

Exploring the Challenges of Implementing Music in Enhancing Preschool Children's English Language Acquisition

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Abstract

This qualitative study explores preschool teachers' perspectives on the role of music in enhancing children's English language development. Conducted in Bandar Sri Damansara and Rawang, Malaysia, the research utilized convenience sampling to gather insights from 10 preschool educators. Data was collected through in-depth, one-on-one interviews, providing a nuanced understanding of the challenges teachers face when integrating music into language acquisition activities. The findings highlight the practical difficulties educators encounter, including limited resources and training, which hinder the effective use of music as a pedagogical tool. This study contributes significantly to understanding the challenges faced by educators in leveraging music for early language development. By shedding light on these obstacles, the research offers valuable insights for policymakers and educators seeking to enhance language learning outcomes in preschool settings through music-based strategies.

Keywords: Preschool, Teachers' Insights, Music, Children, English Language Development, Pronunciation, Vocabulary, Challenges

Introduction

Language acquisition during early childhood plays a crucial role in cognitive and social development, influencing children's communication skills and academic success. English, as a global language, is increasingly important for young learners, especially in multilingual societies where early exposure can provide long-term advantages. Music, recognized for its rhythmic and melodic elements, has been identified as an effective tool in language learning, as it enhances phonological awareness, vocabulary retention and pronunciation skills. However, despite its potential, the integration of music into preschool English language education presents a number of challenges that need to be addressed.

The integration of music into early childhood education has received increasing attention as a powerful tool for enhancing language acquisition. Research suggests that music, with its rhythmic and melodic nature, plays a crucial role in developing linguistic skills such as phonological awareness, grammar, and vocabulary retention in young learners (Tsao et al., 2023). This is particularly relevant in the preschool setting, where children are at a

critical stage of language development. Music engages multiple parts of the brain and provides multisensory and emotionally enriching experiences that support learning.

In the context of English language acquisition, music offers unique advantages. Songs and rhymes provide repetitive patterns and rhythms that facilitate memorization and pronunciation. Through singing, children can practice producing sounds and words in a new language, which helps build their phonetic and syntactic understanding (Muhammed, 2024). Furthermore, incorporating music into language instruction creates a low-stress learning environment by lowering the “affective filter,” making children more receptive to new linguistic skills.

Given the increasing emphasis on early English language proficiency, there is a growing need to explore innovative and engaging methods to enhance language acquisition. Addressing the challenges of integrating music into early childhood education can contribute to refining teaching practices, fostering children's linguistic development, and ultimately improving language learning outcomes. Therefore, this study is essential in shaping effective early childhood education strategies, ensuring that music is not only used as a fun activity but also as a purposeful and structured approach to language learning.

Despite its potential benefits, implementing music as a pedagogical tool in preschool classrooms presents challenges. These include limited teacher training in music teaching, lack of resources, and varying levels of engagement among children. In addition, cultural differences in music preferences and difficulties aligning music activities with curriculum goals may hinder their effective use.

This research explores these challenges while highlighting the potential of music to enhance English language acquisition among preschool children. Examining existing literature and classroom practices aims to provide insights into how music can be effectively integrated into early childhood education to support language learning outcomes.

Understanding these challenges is essential for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers to maximize the benefits of music-based learning. Factors such as teacher readiness, resource availability, cultural perspectives, and pedagogical strategies can impact the success of implementing music in preschool language acquisition. By exploring these challenges, this study aims to provide valuable insights into improving teaching approaches, ensuring a more engaging and effective learning environment for preschool children.

Problem Statement

The integration of music into preschool English language acquisition programs faces several challenges that hinder its effective implementation. One of the main issues is the lack of specific training for teachers in using music as a pedagogical tool for language learning. Many educators, even if skilled in traditional teaching methods, may not have the expertise needed to design and deliver music-based lessons that align with language learning objectives. This gap in teacher training can lead to inconsistent and ineffective use of music in the classroom, undermining its potential benefits for language development (Bsharat et al., 2021).

