

Using English Songs to Teach Vocabulary in an Elementary School

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ABSTRACT

Despite the limited number of students, several teaching and learning activities have been conducted online and face-to-face during the pandemic. Accordingly, it becomes a challenge for elementary school teachers in their English teaching practice as students are more focused on mastering vocabulary. Therefore, teachers should create a pleasant and joyful classroom to ensure students learn English effectively. According to that background, English teaching community service programs should benefit elementary schools. This program was to help create a fun classroom and make the learning process more effective by using songs as the vocabulary teaching method. Muhammadiyah Senggotan Elementary School was involved since it claimed English as its concerned subject to attract prospective students. Therefore, there was a great challenge to provide a variety of teaching methods while doing online and face-to-face learning. This program was conducted by teaching third-grade students during the pandemic using face-to-face meetings. Four stages were applied in this program: need analysis, planning, monitoring, and evaluation. The pre-test and post-test results showed a significant difference in students' vocabulary level mastery before and after applying songs in the English teaching and learning process. Hence, this program's sustainability is maintained by increasing the variety of teaching methods through different activities.

Keywords: English teaching and learning, song, vocabulary, young learners

ABSTRAK

Beberapa kegiatan belajar mengajar sudah dilaksanakan secara daring dan tatap muka selama masa pandemi meskipun jumlah siswa masih terbatas. Dalam praktik pengajaran Bahasa Inggris di sekolah dasar, hal tersebut menjadi tantangan bagi guru karena siswa lebih difokuskan pada penguasaan kosakata. Oleh karena itu, guru perlu menciptakan suasana kelas yang menarik dan menyenangkan agar siswa dapat belajar bahasa Inggris secara efektif. Berdasarkan hal tersebut, program pengabdian kepada masyarakat berbasis pengajaran Bahasa Inggris sangat bermanfaat bagi guru sekolah dasar. Penggunaan lagu sebagai metode pengajaran kosakata bahasa Inggris dapat membantu menciptakan kelas yang menyenangkan sehingga proses pembelajaran menjadi lebih efektif. SD Muhammadiyah Senggotan mengunggulkan mata pelajaran Bahasa Inggris dan menjadikannya daya tarik bagi calon siswa. Oleh karena itu, tantangan terbesarnya adalah menyediakan berbagai metode pengajaran, baik secara online maupun tatap muka. Program ini dilakukan

selama pandemi dengan mengajar siswa kelas tiga di SD tersebut secara tatap muka. Empat tahap yang dilakukan dalam pelaksanaan program ini, yaitu analisis kebutuhan, perencanaan, pemantauan, dan evaluasi. Hasil tes awal dan akhir menunjukkan perbedaan yang signifikan pada tingkat penguasaan kosakata siswa sebelum dan sesudah menerapkan penggunaan lagu dalam proses pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris. Oleh karena itu, keberlangsungan program ini perlu dipertahankan dengan meningkatkan dan menerapkan berbagai metode pengajaran yang relevan.

Kata Kunci: kosakata bahasa Inggris, lagu, pembelajaran bahasa Inggris, siswa berusia muda

INTRODUCTION

Muhammadiyah Senggotan Elementary School is in Senggotan, Tirtonirmolo, Kasihan, Bantul, Yogyakarta. According to data from the ‘Sekolah Kita Kemdikbud’ platform, the school has a total 171 students divided into seven classes (grade 6 has two classes) in the even semester of 2021/2022 (Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia, 2022). The school has also used the 2013 Curriculum adopted by nine teachers.

Additionally, Muhammadiyah Senggotan Elementary School is a partner school for the English Language Education Department (ELED), Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta (UMY). Almost every year, ELED sends several students to do internship activities there for one semester. The internship program aims to familiarize students with school culture through observations during and after teaching and learning activities. In even semesters, students are taught to design documents used by the teachers in teaching, such as lesson plans (RPP), teaching materials, and the teaching media.

Even during the pandemic, ELED students still carry out the internship program. ELED made innovations in responding to the teaching and learning process during the pandemic. ELED students and the teachers in the elementary school continue to carry out the internship program in an online model.

On the other hand, not all elementary schools currently have English lessons, as the 2013 Curriculum does not require English lessons. However, many elementary schools still have English lessons for several reasons. One of these reasons is to attract parents’ attention to prospective students about activities at the school. Ma’rifat (2017) and Sari et al. (2019) argued that English lessons are also used to improve students’ English skills and prepare them for future needs, i.e., English lessons in later years.

