

Promoting English Among Indonesian Preschool Learners through Modification of Nursery Rhymes: Challenges and Opportunities

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Promoting English Among Indonesian Preschool Learners Through Modification Of Nursery Rhymes: Challenges And Opportunities

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Abstract: This paper mainly explores the ways of enhancing English development among Indonesian preschool learners through modifications of nursery rhymes. Further, some opportunities and challenges of teaching English for preschool learners are merely elaborated in this article. This study belongs to a qualitative research method with an approach to descriptive analysis. In order to collect data, the writer conducted in-depth interviews to Indonesian preschool teachers. These preschools include "Taman Melati Playgroup", "Ustman bin Affan Playgroup", and "Pertiwi Kindergarten" located in Central Java, Indonesia. In addition, observation was carried out to obtain further data. The result reveals that the modified nursery rhymes have been perceived to encourage some Indonesian preschool learners in learning English. Furthermore, they will be happier and easier to understand the material delivered by the teacher. Nonetheless, there are some obstacles faced by the teachers when introducing English to preschool learners. These include the limited attention and concentration of learners to teachers in teaching and learning process, the limited knowledge and experience from teachers, the difficulties of pronouncing English words, the limited facilities in learning English and the lack of input about English from the environment.

Keywords: Challenges, Modification, Nursery Rhymes, Opportunities, Preschool Learners.

1. INTRODUCTION

In millennial era, English has become a demand for all people since it is used in all aspects. It is considered as a foreign language in several countries including Indonesia. Considering this, English needs to be taught to students in a number of schools. In Indonesia, English has been a compulsory subject in junior high schools. Nevertheless, the English mastery of English seems to be not maximal especially in the aspect of speaking English since the emphasis on English material was more focused on grammar. In addition, students have not been supported by the environment or atmosphere of English causing they have less exposures of English. Additionally, students will be not optimal in learning English if they get less exposure of hearing the people around them speak English [1]. With regard to this, English teachers should have a responsibility to help students particularly improve their ability to get exposures of better English. In other word, students will be able to speak English better if they have better listening skills. The problem above indicates that English is considerably crucial to be introduced to learners from an early age such as in preschool and kindergarten since at that age they are in the golden age so that they will be easier to receive material (input). Learners in early childhood are expected to have the ability to pronounce the right language including English [2]. Further, the mastery and awareness of listening and speaking skills have become the basis for improving reading skills [3]. In accordance with teaching English for learners, there are abundant ways to introduce English to learners in early childhood. One of them is through nursery rhymes which cannot be separated from the children's life. Nursery rhymes can be defined as a composition of charming stories, vibrant language and colorful characters [4]. Besides the use of nursery rhymes, teachers and parents should build qualified interactions with learners including what they do and

provide for the learners significantly in order that their children will have no language impairment that may influence persistent reading and pronunciation difficulties at the next level [5]. Furthermore, in order to develop learners' language development, it is needed the importance of teachers and professional teaching strategies which include knowledge, theories, and belief systems influencing instructional plans, decisions, and actions [6]. It is strengthened by Morrison emphasizing that preschool learners tend to have active learning activities including role play [7].

In contrast to previous studies explaining the role of nursery songs in teaching English in general, this article mainly more focuses on modifying nursery rhymes as a medium for introducing English to preschool learners in Kudus. In this case, the students of Islamic Preschool Education Department at the State Islamic Institute of Kudus teaching in preschools can change or modify the lyrics, content and meaning of songs which is based on the culture, themes, purposes and moral values so that the songs will be easier to be listened, sung and understood by the learners. Thus, this article mainly explores some creations of nursery rhymes that have been modified by Indonesian preschool teachers. In addition, this article merely elaborates a number of challenges and opportunities in introducing English to learners using nursery rhymes.

2. METHOD

This study belongs to a qualitative research method with an approach to descriptive analysis. Regarding a qualitative research, it seeks to probe deeply into the research setting to obtain in depth understanding about the way things are, why they are that way, and how the participants in the context perceive them. Thus, the writers highlight some examples of the modified nursery rhymes and its importance to introduce English among preschool learners in Kudus in which the lyrics are modified based on the needs, culture, and life values. Besides, some challenges and opportunities in introducing English to preschool learners are explored. In order to collect data, the writer conducted in-depth interviews to 12 Indonesian preschool learners related to the use of modified nursery rhymes in introducing English among preschool learners. These preschools include "Taman Melati Playgroup",