Another important challenge is the lack of resources and materials specifically tailored to integrate music into English language instruction for young children. Educational institutions often lack access to appropriate musical instruments, songs, and activities that are engaging and relevant to language learning goals. This lack can result in a reliance on generic or unstructured musical activities that fail to maximize the linguistic benefits of music. Furthermore, the diverse levels of engagement among children pose additional challenges. Some children may be naturally more musically inclined, while others may find it difficult to connect with musical activities, which can undermine the overall effectiveness of music-based language learning strategies (Fitria, 2022).

Cultural differences in musical preferences also present challenges when selecting and implementing musical materials. What may be engaging and culturally relevant in one context may not be effective in another, potentially leading to a mismatch between the musical activities used and the cultural background of the child. In addition, aligning musical activities with curriculum goals and language learning outcomes can be complex. Educators must ensure that music-based lessons not only enhance language skills but also meet broader educational standards, which can be a difficult task without clear guidelines or support (Franco et al., 2022).

Finally, there is a need for a more systematic understanding of how specific musical properties, such as rhythm and melody, influence various aspects of language acquisition in young children. While research suggests that music aids in language development, a deeper exploration of these mechanisms is necessary to inform effective teaching practices. By addressing these challenges and knowledge gaps, educators and policymakers can work toward creating more effective music-based language learning programs that harness the potential of music to enhance English language acquisition among preschoolers.

The Significance of Study

Language acquisition during early childhood lays the foundation for future academic success, cognitive development, and social interaction. English, as a global language, is increasingly important in early education, especially in multilingual societies. However, many preschoolers struggle with English language acquisition due to limited exposure, lack of engagement, and traditional teaching methods that may not meet their developmental needs.

Music has long been recognized as a powerful pedagogical tool, promoting memory retention, phonemic awareness, and motivation. Songs, rhythms, and melodies create a fun and interactive learning environment, yet integrating music into English language learning in preschool faces a number of challenges. These challenges may stem from a lack of teacher training, inadequate resources, or misconceptions about the role of music in language development.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to address a critical gap in early childhood education by exploring the role of music as a tool for enhancing English language acquisition among preschoolers. Music has been widely recognized as an effective medium for language learning due to its ability to engage multiple parts of the brain, foster memory retention, and create a low-stress learning environment. Through rhythm, melody, and

repetition, music facilitates the development of phonological awareness, vocabulary, and grammatical understanding, which are fundamental skills for language acquisition (Sadiqzade 2024) This study is particularly important because it focuses on preschoolers, a group at a critical stage of cognitive and linguistic development, where exposure to music can have a lasting impact on their language abilities.

In addition, this research contributes to the advancement of knowledge by identifying the challenges educators face in implementing music-based strategies in early childhood classrooms (Bsharat et al., 2021). By addressing issues such as limited teacher training, resource constraints, and cultural considerations, this study aims to provide insights and practical recommendations for integrating music into preschool curricula. These findings have the potential to benefit not only educators but also policymakers and curriculum developers by offering evidence-based strategies for improving language learning outcomes.

This study is motivated by the need to bridge this gap by exploring the barriers educators face when implementing music as a medium to enhance preschoolers' English language proficiency. Understanding these challenges can help develop more effective strategies to optimize language learning through music. In addition, this study outlines the broader implications of using music as a pedagogical tool. Beyond language acquisition, music fosters social-emotional development, creativity, and cultural awareness in young learners. By highlighting these multifaceted benefits, the research supports a more holistic approach to early childhood education that leverages music's unique ability to enrich learning experiences. Ultimately, this study aims to empower educators with effective tools to foster linguistic and cognitive growth in preschoolers while fostering an engaging and inclusive learning environment.

Research Objective

To investigate the challenges faced by preschool teachers in using music to enhance children's English language acquisition.

Research Question

What are the challenges faced by preschool teachers in implementing music to children's English language acquisition?

Methodology

Qualitative research methods are well suited to exploring complex and context-specific phenomena in educational settings, making them an ideal approach for this study of preschool educators' views on the role of music and movement in enhancing children's English language acquisition. Unlike quantitative methods that focus on numerical data and generalizability, qualitative research emphasizes understanding participants' experiences, beliefs, and practices in depth and in their natural contexts (Emon, 2024). This approach allows researchers to capture the nuanced perspectives of educators as they navigate the challenges and opportunities of integrating music and movement into early childhood language education.

