IMPROVING THE ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION OF KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS IN GROUP A THROUGH THE USE OF SONGS: AN ACTION RESEARCH STUDY AT KB – TK ISLAM AL AZHAR 41 PALEMBANG

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Abstrak: Penelitian tindakan ini menguji efektivitas penggunaan lagu anak-anak berbahasa Inggris sebagai pendekatan pedagogis untuk meningkatkan kemampuan pengucapan siswa Kelompok A Taman Kanak-kanak. Peserta penelitian berusia antara 4 dan 5 tahun; 16 siswa hadir pada tahap awal (pre-test) dan 15–16 siswa hadir pada siklus intervensi. Tiga fase tes pengucapan lisan digunakan untuk mengumpulkan data: Pre-test (8 pertanyaan), Post-test Siklus 1 (10 pertanyaan), dan Post-test Siklus 2 (8 pertanyaan). Tujuan intervensi berbasis lagu ini adalah untuk mengatasi masalah fonologis umum, terutama gugusan konsonan kompleks dan vokal bahasa Inggris yang berbeda, dengan menggunakan kualitas ritmis dan repetitif musik. Tingkat akurasi total meningkat dari 53,1% pada Pre-test menjadi 78,1% setelah Siklus 1 dan kemudian menjadi 84,2% setelah Siklus 2, menunjukkan peningkatan yang signifikan dalam akurasi pengucapan. Pelafalan istilah sulit "Crocodile," yang mengalami peningkatan pengucapan yang tepat dari hanya dua siswa pada Pre-test menjadi delapan pada Post-test Siklus 2, merupakan pencapaian yang signifikan. Peningkatan ini menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan lagu memberikan cara yang menyenangkan, bebas stres, dan efisien bagi pelajar EFL muda untuk mempelajari fonem bahasa Inggris yang sulit dan mengembangkan prosodi mereka secara umum. Menurut temuan penelitian, metode berbasis lagu adalah cara yang sangat cocok dan berhasil untuk mengajarkan pelafalan dasar bahasa Inggris kepada anak-anak berusia empat hingga lima tahun.

Kata Kunci: Penelitian Tindakan, Pelafalan Bahasa Inggris, Taman Kanak-Kanak, Lagu, Pelajar Muda, Fonik.

Abstract: This action research study examined the efficacy of employing English children's songs as a pedagogical approach to enhance the pronunciation abilities of Kindergarten Group A students. Students between the ages of 4 and 5 made up the participants; 16 were present for the baseline (pre-test) and 15–16 were present for the intervention cycles. Three phases of oral pronunciation tests were used to gather data: the Pre-test (8 questions), Post-test Cycle 1 (10 questions), and Post-test Cycle 2 (8 questions). The goal of the song-based intervention was to address typical phonological issues, especially complex consonant clusters and distinct English vowels, by utilizing the rhythmic and repetitive qualities of music. The total accuracy rate rose from 53.1% in the Pre-test to 78.1% after Cycle 1 and then to 84.2%

after Cycle 2, indicating a notable improvement in pronunciation accuracy. The pronunciation of the difficult term "Crocodile," which witnessed an increase in proper output from just two pupils in the Pre-test to eight in the Post-test Cycle 2, was a significant accomplishment. This increase demonstrates that using songs gives young EFL learners a fun, stress-free, and efficient way to learn difficult English phonemes and develop their prosody in general. According to the study's findings, the song-based method is a very suitable and successful way to teach foundational English pronunciation to children between the ages of four and five.
Keywords: *Action Research, English Pronunciation, Kindergarten, Songs, Young Learners, Phonics.*

INTRODUCTION

The early acquisition of correct pronunciation is a cornerstone of effective English communication. For Kindergarten students (Young Learners), specifically those in the 4–5-year-old range, this foundational skill is particularly crucial, as these early language experiences shape their future linguistic development (Hurlock, 1978; Alqahtani, 2014). However, sounds and intonation patterns that are absent from their original tongue frequently provide serious challenges for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners (Wei, 2006; Nur, 2014).

This action research study investigates the efficacy of utilizing English children's songs as an instructional medium to enhance the pronunciation skills of students in Kindergarten Group A. The research aims to assess the degree to which a structured, song-based intervention can enhance students' capacity to produce accurate English phonemes, rhythm, and intonation.

The teacher-researcher observed consistent difficulty among Kindergarten Group A students in accurately producing several key English phonemes, especially those within multi-syllabic words and consonant clusters. Due to this challenge, an intervention was required to increase student confidence and improve intelligibility.

There are various theoretical and pedagogical advantages to this research. In theory, the findings can be used as a guide by educators and other researchers to implement or create similar or other approaches for learning English or other languages in the same or different aspects with the same or different circumstances. This research can be beneficial to several parties in terms of pedagogy. Students should use the first one. Students will learn more easily and joyfully using this approach. Teachers should use the second one. The same approach can be used by other teacher researchers to enhance learning in the same or different areas with the

same or different issues.

RESEARCH METHODS

1.   The Music-Language Neuro-Connection (Neuro-Linguistic Basis)

Experts in psycholinguistics and early childhood education identify a strong link between music and language acquisition (Darwin, 1871; Kotilahti et al., 2014). Auditory processing for both music and speech often activates overlapping neural networks, suggesting a shared cognitive infrastructure (François & Schön, 2011).

