

TEACHING ENGLISH THROUGH SONGS

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Abstract. *Teaching English to Young Learners has become a trend nowadays. In every school, English is taught as one of the main subjects. In teaching young learners is not like teaching adults, children have their own way of learning. Since children like to play and have fun, the learning and teaching process should be suited with the nature of the children themselves. One of the forms of fun activities for children is through music, and songs are the common form of music that children know. Through this paper, the writer wants to show that through songs, children could enhance their language skills, such as speaking, listening and writing.*

Keywords: *young learners, music, songs, speaking, listening and writing.*

Since English has become an international language, more and more people learn English. The importance of English as a world language has made people to learn English as early as possible. In Indonesia for example, English is taught even before the children enter the playgroup, there is a special class for children who are still around two or three years old. This is supported by the fact that the optimum age for children to learn a foreign language is when they are still in a very young age. This phenomenon has made Teaching English to Young Learners, TEYL, become increasingly famous. There are many English courses and the publication of the course books. Before we go on, it is better to look at the definition of young learners in order for us to have the same perspective and knowledge. The definition of Young Learners is children between the ages of about 5 years old to 12 years old (Rixon, 1999), while according to Lynne Cameron; young learners are those under 14 years old. Moreover, the definition of young learners is mainly based on the years spent in the primary or elementary stages of formal education before the transition to secondary school. This is why the ages of the young learners could be varied from one country to the others. Some psycholinguists say that one of the factors to be successful in language learning is young age. There are some explanations for better learning at young age. First, the brain is more adaptable before puberty than after, and that acquisition of languages is possible without self-consciousness at an early age and also because young children have more opportunities than adults. The children are learning all the time without having the worries and responsibility of adults (Brumfit, 1994). "Children learn through play" is a sentence that has guided early childhood educators for decades. The nature of children is that they like to play and have fun than studying. Isenberg also stated that play is a need of every child and it is an important childhood activity that helps children master all

developmental needs (1993). Play is the work of childhood and is important for learning and development. One of the forms of play that children are familiar is music, in the form of songs.

After the children listen to the paraphrase, they listen to the song. The third activity is listening to isolated vocabularies, the teachers give the children two lists of words. The first list is indicated by using numbers and the other one by using the alphabet. The teachers play the song and ask the children to draw a line from a word on the first list to a word on the second list. The two words or phrases should follow each other on the same line in the song. This is the example form the Christmas song, "Silent Night." 1. silent a. calm 2. lost b. night 3. all is c. gone

The next activity that can be used is the cloze passage. The cloze passage is any written material with every nth word blanked out. It is the most familiar and popular song activity currently used and the most familiar one (Griffiee, 1992). The teachers prepare the hand out, for example, if the teacher decided to blank out every fifth word of the song My Country Tis of Thee, it would look like this: My country tis of _Sweet land of liberty, _ thee I sing With the missing or blanked-out words being 'thee' and 'of'. An alternative to blanking out every nth word is to blank out a teaching point, e.g. blank out the prepositions. This focuses the cloze in the direction the teachers want. In the classroom, the teachers ask children to listen to the song and hand out the cloze song lyrics. The teachers ask the children to listen until they are able to fill in all the blanks or give up. Since the nature of the children like to play and have fun, it is possible for the teachers to teach the young learners through the fun activity. One form of fun activities that the children know and familiar is music, and the simple form of music is song. Through songs and the fun activity make the children learn the language unconsciously, and in a fun way. Through songs, the children can enhance their language skills such as listening, speaking and writing. These three skills are put in order, since the first skills that the children learn is listening the songs, and after that the children learn to speak or sing the song, the last thing, the children learn to write the lyrics of the songs. The activity is not only lead to the fun activity of the children but also the skills' development of the students.

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