

# IMPROVING ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION THROUGH CHILDREN SONGS

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## ABSTRACT

General characteristics of children that are related to their capability and aptitude are: 1) they ask question all the time, 2) they are able to make some decisions about their own learning, 3) they have definite views about what they like and don't like doing, and 4) they are able to work with others and learn from others. In learning english, it seems difficult for them to pronounce well, when they read some vocabularies. The following activities can be applied in the classroom, to make them happy and enjoy the lesson. It just need a simple media, since every school has a tape recorder. English children songs are provided in some bookstores, and the price is not so expensive. The students will satisfy and enjoy listening to the song. The students are able to memorize the words and their pronunciation easily, it will help students in learning english pronunciation.

**KEY WORDS:** *children song, pronunciation.*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Children always want to know and search information about something, especially if those things are new and strange for them. They will ask people around them, to know more information about everything. The curiosity of the children is very high. As Donalds says that children actively tries to make sense of the world and asks questions (2004:4). Children always want to know and search information about something, especially if those things ate new and

strange for them. They will ask people around them, to know more information about everything.

Children are an interesting object to be observed. They like playing, they are so active, and also so cute and intelligent. Sometimes, children are able to work with other and they also will learn from other. Childhood is unforgettable period. They can do anything they want to do. Children never think that it disturbs others or not, and they also do not think that it inflicts others or not. They will play

the whole time as they want. Those illustrations are appropriate to Scott and Ytlberg statement that the nature of children is love to play (1990: 2-4). Scott identifies some general characteristics of children that are related to their capability and aptitude, those are: 1) they ask question all the time, 2) they are able to make some decision about their own learning, 3) they have definite views about what they like and don't like doing, and 4) they are able to work with others and learn from others.

## **II. TEACHING PRONUNCIATION**

Hornby (1995:928) says that pronunciation is the way in which a language is spoken; the way in which a word is pronounced; the way a person speaks the words of a language. Pronunciation is the way a word or a language is usually spoken; the manner in which someone utters word ([wikipediaorg/wiki/pronunciation](http://wikipediaorg/wiki/pronunciation)). From the definitions above, we can take conclusion that pronunciation is the way person utters a word or a language.

The following is Jeremy Harmer's explanation in pronunciation teaching (2002:1883):

“There are three alternatives are conveyed by Harmer. First, whole lesson: making pronunciation the main focus of lesson does not mean that every minute of the lesson has to be spent on pronunciation work. Second, discrete slots:

some teachers insert short, separate bits of pronunciation work into lesson sequences. And the last alternative is integrated phases: many teachers get students to focus on pronunciation issues as an integrated part of lesson”.

In teaching Pronunciation, teacher should decide what technique or alternative way he chooses. By deciding the alternatives he uses in teaching English pronunciation, he can make an appropriate strategy based on the alternative to get a maximum result. It is needed an enthusiasm in teaching English pronunciation so that both teacher and students get a good result in it. It can be done by encouraging the students that they can do the best. Besides that, it also can be done by asking the students to present their ability in pronouncing English words so that other students know that they can do it well. By doing this, students have a great spirit to learn how to pronounce English words well.

Correct pronunciation is needed for a speaker to communicate. If our pronunciation is incorrect, we will not be understood. The result will be that people will think you are speaking in a foreign language and English people will think you are speaking another language.

It is more important for us as language teachers to have a good pronunciation. If we have not a good pronunciation, how can we enable our students to pronounce correctly? e.g. I need some medicines for my cough.(cough[kof], caw[kau]). He is

not a boy who is afraid of hardship and death. (with or without a pause before "who" is quite different.)

As a means of communication by word of mouth, language is used in oral speech and in reading aloud. Therefore, in order to make oneself easily understood while expressing one's own or other people's thoughts in any language, one must be able to pronounce words and sentences in that language quite correctly.

