UTILIZING SONG "THERE IS AN ANIMAL" TO TEACH VOCABULARY AND BASIC SENTENCE STRUCTURE TO YOUNG LEARNERS THROUGH THREE STAGES ACTIVITY

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Abstract

This paper aims to describe the importance, role, and implementation of using song "There is an Animal" to teach vocabulary and basic sentence structure to young learners through three stages activity. Some experts argue that children will have higher chances to become more proficient if they begin learning a second language earlier rather than learning it later. Children can learn as many spoken language as we allow them to hear systematically and regularly at the same time. In children's class, a positive learning atmosphere can be created by providing favourable environment, useful resources, carefully structured input, and practice opportunities. An effort which can be done is by utilizing song. The use of song in teaching English to young learners gives lots of benefits and advantages. The development of songs into language learning tasks can be a way to optimize advantages and minimize limitations of the use of songs. To utilize song as a powerful tool to teach English for children, there are many strategies which can be used. These strategies are about transforming singing song as an activity into a well-planned and structured classroom task by utilizing the song. Classroom tasks for young learners have three stages that once can be identified, analyzed, adapted, and expanded. Therefore, songs must be developed into a task with preparation, core, and follow-up stages which in result can help transferring the words in the song into use and maximize the potential of songs as teaching and learning tools.

Keywords: children, song, teaching English as foreign language (TEFL), young learners.

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I. Introduction

➢ Children and EFL

Nowadays, English has become an international language for more than fifty years. It makeslots of people learn English. The urgencyto master English well as a *lingua franca* has made people to learn English as early as possible. In Indonesia, English is taught before children enter playgroup.There is a special class for children who are still around two or three years old. This is because the factgives support that the best age to learn a foreign language is when children are still in a very young age. This phenomenon has made Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) becomes one popular topic. It is indicated by lots of publication about TEYL and the presence of English course for children (Yuliana, 2003: 62).

Rixon (1999) in Yuliana (2003: 62) states the definition of young learners that is children between the ages of about 5 years old to 12 years old. But, there is another expert whose name is Lynne Cameron who argues that young learners are those under 14 years old. Finally, Yuliana (2003: 62) decidesthat what is meant by young learners based on the years spent in the primary or elementary stages of formal education, it means that children are they whoare still in primary or elementary school.

Some experts have done their research. They argue thatchildren will have higher chances to become more proficient if they begin learning a second language earlier rather than learning it later. Researchers also claim that the age between six and thirteen years old is the most suitable time to learn other languages (Ara, 2009: 162).

One supporting theory of early language learning is called the critical period hypothesis. This theory reveals thatlanguage can be learnt easier in abiologically specific period of life. According to researchers like Lenneberg (1967) and Bickerton (1981),certain abilities of acquiring a language decrease after the critical period. It happens during puberty;so, people rarely learn a second language after his puberty. This argument is

added by Curtiss, a linguistics professor, in Curtain and Dahlberg (2004)thatthe power of learning language is so great in the young age.It does not matter how many languages which we want tolearn. Children can learn as many spoken language as we allow them to hear systematically and regularly at the same time. Theydo have this capacity. Children's brain is ripe to do this.Curtain and Dahlberg (2004) also believe that the amount of time spent for learning a foreign language is the main factor in building proficiency. It is because when language learning starts earlier, it can last longer and provide more practice and experience which lead ultimately to greater fluency and effectiveness (Ara, 2009: 162-163).

Young learners require the feel of making progress. They need to be encouraged continually as well as praised to achieve good performance. In addition, parents have an important role to encourage and therefore help their children to learn even they only have a little knowledge of English. Parents can make their children to be habituated in using English in daily activity. Parents may also influence their young children's attitudes to language learning and other cultures. It is now generally accepted because the most lifelong attitudes are formed when children are in the age of eight or nine (Brunello and Borşan, 2013: 124).

