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The Use of "Nursery Rhymes" as Strategy to Enrich Students' Vocabulary of the Forth Graders

Riska Meylia[1], Dio Resta Permana[2], Jaya Nur Iman[3]
Indo Global Mandiri University, Indonesia
E-mail: myliaralia08@gmail.com, dio@uigm.ac.id, jaya@uigm.ac.id

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Abstract: *This study investigated by the low vocabulary levels of fourth-grade students at IGM Elementery School Palembang, which leads to difficulties in reading comprehension and effective communication. The aim of this research was to examine the effectiveness of using nursery rhymes to improve students' vocabulary. The research design used in this study was Classroom Action Research (CAR). The sample of this research was class of IV B consisted of 24 students. The data were gathered through qualitative and quantitative data. Based on the result of this research showed that there was a development on the students' vocabulary mastery, it can be seen from the mean score of pretests were 63.8, the mean score of posttest cycle 1 was 73.6 and the mean score of posttest cycle 2 was 91.7. In addition, there were 9 students (37.5%) who passed minimum mastery criterion in the pretest. Meanwhile, in cycle 1, there were 13 students (54.1%) who passed minimum mastery criterion, and it gained which was in the posttest cycle 2 there were 24 students (100%) who passed minimum mastery criterion, so the criteria of success were achieved. Then, from the result of observation indicated increased student activity and participant in the teaching-learning process during the implementation of nursery rhymes.*

INTRODUCTION

English has become a global language, taught in some countries as English as a Second Language (ESL) or English as a Foreign Language (EFL). English as a second language is taught in various nations, including Malaysia and Singapore. In Indonesia, English is learnt as a foreign language. This is due to the fact that English is not commonly utilized in Indonesian society. ESL learners learn English in a natural state. As Krashen (1985) argued "second language acquisition" is an unconscious acquisition that is similar to the process of mother tongue acquisition. When people talk to others in English, some people would think of it as social communication, whereas foreign language acquisition occurs in the learner's mother tongue environment when he differentiates between EFL and ESL.

In Indonesia, instead of being used in daily conversation, English is mostly learnt and

taught in classrooms. English has been introduced at primary level, as the development of the world globalization thatdemand English skill for all people from different nation in the world (Surayatika, 2022). To support the subject, Indonesian government has already set up the curriculum for English subject in the school where themain point is the students are asked to master the four skills in English, (Aghni, 2022). According to Oxford and Shearin (1994), a language that is only learnt in formal schools is considered a foreign language in this sense. Therefore, teaching and learning English in Indonesia has unique difficulties that are not found in countries like Hong Kong, where English is more widely used daily. In Indonesia, learning English was started from the elementary school until the higher educational level in which this requires the EFL learners to be able to respond actively, if not passively, both in oral and written form of communication particularly when they are in academic and communicative settings (Angraini & Iman, 2022). Sulistiyo (2008) states that there are several challenges in teaching EFL in Indonesia. First and foremost, EFL teachers must teach large classes with many students. The second reason is that English is a compulsory subject, even the English subject in Indonesia is compulsory but still the process of learns English is very minimum. This is supported by the results of students' English proficiency in Indonesia which is in the low category based on the survey results from the English Proficiency Index (2020) Indonesian students' English proficiency is ranked 74 out of 100 countries with a score of 453. According to the UNESCO (2021), Indonesia is currently ranked 64th out of 120 countries in terms of the quality of English education at the international level. Due to the low English competence of Indonesians, therefore English education should be taught as early as possible.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Every child will go through a process of language acquisition and development from birth until continued. Therefore, teaching English at an early age is very important because children are still in their golden years (Jones, 2017). In Indonesia, 85% reported having attended pre-primary education for one year or more (OECD average: 94%), and young learners who had attended pre-primary school for one year or more had better reading skills at age 15 than students who had not. Introducing English to children at an early age has different views because according to Steinberg & Sciarini (2006) young children learn quickly and easily because they have good rotational memory and can easily learn many letters, children under the age of 7 show phenomenal abilities in terms of memorization. However, it cannot be denied that the learning of English as early as possible, especially in Indonesia, is made more difficult by the vocabulary.