All teaching and learning processes are conducted online during the pandemic. One of the problems Muhammadiyah Senggotan Elementary School faces is low internet network quality, so online learning often needs to improve. Besides, the teachers had to be in front of the camera to deliver the materials, making teaching and learning activi-

ties seem one-way. Kimsesiz et al. (2017) asserted that elementary school students tend to be physically active during the teaching and learning process, so the teachers sometimes find it hard to carry out interactive learning. In addition, students cannot always be controlled to sit and listen to what the teachers convey (Džaniæ & Pejiæ, 2016; Permana, 2020; Phisutthangkoon & Panich, 2016).

Another problem that the English teachers at the school faced was the lack of learning media used to teach online. Teaching media commonly applied, such as textbooks, may be effective for face-to-face teaching. However, textbooks present their challenges for learning, especially for elementary students during online classes.

After the pandemic, following the government's recommendation, the school started to have face-to-face meetings, with 50% of the school's capacity. However, the situation created another problem in which teachers had to work twice as hard because they taught one-half of one class at one time and the other half at the other time. For example, a class consisted of 24 students. Therefore, the teacher had to teach 12 students in the morning and another 12 students later. In addition, the teaching-learning time was also reduced from 35 minutes to 20 minutes per meeting to ensure air circulation in the room. The situation made the teachers too tired, and students did not grasp the material better. Also, teaching quality was still less optimal as the English teacher had not started to use various teaching methods in such a transition.

This community service program aimed to solve the problems that Muhammadiyah Senggotan Elementary School dealt with regarding face-to-face meetings after the pandemic. First, it helped the teacher to cope with overwhelming teaching time. Second, it introduced a new learning method to the students after learning online for quite a long time.

After analyzing the problems faced by Muhammadiyah Senggotan Elementary School, this community service program offered a solution for using songs as a teaching method to create a pleasant class activity and make the learning process more effective. Lems (2018) asserted that songs make students improve emotional relationships with other students or with their teachers since they do fun things together. Furthermore, songs can be used to improve affective reasons (Coyle & Gracia, 2014) and to exacerbate students' English skills in reading, writing, speaking, or listening.

METHODS

This community service program was conducted at Muhammadiyah Senggotan Elementary School, one of the partner schools for ELED. Therefore, this section dis-

cusses the method employed as a solution to the problems faced by the school. Four stages were applied to conduct this program. They were: need analysis, planning, monitoring, and evaluation, which will be explained in more detail in the following paragraphs.

1. Need Analysis

We visited Muhammadiyah Senggotan Elementary School as the place for the implementation of this program. In this stage, the teacher and this community service team analyzed the problems faced by the school in the online teaching and learning process in English subject. We met the English teachers, school principals, and students to see and understand the real problems. Based on the analysis results, we developed an English subject on the materials of ‘describing someone’ using songs. This program was carried out at the elementary level due to the statement from the English teacher:

- a. English lessons in the school only used textbooks, so the teaching and learning process was less attractive, and some students looked bored
- b. Most materials were less related to daily activities, such as describing someone to their friends or others.
- c. During online learning in the pandemic era, students are only given materials and assignments without meaningful interactions with the teacher.



Picture 1. Muhammadiyah Senggotan Elementary School

2. Planning

‘Describing someone’ is an expression that is closely related to daily activities. For this reason, we developed the methods used in this program based on several stages, including:

- a. Collect the latest data

This activity was closely related to how the school adapts to today’s face-to-face and

online mixed learning activities.

b. Introduction to learning

The introduction to learning in this teaching material contained the describing someone material applied in this service program. We used the textbook that the elementary English teacher uses as a reference in preparing the songs to teach vocabulary to students.

3. Monitoring

In this stage, we collaborated with the English teacher in the school to conduct the teaching and learning process using songs. The population selected in this community service program were all Muhammadiyah Senggotan Elementary School students. We used third graders with 18 students divided into two learning shifts: the first half as the control group and the second half as the experimental group.

a. Pre-test

We conducted a pre-test by distributing English vocabulary tests to determine the mastery level of English vocabulary before there was a different treatment for each group of students.

b. Treatment

We used third-grade students, and each shift received a different treatment. The first shift, the control group, was taught using conventional teaching materials (textbooks/modules) that teachers usually use. The second shift was taught using English songs three times as the experimental group.