➢ The Importance of Using a Suitable Approach

Brown (2000) in Kömür, Saraç, and Seker (2005: 109-110) states that learning a second language is a complex and long process. A person is affected wholly as he struggles to reach beyond the confines of his first language into a new language, a new culture, a new way of thinking, feeling, and acting. In this respect, he has to overcome some challenges experienced in the process of learning a second or foreign language. Moreover, total involvement, total commitment, a total physical, intellectual, and emotional response are necessary to successfully send and receive messages in the target language.

People have their own periodical cognitive development. Each stage in their life has different characteristics which lead to different ways of life. For instance, children can memorize and initiate learning easily than adults. But, adults can think more critically than the children even they have different ability in memorizing. This factor influences on how they learn and what is the best way to learn which give impact on the preference of appropriate approach to teach them whether they are children or adults.

Alptekin (2002) in Kömür, Saraç, and Seker (2005: 110) argues about the acquisition of a second language at an early age that children who had experience of learning a second language is suggested to develop an awareness of meta-language and cognitive flexibility and better cognitive processing ability and linguistic perception. Some arguments also appear that they have more talented reception, self-confidence, and personal development. In addition, they have higher concentration, synthesizing and abstracting competence, and better reading ability; thus, it results in more literate people than those who have only spoken one language.

Actually, children have an innate ability to learn a language. But, they can not learn well if they feel bored and unexcited with their lessons. Children will learn better through interestingactivities.It is why songs, rhymes, and games can be veryuseful tools for teaching a foreign language to children. These are the tools which can help children to enjoy learning in comfortable environment without getting pressure of learninga foreign language (Ara, 2009: 162).

There is an online article entitled "The Child as a Learner" available on www.teachingenglish.org in Ara (2009: 163) which explains that children have immense ability to learn a language. But, it is still the methods and techniques for teaching foreign language to children are different from adults.A wrong method of teaching may leadto a bad result. So, it is very important to consider what can stop children from learning a language. One example is children

will stop learning a language in uncomfortable or under pressure condition. Moreover, the difficulty in understanding the theoretical concepts of grammar rules may confuse them even more. Children are also not able to concentrate on tedious activities for long time due to their short attention spans. As a result, boredom makes children disinterested in the classroom. Another example is excessive correction by teacher. Research has revealed that some of these traditional educational practices in classroom teaching may prevent rather than help children to learn appropriately. Therefore, no one can force children to learn a language; learning a language must be done upon their awareness. However, a positive learning atmosphere can be created in children's class by providing favourable environment, useful resources, carefully structured input, and practice opportunities.

> ### The Purpose of the Paper

This paper is written with purpose to describe the importance, role, and implementation of using song "There is an Animal" to teach vocabulary and basic sentence structure to young learners through three stages activity.

II. Methods

This study employs a literature review method as the technique to elaborate the concept ofutilizing song "There is an Animal" to teach vocabulary and basic sentence structure to young learners through three stages activity. There are some reasons of why the literature review method is used in this study. Cronin, Ryan, and Coughlan (2008: 38) answer this by stating "The reasons for undertaking a literature review are numerous and include eliciting information for developing policies and evidence-based care, a step in the research process and as part of an academic assessment".

Literature review can be defined as an objective, thorough summary, and critical analysis of the relevant available research and non-research literature on the topic being studied (Hart, 1998). Carnwell and Daly (2001) give comments on the

concept of literature review that its goal is to bring the reader up-to-date with current literature on a topic and form the basis for another goal, such as the justification for future research in the area. A good literature review gathers information about a particular subject from many sources. It is well written and contains few if any personal biases. It should contain a clear search and selection strategy.

This studyemploys meta-synthesis technique. Meta-synthesis is the non-statistical technique used to integrate, evaluate, and interpret the findings of multiple qualitative research studies. Such studies may be combined to identify their common core elements and themes. Findings from phenomenological, grounded theory or ethnographic studies may be integrated and used. Unlike meta-analysis, where the ultimate intention is to reduce findings, meta-synthesis involves analysing and synthesizing key elements in each study which having aim to transform individual findings into new conceptualizations and interpretations (Polit and Beck, 2006).