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"Ustman bin Affan Playgroup", and "Pertiwi Kindergarten" located in Central Java, Indonesia. In addition, observation was also carried out to obtain further data. In analyzing data, the writers used triangulation techniques comprising of data triangulation and method triangulation

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Creations of Nursery Rhymes Modified by Students of Islamic Preschool Education Department at the State Islamic Institute of Kudus Learners at an early age tend to experience problems in pronunciation of language [8]. This includes in the process of learning English as a foreign language. Since the role of English is used in various countries, namely as an international language, all people are expected to have the ability to speak English well. In Indonesia, teaching English begins to be taught at the junior high school level. This makes the mastery of English the students is not optimal, especially in the aspect of speaking English because the emphasis on English material merely focuses on grammar. Moreover, students are also not enhanced by English language environment or atmosphere so they rarely hear and use English. Nonetheless, there are some certain Indonesian schools in big cities such as Jakarta, Semarang and Surabaya which began to introduce English to their students at the level of kindergarten and elementary school. It is expected that students have a basic knowledge of English from the beginning so that it is easier to develop at the next level of school. Different from the schools in big cities that have introduced English in some preschools, several preschools including play groups and kindergartens in Central Java, Indonesia may have not been maximal in introducing English. This is due to the limited ability of teachers to master English, lack of strategies and methods for introducing English, and the less supportive facilities. Therefore, teachers are expected to have interesting ways, strategies and methods when teaching English in early childhood. One of the ways is by using nursery rhymes that have been modified based on the need and purpose in order to simplify vocabulary and pronunciation of English for learners. By creating and modifying nursery rhymes, teachers can introduce English more easily to learners through singing together. Indeed, music naturally provides opportunities for practicing patterns, mathematical concepts, and shaping the ability to think symbolically and providing entertainment as a way to relieve tension and boredom [14]. There are a number of nursery rhymes which are modified by some Indonesian Preschool teachers. First, the modified nursery rhymes entitled "One, Two, and Three". This song is modified from Indonesian children's songs with the original title "satu, dua, tiga". It has been very popular among Indonesian learners. Therefore, the teachers have modified the song by changing the English lyrics "One, Two, and Three". The content of this song is to introduce learners about family members including father, mother, brother, sister and moral messages to love the family. In addition, it is easily sung by the learners since the lyrics are simple and easy to memorize. The lyrics are "one and one, I love my father, two and two, I love my father, three and three, I love brother and sister, one, two, and three, I love my family". Considering this, the song has been used by teachers in Playgroups and Kindergarten to introduce English to learners. For example in "Taman Melati Playgroup", teachers introduce English by singing nursery rhymes with the title "one, two and three" to the learners. In order to attract the attention of learners, the

teachers usually sing with them by using gestures repeatedly until the song is memorized. Second, the modification of nursery rhyme entitled "Yellow Kuning". This song is a modification of an English song entitled "Are you sleeping" in which the lyrics are modified by combining with Indonesian lyrics. The purpose of the modification is to introduce various colors in learners using English. In addition, the lyrics are very simple and easily sung by learners. Indeed, this has been used by preschool teachers in Kudus. The lyrics are "yellow kuning - yellow kuning, red merah-red merah, blue biru, green hijau, white putih, black hitam". Third, the modified nursery rhymes entitled "Cha Ca Marica He He". It is one of the popular songs in Indonesia. The lyrics are simple and cheerful making the learners love to sing the song. These include "One angka 1, Two angka 2, Three angka 3, Four angka 4, Cha ca marica hehe - cha ca marica hehe, Let's count using English, Five angka 5, Six angka 6, Seven angka 7, Eight angka 8, Nine angka 9, Ten angka 10, Cha ca marica hehe - Cha ca marica he he, Let's count using English". Considering the ease of lyrics, the Indonesian preschool teachers have the ideas to replace the song's lyrics "cha ca marica he he" with lyrics about numbers using English. Then, this modified nursery rhyme is easily sung by the learners to introduce numbers using English. Fourth, the modified nursery rhyme entitled "Lion Singa" is a modification of the nursery rhyme entitled "Are You Sleeping". The purpose of this song modification is to introduce the names of mammals using English to learners even though not all types of animals are mentioned in the song. The lyrics include "Lion singa-lion singa, cat kucing-cat kucing, elephant gajah-elephant gajah, mouse tikus-mouse tikus". The song simply can be sung by teachers and learners easily in enhancing teaching and learning activities. Fifth, the nursery rhyme entitled "Good morning-goodmorning" is a modification of the children's song with the title "ada kodok rekotok rekotok". The rhythm of the song is very interesting for Indonesian preschool learners. Therefore, the song lyrics can be replaced by modifying English and Indonesian lyrics. The purpose of this song is to introduce learners about how to greet and answer other people's greetings. In addition, the lyrics are very simple and easy to memorize. The lyrics are "Selamat pagi Good morning-Good morning, Apa kabar How are you-how are you, Saya senang I'm happy-I'm happy, Setiap hari every day-every day Sixth, the nursery rhyme entitled "Happy Holiday" is a modified song from the English nursery rhymes entitled "baby shark". The song "baby shark" is very famous and sung by children in Indonesia via social media especially YouTube. The unique rhythm accompanied by the repetition at the end of the lyrics has pursued the teachers changes the lyrics of the song to introduce learners about holiday activities. The lyrics include "Happy holiday na na na na na na, Happy holiday na na na na na na, Happy holiday na na na na na na, Holiday. We can play it na na na na na na, We can play it na na na na na na, We can play it na na na na na na, We can play. Don't be shy na na na na na na, Don't be shy na na na na na na, Don't be shy na na na na na na, Don't be shy. Turn around na na na na na na, Turn around na na na na na na, Turn around na na na na na na, Turn around. Be happy na na na na na na, Be happy na na na na na na, Be happy na na na na na na, Be happy". Seventh, the nursery rhyme entitled "Thumb finger-thumb finger where are you" is a modified song from the English song entitled "Mommy finger-mommy finger where are you". The purpose of this song creation is to introduce learners about the kinds of fingers