4. Evaluation

a. Post-test

After receiving a different treatment, we conducted a post-test using a dissimilar English vocabulary test from the pre-test as the evaluation process. However, the vocabulary test had the same difficulty level as the pre-test. Therefore, the post-test was applied to determine students' mastery level of English vocabulary after different treatments for each shift.

b. Data analysis

We applied two stages of data processing with SPSS. First, we tested the assumptions: normality and the homogeneity test. Then, after getting the results of the two tests, we did a t-test to examine whether there was a difference in students' English

vocabulary mastery levels between the control and the experimental group using the pre-test and post-test results. We also formulated the alternative hypothesis (H_a): there is a significant difference in the level of English vocabulary mastery between the control group and the experimental group.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section describes the results obtained during the implementation of the community service program. We used SPSS to analyze the pre-test and post-test data. The results of data analysis revealed students' English vocabulary mastery levels in the control group and the experimental group before and after being given different treatments.

1. Students' English vocabulary mastery before using songs

We conducted two assumption tests on the pre-test result to identify the distribution of the data. First, we conducted a normality test using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test. The data analysis was performed using SPSS. The result is presented in the following table.

Table 1. The Normality Test Result of Pre-test

		Pre-test
N		18
Normal Parameters ^{a,b}	Mean	3.2967
	Std. Deviation	1.40015
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.197
	Positive	.197
	Negative	-.137
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		.834
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.490

a. Test distribution is Normal

b. Calculated from data

Based on the table above, the significance value for the result of the pre-test is 0.490. Therefore, the significance value in both groups of students is more than 0.05 ($\tilde{n} = 0.490 > 0.05$), so it can be concluded that the pre-test data is normally distributed. Besides, we conducted a homogeneity test to identify whether the variation of the pre-test data was the same/homogeneous using the Levene test. The result of the data analysis is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. The Homogeneity Test Result of Pre-test

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
2.914	1	16	.107

From the table above, the significance value of the variation in the level of English vocabulary mastery of students in the control group and the experimental group is 0.107. Since the significance value is more than 0.05 ($\tilde{n} = 0.107 > 0.05$), it can be assumed that the variation of the pre-test data in the two groups of students is homogeneous.

Furthermore, we performed a t-test on the pre-test to test the truth of the hypothesis. We chose the test to find out the difference in the mean value between the control group and the experimental group. The data were analyzed using SPSS. The result is revealed in the table below.

Table 3. The T-Test Result of Pre-test

	Paired Differences				
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
				Lower	Upper
Pair 1 Control group – Experimental group	.66444	1.85667	.61889	-.76272	2.09161
	t	df	Sig. (2 tailed)		
	1.074	8	.314		

Table 3 presents the significance value is 0.314, where the value is greater than 0.05 ($\tilde{n} = 0.314 > 0.05$). Thus, H_0 is accepted, and H_a is rejected. It can be indicated that there is no significant difference in the level of English vocabulary mastery between the control group and the experimental group before being given different treatments. In addition, the t value is 1.074, indicating that the mean value of the control group is higher than the experimental group. It can be seen in Table 4, where the mean value of the control group is 3.6289, and the experimental group is 2.9644.

Table 4. The Pre-test Mean Value Difference

Pair 1		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Control group	3.6289	9	.48426	.16142
	Experimental group	2.9644	9	1.91912	.63971

2. Students' English vocabulary mastery after using songs

After doing the post-test, we conducted assumption tests: normality and homogeneity test on the data

obtained. We used the same test type as the assumption test for the pre-test. The data were analyzed using SPSS. The result of the normality test is presented in Table 5.

Table 5. The Normality Test Result of Post-test

		Post-test
N		18
Normal Parameters ^{a,b}	Mean	3.2217
	Std. Deviation	2.24409
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.147
	Positive	.147
	Negative	-.089
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		.625
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.829

a. Test distribution is Normal

b. Calculated from data

Based on the table above, the significance value for students' post-test data is 0.829. The significance value of the control and the experimental group is more than 0.05 ($\tilde{n} = 0.829 > 0.05$), so it can be concluded that the post-test data were normally distributed. In addition, we conducted a homogeneity test to examine whether the variation in the post-test data was the same/homogeneous using the Levene test. The data were analyzed by SPSS. The result is shown in the following table.

Table 6. The Homogeneity Test Result of Post-test

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
.163	1	16	.691

The results of the data analysis in the table above showed the significance value of the variation in the post-test data of students' English vocabulary in both groups is 0.691. As the significance value is more than 0.05 ($\tilde{n} = 0.691 > 0.05$), it can be assumed that the variation of the post-test data in the control group and the experimental group is homogeneous. Moreover, we used the same t-test in the pre-test to test the hypothesis. The result of the t-test is revealed in the following table.