Pronunciation is more important than phonetic. Stress and intonation are as important as the sounds themselves and should be taught from the very beginning. Whether pronunciation needs special attention or focus in language teaching depends on many factors especially learner factors. Learners whose native language has similar sounds to English are less likely to have problems with pronunciation

The goal of teaching Pronunciation are: 1) to pronounce correctly all the speech sounds of the language and all the combinations in their proper order not only isolated words, but also in sentences, 2) to pronounce sentences fluently at the speed required by the situation with correct stresses, linking of sounds, rhythm, pauses and intonation. Critical period hypothesis states that if humans do not learn a foreign language before a certain age, then due to changes such as maturation of the brain, it becomes impossible to learn the foreign language like a native speaker.

The presentation of teaching pronunciation:

1) Introduce the sound.

The first step in actual classroom instruction is to introduce the sound, to focus the students' attention on the teaching point. e.g. We can teach the words eat, he, she, seat, see, etc. with the help of learning A,B,C,D,E,

2) Imitate the sound

The sound system is known to be learned best through imitation of the sound patterns, description of phonological systems and comparison and contrast of different sounds. By imitation, students learn a new sound by listening to the teacher's modeling, following the teacher's model and trying to produce the sound in the way the teacher do. Since most of the teachers are not native speaker of English, tapes or records are very helpful for the students.

From those principle of teaching pronunciation mentions in <http://5974.71.99/2009/yyy/Jiaoan/unit.doc> above, it is important for the teacher to create an interesting activity in a class, such as using of children song media. The students will satisfy and enjoy listening to the song. The students are able to memorize the words and their pronunciation easily, it will help students in learning english pronunciation.

### **III. WHY ENGLISH SONG CAN HELP?**

Songs provide examples of authentic, memorable and rhythmic language. They can be motivation for students' to repeatedly listen to and imitate their musical heroes. Here, we look at some aspects of pronunciation that can be focused on through songs:

1) Using songs to focus on sounds

Sounds are the smallest unit from which words are formed and can be categorised as vowels and consonants. The question is why are they difficult? As languages differ in their range of sounds, students have to learn to 'physically' produce certain sounds previously unknown to them., and learners can find sounds difficult to pick out, and may not see the point in focusing on them. However, incorrectly pronounced sounds strain communication, sometimes even changing a phrase's meaning.

How songs can help ? First, songs are authentic and easily accessible examples of spoken English. The rhymes in songs provide listeners with repetition of similar sounds. Second, students often choose to listen to songs over and over again, indirectly exposing them to these sounds.

## 2) Using Song to Focus on Words

Words are combinations of sounds which form together to give meaning. A word is uttered in syllables, usually one emphasised syllable (the stress) and the rest weak (unstressed).

How songs can help? First, words in songs fit the music, helping learners associate the number of syllables / stress in these words, with memorable rhythms. Second, The relaxed atmosphere songs create can expose students to this difficult pronunciation area, without their realizing. Third, songs contain endless examples of weak syllables, helping to convince learners of the way English is pronounced.

## 3) Using Song to Focus on Connected Speech

Connected speech is the natural way we speak, linking together and emphasising certain words, rather than each word standing alone. Contractions (two words forming one) are an extreme example of the way we connect speech, to the extent that the written form too is affected.

How songs can help? First, Songs, and especially the chorus, provide real and 'catchy' examples of how whole phrases are pronounced often to the extent that students find it difficult to pick out individual words. The music further emphasises the 'flow' of the words. Second, songs, like other spoken texts, are full of contractions. Third, students can be keen to reproduce this, in order to sing the song as they hear it.

There are no 'standard' songs for teaching pronunciation. Any song can be an example of different pronunciation aspects. However, we try to choose songs that are clear (use quality recordings where possible), not too fast, memorable, likely to appeal to our learners (possibly songs they already know) and easy to create activities for, depending on the area of pronunciation we are focusing on.