using English, for example: thumb, fore finger, middle finger, ring finger, and little finger. This song is very interesting for learners. In this matter, teachers can sing while showing fingers with learners. The lyrics include "Thumb Finger-thumb finger where are you, Here I am- here I am, how do you do. Fore finger -fore finger where are you, Here I am-here I am, how do you do, Middle finger-middle finger where are you, Here I am- here I am, how do you do. Ring finger -ring where are you, Here I am- here I am, how do you do. Little finger-little finger where are you, Here I am- here I am, how do you do". The ease of lyrics makes learners easily memorize finger names using English because they learn while singing through songs. Furthermore, the motor and cognitive skills can also develop through songs. This is in accordance with Parlakian, Rebecca, & Lerner highlighting that music and songs, especially nursery rhymes, have tremendous benefits for learners' development and character education including social-emotional skill, motor skill, and cognitive skill [15].

Challenges in Introducing English for Indonesian Preschool Learners

In introducing English to preschool learners, teachers should use strategies and methods that can foster learners and enthusiasm in learning. One of them is by singing modified nursery rhymes. Nonetheless, there are several obstacles in teaching English for preschool learners. These cover:

Limited attention and concentration of learners

Learners cannot be separated from playing activities. At that age, they show their activeness in various ways. For example, when learning in class, most learners are actively playing, joking, and chatting with their friends so that they have less attention and concentration on teachers. Therefore, teachers are required to be able to master the classroom conditions before starting English learning. Moreover, they should recognize the characteristics of learning in preschools so that classroom learning can run well. This is in line with Mays that teachers teaching in Preschool should be able to know the characteristics of how learners learn, develop learning contexts, and realize that learners are active learners who need knowledge and experience from the world outside [16]. The limited level of concentration among learners in learning English is revealed by one of the Indonesian preschool teachers teaching in Taman Melati Playgroup, Indonesia:

"Teaching preschool learners in Playgroups and Kindergartens needs precision and patience. When I taught English at Taman Melati Kudus playgroup, the obstacle is children are busily playing and joking with their friends so I had to set up strategies and master the class before entering the learning process"[17].

Some learners seem passive in learning English

The status of English in Indonesia is a foreign language so learners need time and adaptation about learning English. Therefore, when learners are taught English by their teachers, they seem to be passive in learning English. This could be seen when the teacher ask the learners to sing English, some learners seems to be passive and silent. As it has been reported by the Indonesian preschool teacher at "Pertiwi Kindergarten":

"Some preschool learners initially seems to show shame and passivity when they were asked to sing English songs. This is because they are not familiar with English nursery rhymes. The learners began singing after the teacher sang the songs several times. In this case, the teachers who teach in preschool learners

should be patient in teaching. Further, they should have creativity in teaching so that learners feel interested and active in the learning process" [18].