III. Discussions

➤ The Definition of Song

Griffee (1995) in Rosová (2007: 10) state that song refers to pieces of music which contain words or lyrics, especially popular songs such as those which are usually played on the radio. Moreover, Rosová (2007: 14) adds thatsongs contain the power of music as well as the power of lyrics. In her opinion, music can touchpeople's hearts, while the lyrics and the words flow into people's minds; so, songs can draw us into their own world.

According to Shen (2009: 88), song is defined as a combination between music and lyricshaving many intrinsic meritswhich are called as a kaleidoscope of culture, expressiveness, recitability, and therapeutic functions rendering it an invaluable source for language teaching. In addition, Razmjoo, Mehrpur, and Darban (2012: 103) state that songs contain rhythmic and melodic content that represents a specific form of communication in a linguistic sense.

To be concluded, song can be defined as a unity of music (instrument) with lyric which contains culture, expression, rhythm, melody, and other components in it to deliver the message of song.

➤ Underlying Theories

All children love music and fond of singing song. This is the nature of young learners. It is why music has long been utilized in the EFL/ ESL classrooms. Lots of literature evidence have existed to show that music gives benefits in teaching second and foreign language to young learners (Tuan and An, 2010: 23).

According to Millington (2011: 139), the utilization of song as language learning tasks can optimizeits role as teaching and language learning tool. There are some benefits achieved by using songs in language classroom; but, songs are often used ineffectively. It is because songs are often used as activities between learning. Moreover, it does not matter how enjoyable or memorable singing songs can be because singing songs in itself will not teach learners to use language and give them ability to communicate in another language. But, songs must be developed into a task with preparation, core, and follow-up stages which in result can help transferring the words in the song into use and maximize the potential of songs as teaching and learning tools.

In short, song can be a powerful pedagogical tool. The use of song in teaching English to young learners gives lots of benefits and advantages. One of the advantages is flexibility. Murphey (1992) in Millington (2011: 134) states that songs can be used for lots of purposes. Moreover, song is considered as a valuable pedagogical tool. Songs can help young learners improve listening skill and pronunciation. Songs are also potential to develop speaking skill. Songs can also be useful tools to learn vocabulary, sentence structure, and sentence pattern, not to mention their reflectivity of mother tongue culture. According to Cameron (2001) in

Millington (2011: 137), the development of songs into language learning tasks can be a way to optimize advantages and minimize limitations of the use of songs. It can turn a song into a useful tool for language learning and teachingeven this alone can not help teachers develop a greater repertoire of songs.

Moreover, Read (2007) in Tuan and An (2010: 23) states that rhymes, chants, and songs can be utilized as an opening or closing part of lesson, an integrated part of language, a story, or a topic-based project. They can also be optimized to increase knowledge and skill in other subject matters, for example, numeracy or citizenship issues, such as taking care environment. According to Horn (2007) in Tuan and An (2010: 25), songs can be utilized as greeting, command, memory skill, vocabulary and creativity, relaxation and motivation, expression of joy, and community awareness. Song is the most valuable educational tool which can help language acquisition as well as whole learner's physical and mental development (Tuan and An, 2010: 26).

According to Salcedo (2002) in Tse (2013: 87), songs are considered as a unity of memory of text which can support language acquisition effectively. Songs can also improve students' knowledge of grammatical structures. In addition, accent, intonation, and rhythm can easily be imitated by young children. Children can improve their pronunciation greatly because their focus is on the sound, not meaning (Reilley and Ward, 1997 and Klancar, 2009 in Tse, 2013: 87). Finally, Tse (2013: 87) concludes that songs can strengthen children's language skill, linguistic knowledge, pronunciation, and cultural consciousness.

➢ **Implementation in the Classroom**

According to Ohman-Rodrigeuz (2004) in Paquette and Rieg (2008: 227-228), music has been utilized to maximize the learning power of young children for many years. To utilize song as a powerful tool to teach English for children,

there are many strategies which can be used. These strategies are about transforming singing song as an activity into a well-planned and structured classroom task by utilizing the song.

