is equipped from birth with a set of equipment that makes it possible to acquire a first language called a language acquisition device (LAD) or 'language acquisition equipment'. According to him, LAD is what distinguishes humans from animals, and is a hallmark of the acquisition of human language, compared to non-language forms of behaviour of living things.

The development of a child's language is influenced by many factors, such as the development of neurology, but also by the biological development of the child. According to Lenneberg, children's language development follows a biological schedule that cannot be negotiated.

M. Schaerlaekens divides the phases of children's language development into four periods. This difference is based on certain characteristics that are unique to each period. [6] The phases are as follows:

1. Prelingual phase (age 0-1 year)

This phase is called the prelingual phase because the child has not been able to pronounce the "speech-language" as spoken by adults, in the sense that they have not followed the rules of the applicable language. But the development of 'producing' the sounds has started in a few weeks since his birth. The stages of development are:

- a. Resonant sound
- b. Coing sound
- c. Squeaky sound
- d. Repeating sound
- e. Vowel sound

2. Early Lingual Phase (age 1-2,5 years)

In this phase, the child begins to pronounce the first word, although it is not yet complete. The increase in language proficiency in this phase is very fast and is divided into three periods, namely:

- a. The period of a one-word sentence (holophrases)
- b. Two-word sentence period
- c. Sentence period of more than two words (more word sentence)
- d. Differentiation Phase (ages 2.5-5 years)

What is striking in this period is the child's skill in making differentiation in the use of words and sentences.

3. Pre-school phase (after 5 years)

According to Chaer, what is meant by approaching school here is before children enter elementary school; that is when they are between five

and six years old. Education in kindergarten, especially playgroups, is not considered a school, because it only helps children to be ready to enter primary education.

3) Child's Language Development Type

The factors that influence the development of children's language are:

1. Health factor. This factor is very influential in the development of a child's language, if in the first two years a child's health is often disturbed, then his language development will be hampered. However, if the child's health is good, the child's language development will run as it should.
2. Intelligence. Children's language development will be known from their intelligence. Children who have a normal level of intelligence or above, usually experience rapid language development. Meanwhile, children who experience intellectual delays have a limited amount of language or vocabulary.
3. Socio-economic status of the family. In several studies on the relationship between family socioeconomic status and language development, it is stated that most children who come from poor families will experience delays in language development. This is due to differences in intelligence or learning opportunities in children from poor families compared to children from well-off families.
4. Gender. Based on this gender factor, from the age of two years and over, girls have faster language development than boys.
5. Family relationships. Children who have healthy relationships with their families (full attention and affection from both parents) have a lot and good language development because with good family relationships the child will be more open to his family so that the child can express what he feels. With good relationships, children are taught good manners. On the other hand, if the relationship between the child and his parents is not healthy, then the child's language development tends to stagnate or experience abnormalities, such as stuttering, speaking unclearly, speaking rudely and impolitely, and being afraid to express his opinion.

4) Factors Affecting Children's Language Development

- a. Elementary school is the first formal school where children are introduced to foreign languages such as English. Learning English needs to be applied from an early age because children will find it easier to develop their foreign language skills when they enter the next school level.
- b. Learning foreign languages, especially English, can be done since entering elementary school because at that age children's brains still experience 'plasticity' or 'flexibility' so children will be very easy to absorb various information they get. At those times language can be learned more easily than other stages of life, so these periods are called critical periods (Lenneberg, 1967) for learning a language. Lenneberg set an age limit for natural language acquisition, starting at 2 years of age until puberty. Birdsong (1990) says that 'once this window opportunity is passed, the ability to learn languages declines'. Before the age of two years, language acquisition is not possible due

to maturation, and after puberty, language acquisition is naturally hindered by the loss of 'cerebral plasticity' as a result of the completion of the development of cerebral dominance of the lateralization of language functions.

- c. When it comes to learning English in elementary schools, these are the golden ages for learning the language, even though the status of the language being studied is a foreign language. The introduction of foreign languages from an early age helps children's language development to be more familiar and accustomed to English. Although there are very few opportunities to use English in Indonesia, the more familiar a child is with English, the easier it will be for the child to learn a foreign language at a higher level. Learning English from an early age will not interfere with the development of their mother tongue because the child's first language has been well established.

5) Music media in helping students' understanding

Music is a basic need for every human being, because music can make people feel happy, happy and comfortable. Music can be effective in academia by helping shape learning patterns, combat boredom and ward off distracting external noise. Music illustration media can change the learning environment to be fun so that students are enthusiastic to learn. Music can trigger great connections among the areas in the brain that are responsible for emotion and memory. Music can affect the listener's heart rate. Music can also calm one's mind and become a tool for the development of human intelligence. [7]

The influence of music on the intelligence of a person's brain is to make new neurons become circuits if there is musical stimulation, so that the separate neurons link and integrate themselves in the brain circuit, so that there is a link between the right and left brain neurons. The benefits of music for brain intelligence that music can provide rich stimuli for all aspects of cognitive development and emotional intelligence.