Limited knowledge of preschool teachers about teaching English for preschool learners

The teachers' lack of insight, knowledge and strategies about teaching English in preschool is an obstacle in learning process. This is due to the different educational background of the preschool teachers so that they have difficulties in creating a pleasant atmosphere when teaching English. Furthermore, the lack of strategies in teaching English for preschool learners, and lack of mastery of learning methods in English for preschool learners. This is in line with the result of observations in three preschools in Central Java, Indonesia that the educational background of preschool English teachers is not English Education so that they have some problems about English teaching method and strategies. As it has been reported by Azizah, the preschool teacher at 'Ustman bin Affan playgroup':

"Introducing English in preschools requires patience, thoroughness and professional skills from the teachers. Learners in this preschool have been introduced to English with basic materials. However, the learning outcomes have not been maximized because the teacher's ability to master English is very limited. This is due to the background of education is not English education so that the teachers have lacks of enthusiasm when teaching English" [19]

In addition, teachers should understand the character and emotions of preschool learners. This is in line with Dekker & Wichgers that learners' emotions need to be considered by the teachers when teaching English because they tend to express feelings and emotions such as pleasure, sadness, fear, anger, surprise, doubt, and so on [20]. Therefore, teachers should be able to control learners' emotions first and ensure that they are in a good condition or mood.

Preschool learners find difficulties pronouncing English Words

In everyday life some preschool learners in Kudus interact with other people using Javanese, while others use Indonesian. Besides, they have not been familiar with English culture. Thus, this makes it difficult for them to learn English, especially in pronouncing English words. The difficulties shown by learners in language acquisition are in accordance with the research conducted by Brodin, et al., that learners tend to have language and speech constraints and they need supports from the teachers [8].The importance of the role of the teachers in the learning process is also emphasized by Klein & Knitzer who explicitly explain that the learning process for preschool learners can succeed if teachers and learners are able to build interaction actively; the teachers are able to create an attractive educational atmosphere, and provide opportunities for learners to be actively involved during the learning process [6].

Limited facilities for learning English

Facilities are one of the supporting aspects in the learning process. Learners will more easily receive material if they are supported by adequate learning facilities. These facilities can be in the form of the available projector in classrooms, comfortable classrooms, the balanced ratio between teachers and learners, English books for preschool learners, interesting collections of English nursery rhymes, English movies and so on. However, such facilities have not been necessarily provided by some

preschools in Indonesia. This is in accordance with Na'imah, the preschool teacher at "Taman Melati Playgroup":

"Adequate facilities have become supporting aspects in the learning process of English for preschool learners. The preschool learners do not have a projector or LCD, the limited collection of English books for learners, unavailable collections of English films, and the ratio between the number of teachers and students is not balanced so the teacher feels overwhelmed when teaching English. Moreover, the lack of ability to create creativity in English is also an obstacle in introducing English to preschool learners" [17].

Based on the explanation above, it can be seen that learning English will run more optimally if it is supported by adequate facilities and the balanced ratio between the number of teachers and students abilities of the teachers.

Preschool Learners have the lack of input about English from the environment

Environment is one of the factors that influence the mastery of the language possessed by learners. Input from the family, environment and school about language in this case English including the availability of visual activities and kinesthetic for learners and pleasant atmosphere or environment is very important for the learners' ability in mastering foreign languages[21]. Input related to English can be in the form of learners-centered activities supported by holistic development including music, dance, stories and songs to provide a natural experience for learners and a positive attitude towards foreign language. Based on observations in several Playgroups and Kindergartens in Indonesia, the input of English from family, environment and schools has been considerably limited. The educational background of learners' parents is not English. In fact, the family members often use Indonesian and Javanese at home when doing an interaction. In addition, people in the neighborhood around learners often use the Javanese language when doing interaction. Thus, it can be seen that input from various aspects really influence the acquisition of learners' language.