In language learning, the importance of vocabulary is obvious because word knowledge is essential for developing students' competence as well as their comprehension and production; in fact, the four language skills are all based on students' vocabulary acquisition (Bai, 2018). Building upon the importance of vocabulary knowledge, it is essential to explore the concept of vocabulary fluency, particularly under the usage domain (Budiartha & Akmar, 2024). In everyday life, vocabulary is needed to express be meaning when communicating with others. Vocabulary is divided into two types: productive vocabulary and receptive vocabulary (Hatch & Brown, 1995). Vocabulary that is regularly utilized in writing and speaking is known as productive vocabulary. This means that for students to construct sentences using particular words when speaking or writing, they must comprehend how to express themselves and apply grammar. A person's productive vocabulary consists of the words they are able to use in writing or speaking. These words are typically common, well-known, and familiar (Hiebert & Kamil, 2005). Easy-to-understand vocabulary is known as receptive vocabulary. Learners who possess this vocabulary can read, hear, and define words with ease in context, but they do not utilize it while speaking or

writing. According to Webb (2009), receptive vocabulary refers to terms that students may recall when they come up in a reading text but are not frequently employed in speech or writing.

Although young students can receive and learn the latest information quickly, there are still some problems that students face in language acquisition. Teaching vocabulary for young learners is challenging. Sometimes, learning vocabulary is boring. As a teacher of English, we must be creative to think (Agustiawati, 2022). In teaching vocabulary, teachers need strategies to be able to develop materials that suit the needs of students. One of the efforts in improving vocabulary skills or making teaching easier is by preparing teaching strategies, one of the good teaching strategies that is suitable for vocabulary learning is the existence of Nursery Rhymes.

According to Temple et al. (2011), these poems are "highly rhythmic, tightly rhymed, and popular with small children." "Nursery Rhymes are only a step away from song in their changing cadence and compressed story elements," says Besty Hearne, highlighting the appeal of these rhymes (Norton & Norton, 2011). When young children are exposed to nursery rhymes, they utilize both their native tongue—Indonesian—and other languages, like English. Children quickly pick up the proper language rhythm, intonation, and pronunciation by singing rhymes. Singing entire words also facilitates verbal flow. This approach can help students acquire language through rhymes.

Seeing the problems that occurred, an effort was needed to improve the ability to understand vocabulary acquisition in children, because using the learning media commonly used by class teachers was deemed insufficient to improve vocabulary skills in children. Therefore, a strategy was needed that attracted children's attention to want to master English vocabulary, one of which was the use of the Nursery Rhymes strategy, which used sound and visuals to attract students to be more enthusiastic in understanding vocabulary recognition in English.

METHODS

This research used classroom action research design. Classroom action research (CAR) was a self-reflective study undertaken by instructors in their own classrooms with the goal of improving performance and increasing student learning outcomes (Mettetal, 2002). This research was implemented in two cycles. Mettetal (2002) defined classroom action research as a process that included planning, action implementation, observation, and reflection. The self-reflection spiral method, which began with planning, action, observation, reflection, and re-planning, served as the foundation for this problem-solving design.

Participants

The population used in this study were fourth graders students of the IGM Elementary School Palembang, The entire population consisted of 94 students in four classes. The writer selected kids in fourth grade because at that age, children were at an important phase of language development, where they were able to quickly understand and internalize new vocabulary. This was in line with our goal to improve their vocabulary through interactive and fun methods such as nursery rhymes. This study employed purpose sampling as its sampling technique. The study used IV B as a participant, consisting of 24 students, because, according to the results of informal interviews with the teacher of IGM Elementary School Palembang, almost all students in class IV B had fluent English skills and high scores.