In this study, qualitative methods enabled an exploration of how preschool educators perceive and implement music and movement-based strategies to support English language

learning. Using tools such as interviews, focus groups, and classroom observations, this research aimed to uncover educators' lived experiences, the pedagogical rationale behind their practices, and the barriers they faced. Such methods are particularly valuable in early childhood education research, where contextual factors such as classroom dynamics, cultural influences, and individual teaching styles play a significant role in shaping outcomes.

Research Design and Setting

Qualitative research has traditionally been viewed as one of the best ways to provide information about minority people's perceptions, beliefs, experiences, and stories of ethnicity, language, and gender (Baldwin, Peters, & Loney, 2024). Qualitative method included some major progress, which the researcher required to discover a problem and obtain an in-depth understanding through philosophy, techniques, and procedures are the foundations of the current issues.

The objective of this research is to figure out what preschool teachers perceive on the influence of music and movement towards children's learning in English language development. To verify the completeness and validation of the data in the research, the researcher will modify one method, the qualitative approach, and apply triangulation of qualitative approaches.

The researcher will solely use a qualitative approach to collect primary data. The research setting refers to the location where data is collected; thus, two preschools in the Selangor district, Rawang and Bandar Sri Damansara, were chosen as research settings. The study sample included ten preschool teachers who were teaching children from the aged 4 to 6 years old. 4 out of 10 preschool teachers are from Sunbeam Kindergarten, Rawang; 6 out of 10 preschool teachers are from Manjaria Kindergarten, Bandar Sri Damansara, who were volunteered to take part in the study.

Qualitative data was collected using a one-on-one online interview method as a survey, which contained six interview questions to focus solely on the preschool teacher's perspectives on the impact of music and movement on children's language development, such as pronunciation and vocabulary skills. To verify the completeness and validation of the data in the research, the researcher will modify one approach, which is a qualitative method, and apply triangulation of qualitative methods.

Findings and Discussion

RQ: What are the challenges in implementing music to children's English language acquisition?

Results

In response to the research questions, the investigators examined the challenges associated with integrating music into children's English language development. As detailed in Table 4.6, the analysis yielded three distinct coding themes that directly addressed the research questions. These themes emerged from a comprehensive examination of the data, providing insight into the specific barriers educators face when using music and movement as pedagogical tools to enhance language acquisition among young learners. The identification of these themes not only sheds light on practical challenges but also offers a

framework for understanding how these challenges impact the effectiveness of music-based language learning strategies in early childhood education settings.

Table 4.6

Challenges in implementing music to children's English language acquisition?

	Mispronounce the words when singing	Not interested in participating in activities	Provide Developmentally Appropriate Practices lesson
P1	0	0	1
P2	0	1	0
P3	0	0	1
P4	1	0	0
P5	0	1	0
P6	0	1	0
P7	0	0	1
P8	1	0	0
P9	0	1	0
P10	1	1	0
Totals	3	5	3

Mispronounce the Words when Singing

The ultimate goal of language is for children's speech expression to be clear, accurate, and simple to understand. Encouraging a pre-schooler to mispronounce word may seem appealing in the short term, but this approach may eventually lead to speech problems. These supported by Participant 4, P8, and P10 where have responded about how the preschool teachers face the challenges of implementing music and movement on children's English language development.as what the participants has stated:

Children will be hard to get the real lyric, they might sing wrongly. So, we need to specially emphasis the words that they sing wrongly, correct them, and repeat frequently. (P4: 22nd Nov 2021; L47-L48)

Would be more difficult for me to check their pronunciation during the online class. Children may confuse my pronunciation for letter "m" and "n" sound. Sometimes, they are hard to cope with the learning due to the internet break down. (P8: 30th Nov 2021; L29- L31)

Children might get the pronunciation wrong when I pronounce the vocabulary. I will need to pronounce it precisely by emphasizing my mouth shape. (P10: 30th Nov 2021; L42-L43)