Teaching English to elementary students is different from teaching this language to teenagers or adults. Elementary school students have their own uniqueness and characteristics that more or less affect the learning atmosphere in the classroom and the teacher's selection of learning strategies. Among the strategies for teaching English to children that teachers can do is using songs. Songs are an authentic source of language. There is almost no time limit in using song media to teach English, meaning that students can use songs as language input as they like, whenever they want, both inside and outside the classroom. They can hum this song anywhere, and anytime they want. They naturally come into contact with English quickly and enjoy the process. [8]

Various kinds of songs that we can use according to our needs in class. Songs can be categorized into activity songs, animal songs, counting songs, food songs, learning songs, lullaby, patriotic songs, parody, sport songs, traditional songs, and so on. Please note that not all English songs can be used as learning resources. Songs whose music is too dominant, for example, or songs that contain too many metaphorical language, slang language, are not good for children. Choose songs that are simple and appropriate to your learning needs (curriculum, for example). Also choose a song whose lyrics can be heard clearly, as well as the correct pronunciation. Because students will use the song as a model, of course

they have to find the best model. If the teacher will sing it, it must also be ensured that the teacher will provide a good model for his students.

When the child sings the song, the teacher can while showing the letter card in question. So it is hoped that the child can understand the shape of the letter visually and pronounce the sound properly and correctly. Other examples can be sought from various sources that already exist, or also created by the teacher himself by considering the suitability of the situation and conditions as well as the material to be delivered. Singing as a teaching material, in learning is not only sung but also read and understood by children. Therefore, the singing material must be adapted to the child's age, so that singing becomes a fun activity, not a burden [9].

Improving singing comprehension for children is not only voicing the song, but at the same time conveying the content and meaning of the song, as well as demonstrating the song with movements such as free movement or dance moves. For that it would be nice if the teacher could make good use of Music and Movement in the implementation of teaching and learning activities. The songs that are good and suitable for children are, among others:[10]

1. Songs that can help children's growth and development (physical, intelligence, emotional, social aspects);
2. Singing that departs from the abilities that the child already has; a. the content of the song according to the children's world; b. the language used is simple; c. the area of the tone is commensurate with the ability of the child's vocal apparatus and pronunciation; and
3. The theme of the song, among others; refers to the curriculum used. For children's songs (songs) in English, we can use many sources as reference materials, including: 1. The Complete Daily Curriculum for Early Childhood Book (Pam Schiller and Pat Phipps, 2002); 2. The Complete Book of Rhymes, Songs, Poems, Fingerplays, and Chants (Jackie Silberg and Pam Schiller); 3. The Giant Encyclopedia of Circle Time and Group Activities for Children 3 to 6 (Kathy Charner, 1996); 4. Where is Thumbkin? (Pam Schiller and Thomas Moore, 1993); 5. Creative Resources for the Early Childhood Classroom (Judy Herr and Ivonne Libby, 1995), etc.

Research that has been conducted by Salim D, 2010 examined the influence of music on the learning concentration of grade 2 students of SMAK 1 Salatiga. The number of sampling is 29 students. The subjects studied were Mathematics and English. The type of music used is Sundanese gamelan music and heavy metal music. In addition, comparisons were also made without background music. The results showed that the background music used had an effect on the learning concentration of grade 2 students of SMUK 1 Salatiga. Sundanese gamelan music has a positive effect on English subjects and negatively on Mathematics. Meanwhile, heavy metal music has a negative effect on both subjects.

3. Conclusion

English is a foreign language that has been designated as an international language. English is used in almost all areas of global life. English is also a world language that dominates the communication era to connect and transfer knowledge throughout the world. There are even some countries that make English the official language of their country.

In learning English for elementary school children, learning is carried out from an early age because at these times the children's brain still experiences 'plasticity' or 'flexibility' so that during these times it is very easy to absorb information. At those times language can be learned more easily than other stages of life, so these periods are called critical periods or critical periods.

The golden ages are a very good time to learn a language, even though the status of the language being studied is a foreign language. The introduction of foreign languages from an early age helps children's language development to be more familiar with English. Although there are very few opportunities to use English in Indonesia, the more familiar a child is with English, the easier it will be for the child to continue learning foreign languages at a higher level. Learning English from an early age will not interfere with the development of their mother tongue because the child's first language has been well established, and the child's brain development is still very flexible to receive information.

In learning English, it can be done by various methods that are relevant for the basic level including Total Physical Response (TPR), The reading method, Songs and games, Field study. In addition to using the methods as above, learning English can also be done using fairy tales or children's stories, children can be taught to retell the fairy tale or cheerful using their simple language. This will increase their English vocabulary.

Music is a basic need for every human being, because music can make people feel happy, happy and comfortable. Music can be effective in academia by helping shape learning patterns, combat boredom and ward off distracting external noise. Music illustration media can change the learning environment to be fun so that students are enthusiastic to learn. Music can trigger great connections among the areas in the brain that are responsible for emotion and memory. Music can affect the listener's heart rate. Music can also calm one's mind and become a tool for the development of human intelligence.

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