Instruments

The instruments that used in this research were test and observation checklist. Test were desgined to asses and evaluate students' skills. These assesments were administrated both before

and after each cycle. The pre-test assesed the students'prior knowledge before and introducing the topic, while the post-test assessed their vocabulary acquisition after learning the material through nursery rhymes. The test comprised three sections: a multiple-choice test with 10 questions, 10 questions for jumble words and a word search puzzle containing 10 words, resulting in a total of 30 questions. Each multiple choice in the multiple-choice and jumbled words test earned 4 points, and each correct answer in the word search puzzle earned 2 points, while incorrect answers received 0 points. The students were allowed 15 minutes to complete the test. The word search puzzle entailed finding words hidden within a grid of letters, arranged randomly in a square shape. Words could be located horizontally, vertically, diagonally, or backwards. The player had to locate the first letter of the word within the grid, then proceed to search for the subsequent letters in the appropriate directions until the entire word was formed. Once a word was found, it was circled. The themes for the vocabulary test included animals, food and vegetables, vehicles, and parts of the body. Then, for obsrvation checklist observation was employed to monitor students' engagement in the vocabulary teaching and learning process through nursery rhymes. Additionally, the writer developed an observation checklist to assess student involvement in the teaching and learning activities.

The treatment was conducted over six meetings, there are two cycle in this research, so this research was consisted of twelve meetings with each meeting lasting 35 minutes. The topics that were used included animals, vegetables, vehicles, telling the time, daily activities, and parts of the body. The first meeting discussed animals, the second meeting discussed vegetables, the third meeting discussed vehicles, the fourth meeting discussed telling the time, the fifth meeting discussed daily activities, and the last, sixth meeting discussed parts of the body.

Data analysis

The data gathered in this research underwent quantitative analysis. This meant that all data acquired from observations during the teaching and learning sessions, including the tests (both pretest and post-test), were quantitatively analyzed descriptively (using percentages). To process the numerical data, the author aimed to calculate the average vocabulary scores of students before the implementation and after each cycle, aiming to evaluate the effectiveness of utilizing nursery rhymes in the classroom. The score of the pre-test, post-test and observation checklist were analysed by using Microsoft Excel.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this study, content validity was employed to assess the instrument's validity. To achieve a high level of content validity, the writer formulated questions based on the test objectives, which were personally crafted. The validity data for the vocabulary test indicated that all 30 questions were valid. Therefore, the writer employed 10 multiple-choice questions, 10 jumble word, 10-word search puzzles and observation checklist as instruments.

Reliability is the degree to which a test consistently measures whatever it is measuring. This study tested the reliability of the instrument through pretest and posttest data to assess students' vocabulary improvement. The reliability test was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha on the pretest and posttest data to ensure the internal consistency of the instrument used.

Table 3.1
Reliability of Pre-Test of the Vocabulary test

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.887	30

As presented in table, the reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha showed that the result of the vocabulary test pre-test in class IV.B as the student sample is 0.887. This can be interpreted as that the item has a very high reliability for research. In addition, table 3.1 shows the reliability results of Post-Test 1.

Table 3.2
Reliability of Post-Test of the Vocabulary Test

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.853	30

As presented in table, the reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha showed that the result of the vocabulary test post-test in class IV.B as the student sample is 0.853. This can be interpreted as that the item has a very high reliability for research. In addition, table 3.2 shows the reliability results of post-test.

The pre-test was done to measure students' vocabulary knowledge before the implementation of nursery rhymes strategy. After conducting the pre-test, the writer started the treatment to the students for 6 meetings and conducted for 2 cycles. The post-test 1 and post-test 2 was done to measure students' vocabulary knowledge after the implementation of nursery rhymes strategy.