Cameron (1997) and Cameron (2001) in Millington (2011: 138) state that classroom tasks for young learners have three stages that once can beidentified, analyzed, adapted, and expanded.For many years, ithas also been common practice to arrange reading activities in three stages which are called pre-reading, reading,and post-reading. Cameron (2001) in Millington (2011: 138)adds that the core activity is very important thing; it is because without the core, the task will collapse. Moreover, the preparation activities must be ableto help students preparing themselves to successfully complete the core activity. These activities may include pre-teaching of language items or activating topic vocabulary. Then, the completion of the core activity must be built by the follow-up stage.

Fig. 1. Three Stages in "Task" for Young Learners, Cameron (2001) in Millington (2011: 138)

In the preparation stage, teacher writes the vocabulary which is available in the song "There is an Animal", such as: big, ear, long, nose, elephant, leg, neck, tall, giraffe, short, mouth, hippo, et cetera. The teacher gives model of how to pronounce it and asks the students to follow. After drilling pronunciation, the teacher provides the translation of each word in the mother tongue language. Each student is then asked about the meaning of some words to make them remember the words and meanings.

Then, the teacher writes some phrases and clauses which are available in the song, such as: "There is an animal with …; What is it?; I know; It is a/an …; et cetera". The teacher gives model of how to pronounce those utterances and asks the students to follow. After that, the teacher provides the translation of each utterance. Next, each student can be asked to explain about how to describe an animal (for example, the

students will answer by using clause "There is an animal with …"), how to mention an animal (by using "It is a/an …"), how to question the name of an animal (by using "What is it?"), et cetera. Until this step, all vocabulary, phrase, and clause have been introduced to the students. They have been familiar with vocabulary in the song and its sentence structure. To make students interested, pictures can be used to represent the vocabulary which is taught, for example by providing the pictures of animals which are available in the song.This is what we call as preparation stage activity.

In the core stage, students are asked to sing the song many times in order to get the students involved and interested.It will be good to vary the pace or volume and ask the students to perform actions and sing along together. The teacher asks the students to make demonstration when singing the song. For example in the lyrics "There is an animal with big, big ears. There is an animal with a long, long nose", students are asked to point out their ears to express "big

ears" (by making big circle with their hands) and their nose to express "long nose" (by making illustration with their hands to describe long nose). It is just the same in the next lyrics "There is an animal with long, long legs. There is an animal with a long, long neck", students are again asked to illustrate long legs and long neck using their body parts. By this way, students have learned how to describe some animals like elephant, giraffe, hippo, and monkey. Till this stage, students have learned some aspects which are vocabulary, basic sentence structure, how to question ("What is it?"), how to answer ("It is a/an …; Yes, it is"), and how to describe ("There is an animal with …").

Finally, the completion of core stage must successfully be built by the follow-up stage. In the follow-up stage, students must be encouraged to use the vocabulary or sentence structures which are derived from the song. Yet, the success of this stage depends on the circumstances of the teacher. The follow-up stage may consists of some activities such as written production, either through

writing sentences or filling gap activities, or oral production by mean of role-playin which vocabulary learned is used contextually(Millington,2011: 139).

In practice, students can be asked to describe about the characteristics of an animal in front of the class. The animal is chosen by the teacher spontaneously. Then, the teacher gives the picture of chosen animal to be described by the students orally. The teacher may help the students when they get difficulty in uttering their ideas. To build communicative conversation, the teacher and other students may ask about aspects which have not been described yet.

According to Yuliana (2003: 63), the utilization of songs can enhance children's language skills such as listening, speaking, and writing. These skills are put in order because the children will learn how to listen the song first, then how to speak or sing aloud, and finally how to write the lyrics.

IV. Conclusion

Song can be a powerful tool to teach English for children. It is because the nature of children who love music and fond of singing song. The utilization of song as a powerful tool to teach English for children must be well-planned and structured task. Singing song itself will not teach the children anything. It will give nothing to them. But, song must be transformed into a well-planned and structured task which has three stages called preparation, core, and follow-up stage. By learning English through song and fun activity, children will learn language in free stress and fun condition. Thus, the language skills and linguistics knowledge of the children will be well-developed.

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