Not Interested in Participating in Activities

Children may feel reluctant to participate in certain activities. Therefore, teachers may prepare some fun learning activities which suit children's needs in order to grab their attention. These are supported by Participant 2, P5, P8, and P9 who have responded about how the preschool teachers face the challenges of implementing music and movement on children's English language development as what the participants have stated:

Some of the children might not want to join the song session while we are having music and movements. They will remain sitting or standing aside without giving any response. (P2: 23rd Nov 2021; L37-L3)

Sometimes, children are not following the actions according to the music. For example, they will lose focus during the music and movement class by doing their own activities. (P5: 24th Nov 2021; L24- L25)

Some children refuse to sing along or involved in the class as they are not interested in the music. For them, they would prefer a silent mode of learning motion. (P8: 30th Nov 2021; L29)

Some of the children might not wanted to join the song session while we are having music and movements. Therefore, I will need more time to observe what are the best music to suits their learning. (P9: 30th Nov 2021; L27- L29)

Sometimes, children might not like to join in the music and movement sessions by dancing or singing along with their friends. (P10: 30th Nov 2021; L43-L44)

Provide Developmentally Appropriate Practice Lessons

Provide an approach that is appropriate for the children's needs based on their age and ability skills. DAP is an open-ended activity that allows teachers to pre-plan the lessons according to individual needs. These are supported by Participant 1, P3, and P7, who have responded about how the preschool teachers face the challenges of implementing music and movement on children's English language development.as what the participants have stated:

Children nowadays are being influenced by western culture, they like pop songs or Korean songs. We as teachers must filter the lyrics, whether it is age appropriate, before conducting the lesson. (P1: 22nd Nov 2021; L35-L37)

The selection of songs before we introduce them to the children to avoid sensitive issues, such as the words; the meaning of the lyrics might be too difficult for certain age groups of children; time-consuming when teaching the children by using songs because they going to enjoy the music instead of language learning. (P3: 24th Nov 2021; L32-L37)

The challenges that I might go through implementing music and movement are to make sure it reaches the children's needs. I will make sure every child benefits. (P7: 29th Nov 2021; L42- L43)

Discussion

Early childhood is a critical period for language development, and the acquisition of English, as a global lingua franca, provides children with long-term academic and social advantages. Music, with its rhythmic, melodic, and repetitive structures, serves as a powerful medium for language learning (Sadiqzade, 2024). It aids in improving phonological awareness, pronunciation, vocabulary retention, and comprehension, making it a valuable tool for English language acquisition in preschool settings. However, despite its proven benefits, effectively integrating music into language instruction comes with challenges that must be addressed to

optimize its potential. The findings of this study provide valuable insight into the challenges faced by preschool teachers when integrating music into children's English language acquisition. Three distinct themes emerged from the data analysis: mispronunciation of words during singing, lack of interest in participating in musical activities, and the need for developmentally appropriate practice (DAP). These themes highlight the multifaceted nature of the barriers faced by educators and highlight the complexity of implementing music-based pedagogical strategies effectively.

A key challenge identified was the issue of mispronunciation of words during singing. Teachers reported that children often struggled to understand lyrics or correct pronunciation, which can lead to confusion and incorrect language use. For example, participants stated that children may sing words incorrectly or confuse similar sounds, such as "m" and "n," especially in online learning environments where technical issues such as internet interruptions further complicate pronunciation guidance. These findings align with existing research showing that while music aids phonological awareness, it requires careful implementation to ensure accurate language modeling. Teachers emphasized the importance of repeated correction and correct pronunciation to mitigate this issue.

Another important challenge was the lack of interest of children in participating in musical activities. Teachers observed that some children were reluctant to participate in music and movement sessions, preferring instead to remain passive or engaged in unrelated activities. This disengagement was a barrier to achieving the desired learning outcomes. Participants highlighted the need for more engaging and tailored activities to capture children's attention and cater to their diverse preferences. For example, some children preferred a quiet or non-musical learning approach, while others were not interested in a particular song or movement. These findings highlighted the importance of designing inclusive and engaging activities that were appropriate to the interests and needs of young learners.