- **Rhythm and Pitch:** Songs provide an authentic, melodorhythmic context for young learners to internalize the natural stress, intonation, and rhythm (prosody) of English, which are crucial for intelligibility (Cakir, 2006; Sihvonen, 2014).

- **Repetition and Memory:** The repetitive nature of song lyrics and melodies aids the brain's capacity for statistical learning (Saffran et al., 1996; Lazem, 2014). This repetition makes it easier for young children to process, remember, and spontaneously reproduce new phonetic patterns (Murphy, 1990; Said, 2014).

- **Affective Filter:** Music is widely known to create a relaxed and low-anxiety learning atmosphere (Demirel, 2004; Krashen, 1981). By lowering the "affective filter," songs increase learners' motivation and receptivity to new linguistic input (Rosová, 2013; Lee & Lin, 2014).

2.   Songs in Early Language Development

Songs serve as an authentic and engaging language resource that aligns perfectly with the characteristics of young learners (Scott & Ytreberg, 1990; Brewster et al., 2002).

- **Phonological Awareness:** Singing activities directly enhance phonological awareness—the ability to recognize and manipulate sounds in spoken language, which is a key precursor to literacy (Zhang et al., 2014).

- **Pronunciation Practice:** Songs offer opportunities for choral repetition and imitation of native-like pronunciation models, intonation, and connected speech patterns (Rorintulus, 2014; Boustani, 2013), often proving less tedious than traditional drill exercises (Sharpe, 2001).

- **Motivation and Engagement:** Studies consistently show that songs boost motivation and foster a positive association with language learning (Cullen, 1999; Shin, 2012).

3.   **Methodology**

  1) **Research Design and Participants**

This study employed a **Classroom Action Research (CAR) design** over two cycles, following the Plan-Act-Observe-Reflect model.

Participants in this study are Kindergarten Group A students, aged 4–5 years old. 16 children were present for the pre-test and post-test cycle 1. 15 children were present for the post-test cycle 2. The instruction used simple, repetitive children's songs focusing on animal names, specifically targeting words found to be challenging in the initial assessment. The intervention was carried out over two cycles.

  2) **Assessment Instruments**

Oral pronunciation tests were administered at three stages:

   1. **Pre-test:** 8 animal names/questions (Total 128 response opportunities).

   2. **Post-test Cycle 1:** 10 animal names/questions (Total 160 response opportunities).

   3. **Post-test Cycle 2:** 8 animal names/questions (Total 120 response opportunities).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

A.   Pronunciation Test Results Overview

The results below clearly demonstrate the progression of the students' pronunciation skills across the two intervention cycles.

Table 1: Summary of Class Pronunciation Improvement

Assessment Stage	(Students Present)	Total Questions	Total Response Opportunities	Total Correct Pronunciations	Total Accuracy Rate
Pre-test	16	8	128	68	**53.1%**
Post-test Cycle 1	16	10	160	125	**78.1%**
Post-test Cycle 2	15	8	120 (15 x 8)	101	**84.2%**

The overall group accuracy rate showed a significant increase from 53.1% in the Pre-test to 84.2% after the second cycle, representing a final gain of 31.1 percentage points and validating the effectiveness of the song-based approach.

Table 2: Score Distribution Comparison

Score (Correct Answers)	Post-test Cycle 1 (=16, Max 10)	Post-test Cycle 2 (=15, Max 8)
Perfect Score	4 students (Score 10)	5 students (Score 8)
-1 Error	3 students (Score 9)	5 students (Score 7)
-2 Errors	2 students (Score 8)	4 students (Score 6)
Lowest Score	2 students (Score 5)	1 student (Score 2)

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B.   Phonological Analysis of Target Words

The most compelling evidence of the intervention's impact is seen in the improvement on previously difficult words, particularly "Crocodile."

Table 3: Pronunciation Accuracy for Challenging Items

Word	Test	Correct Students	Accuracy	Primary Challenging Phonemes
Crocodile	Pre-test	2	12.5%	Initial /kr/ cluster, the long word structure, and final syllables.
Horse	Post-test 1	4	25.0%	Vowel /ɔ:/ or /oʊ/, and the final /rs/ consonant sequence.
Seal	Post-test 1	8	50.0%	Vowel /i:/ (long E) and clear articulation of the final /l/.

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Targeted Improvement: The Case of "Crocodile"

The most significant finding is the improvement on the pronunciation of **"Crocodile"**. The number of students who could correctly pronounce the word increased from **2 in the Pre-test** to **8 in the Post-test Cycle 2**. This four-fold improvement suggests that the songs, which

likely emphasized the rhythmic pattern and sequencing of syllables, were highly effective in addressing this complex phonological challenge.

Discussion

The findings confirm the significant pedagogical value of integrating songs into early EFL pronunciation instruction. The substantial increase in the overall accuracy rate from 53.1% to 84.2% and the targeted mastery of complex words like "Crocodile" validates the approach. The rhythmic and engaging nature of the songs successfully lowered the affective filter and provided memorable, continuous auditory input, which is key for developing accurate English phonemes and prosody.

CONCLUSION

This action research study effectively showed that Kindergarten Group A students' English pronunciation accuracy was much enhanced by the inclusion of targeted English songs. The results provide compelling evidence for the idea that songs can effectively address segmental and suprasegmental pronunciation aspects in early language instruction.

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