## IV. CHILDREN SONG

Children's song may be a [nursery rhyme](#) set to music, a song that young children invent and share among themselves, or a modern creation intended for entertainment, use in the home, or education. Although children's songs have been recorded and studied in some cultures more than

others, they appear to be universal in human society.

Pioneers of the academic study of children's culture [Iona](#) and [Peter Opie](#) divided children's songs into those taught to children by adults, which when part of a traditional culture they saw as nursery rhymes, and those that children taught to each other, which formed part of the independent culture of childhood. A further use of the term is for songs written for the entertainment, or education, of children, usually in the modern era. In practice none of these categories is entirely discreet, since, for example, children often reuse and adapt nursery rhymes and many songs now considered as traditional were deliberately written by adults for commercial ends. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/children's song](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/children's_song).

There are many reasons why children songs are good for English pronunciation. It has many contributions in pronunciation teaching.

1) Children songs are funny.

They promote mimics, gestures which are associated to the meaning. They are good to introduce suprasegmental phonetics. Children songs can be applied to comprehension stages (listening) or production (singing). There are songs for all ages and levels. Students can learn English very easily through echoic memory.

2) Children songs also help children remember things more easily and draw children more deeply into a lesson.

3) Music and rhythm it much easier to imitate and remember language than words which are just spoken.

Those statements above, clearly define that children song is funny. As we see, most children like something funny. They like something different, with their interest in children song, will make the process of teaching English pronunciation easier. We assume that children song is good for improving English pronunciation of Elementary School students, because it is something different than usual way.

In conducting this activities, the students will be active and enthusiastic in the class. The students will pay attention to the teaching learning process. In this situation, the students will seem to be cheerful when the songs are played. They can practice the songs during study in the class room, or out of the class.

New song will be nice for them, especially if the students have ever heard in Indonesian edition song, such as :

- a) I am a captain ( Aku Seorang Kapiten),
- b) My Ballons (Balonku),
- c) When I Wake Up (Bangun Tidur),
- d) Lizard Lizard on The Wall (Cicak Cicak Di Dinding),
- e) I Have Two Eyes (Dua Mata Saya),
- f) I am very Happy Everywhere (Disini Senang Disana Senang),
- g) My Hat is Round ( Topi Saya Bundar),
- h) The Alphabet Song,
- i) Twinkle Twinkle Little Star,
- j) Are You Sleeping, ect.

Those rhymes of the songs are familiar enough to Indonesian children. It makes them enthusiastic when the songs are played. The Students will not feel shy when they make some mistakes in pronouncing the words of the song. They will seem cheerful and become more confident because they know much about that songs, when they sing the song.

Almost all children are interested in singing a song, but teachers should be selective in choosing a song that will be used in teaching pronunciation. They should choose an interesting song so that the students are attracted in them. A song can be learnt only when the learner understands the meaning of the language items in that song. The implementation of the children songs as follows:

- 1) The Teacher distributes the text of lyrics of song to the students, or teacher can write the lyrics on the board;
- 2) The teacher explains the meaning of lyrics and tell the way how to pronounce it;
- 3) The teacher plays the music about two times, let the students listen to the song;
- 4) The teacher asks them to sing a song three times;
- 5) The teacher play the music one again to check their pronunciation;
- 6) The teacher asks them to do some exercises.

Another alternative that can be done by the teacher in conducting this activity are as follows:

- 1) The students listen the song from the cassette;

- 2) Teacher repeat the song in spoken form;
- 3) Teacher and student repeat a song together;
- 4) Students listen the song from the cassette once again;
- 5) The last activity is the repetition of the song in the instrumental version.

## V. CONCLUSION

The following activities can be applied by the english teacher in the classroom. It needs only simple media such as: cassette or Compact Disk of children songs, tape recorder or DVD Player and Television, since every school almost has those kinds of equipments. English children songs are provided in some bookstores, and the price is not so expensive. The students will satisfy and enjoy listening to the song. The students are able to memorize the words and their pronunciation easily, it will help students in learning english pronunciation.

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