Table 7. The T-Test Result of Post-test

	Paired Differences			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper
	Pair 1 Control group – Experimental group	-1.81556	1.66110	.55370	-3.09239
	t	df	Sig. (2 tailed)		
	-3.279	8	.011		

Table 7 presents the significance value is 0.011 where the value is less than 0.05 ($\tilde{\alpha} = 0.011 < 0.05$). Thus, H_0 is rejected, and H_a is accepted. It can be indicated that there is a significant difference in students' English vocabulary mastery levels between the control group and the experimental group after being given different treatments. Additionally, the t value is -3.279, indicating that the mean value of the control group is lower than the experimental group. According to Table 8, the mean value of the control group is 2.9622, and the experimental group is 4.7778.

Table 8. The Post-test Mean Value Difference

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
		Pair 1	Control group	2.9622	9
	Experimental group	4.7778	9	2.16076	.72025

From the results of the SPSS analysis, the experimental group who received teaching with songs showed an increase in English vocabulary than the control group. This result has similarities with previous studies in linear fields with this dedication (Cevikbas et al., 2018; Faliyanti, 2017; Rukholm, 2015). Students' interest in learning English increased throughout the teaching and learning session. Most of the students participated in the activities designed during the lesson well and were well-behaved. Students were also more enthusiastic about participating in learning. They sat in their respective chairs facing us as their teacher and were involved in teaching and learning activities. They can imitate the vocabulary in the song by singing along with us and completing the textbook exercises. Students may also seem to remember the English vocabulary learned at each meeting well. When we did apperception activities, students mentioned most of the words taught through songs.

Students seem interested in learning new vocabulary contained in the songs. Sari et al. (2019) clarified that the music in the song could entertain students, so they enjoy

teaching and learning activities. Furthermore, students' interest in learning English is also significant in remembering the vocabulary taught and forming their learning motivation (Coyle & Gracia, 2014; Džaniæ & Pejiæ, 2016). In addition, the results of Cevikbas et al. (2018) which used songs to teach English vocabulary to first-grade elementary school students in Turkey, showed a significant difference between the pre-test and the post-test result of students' vocabulary. Therefore, using songs in the learning process may increase students' enthusiasm and help intensify their English vocabulary.



Picture 2. Students Enjoyed Learning English using Songs

Besides, students are more interested and motivated in learning English vocabulary with variations in learning media (Dalton & Lewes, 2015; Maziyyah & Rahajeng, 2020; Rukholm, 2015), teacher changes, and different learning methods (Kimsesiz et al., 2017; Lems, 2018). It can be seen when students dare to answer questions even though the answer is wrong and want to ask if they do not know without being appointed. The songs used to teach are one of the factors that cause the class situation to change to be more fun and effective (Faliyanti, 2017; Phisutthangkoon & Panich, 2016; Stanlee & Singh, 2021) as this method is something new for students. Even though the school provides learning books, using the same teaching method makes students look bored.

The teaching and learning process became more intimate between the students and us due to using songs as the teaching method. It is one of the factors that make students able to acquire English vocabulary in an easy and fun way. Furthermore, class activities became student-centered. Using different teaching methods made the teaching and learning activities more exciting. The teaching method we applied is new things for students, so they can be more enthusiastic about learning English vocabulary. Cevikbas et al. (2018) claimed that through songs, teachers might attract stu-

dents' attention to participate in learning activities. The presence of music in the song creates a sense of pleasure and enthusiasm for students in learning English vocabulary (Permana, 2020; Sari et al., 2019). Teachers and students can carry out classroom activities, such as singing songs along, increasing emotional closeness.

CONCLUSION

The results of this community service program indicate that using songs as a teaching method and media significantly affects students' English vocabulary mastery. Students love English songs for entertainment in this modern era. Using songs in learning is efficient enough to arouse their interest in teaching and learning activities. In addition, songs can be a suitable media applied when learning situations require students to interact more online. Learning vocabulary using songs is more attractive and may increase students' motivation. Hence, applying songs is one way to teach English vocabulary so that students can comprehend the materials and be embedded in their memories longer.

All in all, songs can be utilized to boost elementary school students' enthusiasm for learning English and their vocabulary. Due to the variety of teaching methods and media teachers use, students may be more enthusiastic about participating in teaching and learning activities. The selected song must contain lyrics with words that are easy for students to follow and understand. Teachers can consider using songs as teaching media to introduce English vocabulary to students. This service program is expected to provide opportunities for teachers to develop and maximize existing English songs to be added value as a medium and method for teaching vocabulary. In addition, songs can reference teachers in choosing media and teaching methods for face-to-face and online English learning. The results from this community service program may contribute to different programs with linear interests or topics.

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