The third theme, providing developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) lessons, reflected the need to align musical activities with children's developmental stages and cultural contexts. Teachers reported challenges in selecting age-appropriate songs and screening lyrics to ensure they were appropriate for young learners. In addition, they noted that certain songs may be too complex or time-consuming to teach effectively, compromising their educational value. Participants also highlighted the influence of external cultural factors, such as children's preferences for pop or Korean songs influenced by media exposure, which requires teachers to carefully balance cultural relevance with educational goals.

These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the practical barriers educators face when integrating music into early language learning. They also highlight the need for targeted interventions, such as professional development programs for teachers to effectively use music as a pedagogical tool, access to curated resources tailored for preschoolers, and strategies to foster active participation among children. Furthermore, this study reinforces previous research showing that while music has great potential to enhance language acquisition through its rhythmic and melodic properties, its effectiveness depends on thoughtful implementation that takes into account linguistic and developmental factors.

This study is important for a variety of stakeholders in early childhood education. For educators, understanding the challenges of implementing music-based language learning will help them develop more effective teaching strategies, integrate music more purposefully into their lessons, and increase children's engagement and motivation. For curriculum developers and policymakers, insights from this research can guide the creation of well-structured evidence-based curricula that incorporate music as a strategic component of early language education. By identifying barriers such as teacher training gaps, resource constraints, and perceptions of music culture in education, this study can contribute to improved policies and professional development programs.

Additionally, for parents, this study highlights the importance of music exposure at home as an additional tool for language development. It provides guidance on how they can reinforce language learning through songs, rhymes, and interactive musical activities. For researchers, this study fills a critical gap in understanding the practical difficulties of integrating music into early childhood English education, paving the way for future research into innovative pedagogical approaches.

Furthermore, in multilingual societies where English is not the first language, music can serve as an engaging and inclusive tool that overcomes linguistic barriers, making language learning more natural and enjoyable for preschoolers. By addressing implementation challenges, this study contributes to fostering more effective, engaging, and developmentally appropriate approaches to early language acquisition, ensuring that young learners receive the foundational skills needed for their future academic success.

In conclusion, addressing these challenges is essential to maximizing the benefits of music-based strategies in early childhood education. By overcoming barriers such as mispronunciation, isolation, and inappropriate content selection, educators can more effectively leverage music to support English language acquisition among preschoolers. Future research should explore innovative solutions, such as integrating technology or culturally diverse musical content, to further enhance the effectiveness of music-based language learning interventions.

Conclusion and Suggestion

In conclusion, this study has provided a comprehensive exploration of the challenges faced by preschool teachers when integrating music into children's English language acquisition. The findings highlight three main themes: the risk of mispronunciation during singing, children's lack of interest in participating in musical activities, and the need for developmentally appropriate practice (DAP). These challenges highlight the complexity of using music as a pedagogical tool and emphasize the importance of thoughtful implementation to ensure effective language learning outcomes. The study reinforces the notion that while music offers significant benefits for language development, its integration requires careful consideration of linguistic accuracy, student engagement, and cultural relevance.

Based on these findings, several recommendations can be made to improve the integration of music into preschool English language acquisition. First, providing teachers with specific training in using music effectively in language instruction is essential. This training

should include strategies for correcting pronunciation, engaging reluctant students, and selecting culturally appropriate materials. In addition, developing and disseminating resources specifically designed for preschool language learning can help ensure that songs and activities are engaging and linguistically accurate. These resources should cater to diverse cultural backgrounds and learning styles. Encouraging active participation by incorporating a variety of musical activities that appeal to different interests and abilities is also important. Teachers should be flexible in their approach, allowing children to express themselves through music in ways that are meaningful to them (Torrás Vila, 2021).

Furthermore, leveraging digital tools can enhance pronunciation guidance and engagement. Interactive apps and online platforms can offer real-time feedback on pronunciation and provide engaging musical content tailored to individual learning needs. Finally, fostering collaboration between educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers is essential to ensure that music-based language learning strategies are integrated into early childhood education standards. This collaboration can help address systemic barriers and ensure that music is used effectively across different educational settings. By implementing these recommendations, educators and policymakers can better support the integration of music into preschool language learning, ultimately enhancing the linguistic and cognitive development of young learners Arasomwan, (Daries, 2024).

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