Some Opportunities of Introducing English using modified nursery rhymes for Indonesian Preschool learners

Some of the creation of nursery rhymes can provide benefits to learners including values, morals, character, and social-emotional, cognitive and motor development of learners. Furthermore, nursery rhymes can provide a cheerful stimulation to learners since basically music and songs are important aspects of preschools education. This is strengthened by Taylor that learners will be happier and free to move when they hear music. Indeed, they have beneficial physical activity for the health development [22]. In relation to the introduction of English in preschools, the creation of nursery rhymes above can be used as a medium to attract learners' interest when learning English which covers vocabulary, pronunciation, and listening. In other words, learners who repeatedly hear and sing nursery rhymes will be better in vocabulary and able to pronounce it compared to those who never hear and sing the nursery rhymes. This is in accordance with preschool teacher at Ustman Bin Affan Playgroup:

"Teaching preschools learners is not easy. Teachers must have interesting strategies and teaching methods so that learners will be more enthusiastic in learning especially teaching or introducing English to learners. In this case, the creation of children's songs in English can be used as a solution to introduce

English to learners. The teacher can modify the original song by changing the lyrics and adjusting to the culture, conditions of the learners' environment, goals or messages to be conveyed by the teacher. Learners will recognize English vocabulary, mention vocabulary related to colors, members of family, animals and so on" [23].

This is in line with Anifah, the preschool teacher at Taman Melati Play Group:

"Singing can be used as a method to introduce English to early childhood. In this case, the teacher as a facilitator of students must be creative in providing teaching activities because it is more easily absorbed in the golden age. When I teach them about animals, I use songs that I have modified using English. Learners can sing and learn about animal's names using English" [24].

Thus, nursery rhymes have positive and effective values in introducing English to learners. This is strengthened by Nikmah, a preschool teacher at "Pertiwi Kindergarten":

"The benefits of teaching English using nursery rhymes include learners feel more motivated when learning English. By singing, learners become happier and easier to understand the material delivered by the teacher. Through English songs and varied learning activities, the teacher can attract the interest of learners to be more happy and active in learning. Children's motor skills also develop because they feel free to move without pressure" [25].

Based on the interview, it can be seen that teaching English in preschool education is not easy. It requires strategies, methods and creativity to attract learners' interest in learning. In this case, the creation and modification of English learners' songs can be used as a method to teach English for preschools learners. By singing modified nursery rhymes, learners feel more relaxed since they learn English vocabulary while singing. Indeed, they do not feel stressed during learning English. In addition, by creating a joyful learning, learners become more passionate and motivated to learn. Through singing, the learners' development can be maximally stimulated including physical-motor, social, emotional, and intellectual aspects. In other words, singing is an activity that cannot be separated from the learners' lives. This finding is in line with the study conducted by Pourkalhor&Tavakoli reporting that song can be considered as a means to enhance the learners' development in English skills and gives more opportunities to learn grammar, vocabulary, rhythm and pronunciation [11]. Interestingly, the current study more explores on the use of nursery rhymes that have been modified its lyrics associated with the culture and environment in Indonesia. Further, for the sake of simplicity, preschools teachers attempt to modify some nursery rhymes to teach English for preschool learners. In contrast to some previous studies using original English nursery rhymes to teach English, this study has offered something different in using nursery rhymes by modifying its lyrics so that they will be more acceptable for preschool learners. Interestingly, these modified nursery rhymes can considerably create a non-threatening learning environment and make some preschool learners feel more open to English learning..

4 CONCLUSION

Introducing English to preschool learners is considerably crucial since at an early age learners will receive language more easily and quickly. However, some preschool teachers in Kudus still find obstacles in introducing English to learners. In this case, they should be able to master the methods and strategies in learning English. One of them is by using the creation of nursery rhymes

which have been modified by replacing lyrics that are adjusted to culture, material, needs or goals. By singing nursery rhymes, learners feel more motivated when learning English. Indeed, learners will be happier and easier to understand the material delivered by the teacher. Through modified nursery rhymes and varied learning activities, teachers can attract the interest of learners to be more happy and active in learning. Moreover, the learners' motor skills also develop because they feel free to move without any pressure. However, there are some obstacles faced when introducing English to learners such as the limited attention and concentration of learners in teaching and learning process, limited knowledge and experience from teachers, the difficulties of pronouncing English words among learners and limited means of support and facilities in learning English. It should be noted that this study has explored some creations of nursery rhymes modified by Indonesian preschool teachers. There are only seven nursery rhymes that have been modified by them that can be used as a media to introduce English for preschool learners in Kudus. The findings of this study kindly suggest that future researchers conduct studies of English for preschool learners from different and wider aspects. In addition, preschool teachers should be aware of children's characteristics, style in language learning, and teaching methodology for preschool learners. By conducting such research, we would possibly obtain wider insights on how modified nursery rhymes contribute to positive attitudes to preschool learners in learning English. Further, the modified nursery rhymes have implications for a pedagogical aspect in which it can be used to create a non-threatening learning environment.

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