Table 3.3
Students' Score

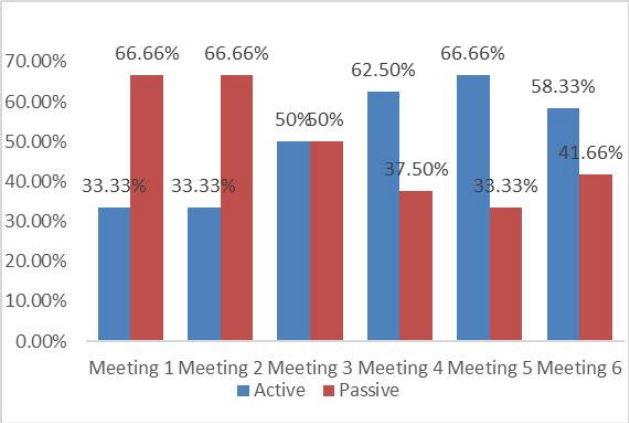
No.	Students' Initial Name	Scores			No.	Students' Initial Name	Scores		
		Pre-test	Post-test 1	Post-test 2			Pre-test	Post-test 1	Post-test 2
1	ARSPK	52	60	96	13	IDP	86	40	96
2	AMT	90	58	96	14	KA	40	58	96
3	AP	74	90	92	15	MKAF	96	92	92
4	ASF	60	40	92	16	MKA	78	72	92
5	BAM	68	90	92	17	NE	48	64	88
6	CGA	72	78	76	18	NAN	70	92	92
7	CAZ	88	86	96	19	SNH	54	92	88
8	EML	72	76	92	20	TN	32	64	96
9	FRB	48	58	96	21	LASB	78	86	84
10	FBD	78	92	96	22	RAI	40	78	82
11	FS	34	60	96	23	ZAK	88	92	92
12	AF	38	68	96	24	KGA	48	82	88

Based on the result of the pre-test, the data showed that the mean of the pre-test was 63.8. the mean of the post-test 1 was 74.0. furthermore, the data showed that the mean of the post-test 2 was 92.5. thus, based on the result above, it can be said that there was an improvement on students' vocabulary knowledge after the implementation of nursery rhymes strategy.

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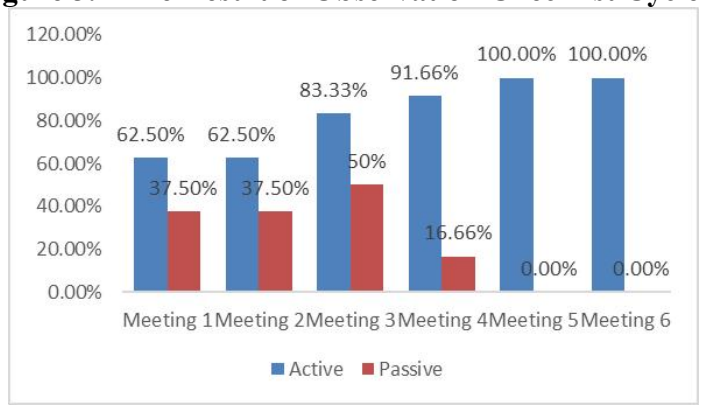
The results of the observation checklist in the first cycle indicated that many students had difficulty understanding the vocabulary presented in the nursery rhymes.

Figure 3.1 The Result of Observation Checklist Cycle 1



In the second cycle, the observation checklist results showed marked improvements in student comprehension and engagement.

Figure 3.1 The Result of Observation Checklist Cycle II



In the first cycle, the findings indicated that many students struggled to grasp the meaning of nursery rhymes' words. This was evident from their limited active participation and frequent inquiries about word meanings. Additionally, some students exhibited signs of boredom and lack of motivation, resulting in decreased attention and enthusiasm during activities. This finding supports the finding from Sari (2021), difficulties in understanding new vocabulary often stem from inadequate contextualization, where students fail to relate words to their everyday experiences. This lack of relevant context in nursery rhyme teaching may have contributed to low participation and student disengagement observed in the first cycle.

Following methodological revisions in the second cycle, significant improvements were noted in students' comprehension and engagement levels. The reintroduction of nursery rhyme meanings and the incorporation of interactive activities like clapping rhymes fostered heightened student interest and active participation. Boredom levels plummeted, and students demonstrated enhanced memorization of lyrics. Moreover, practice sessions concluded with students displaying improved recall and application of newly acquired vocabulary. The findings support the finding from Muttahidah (2019) conveying that employing interactive and enjoyable teaching methods, such as clapping rhymes, enhances student motivation and engagement in learning processes. The increased participation and enthusiasm observed in the second cycle underscores the effectiveness of such interactive approaches in boosting student comprehension and involvement.

This study's findings indicate that students' scores significantly improved following the intervention with nursery rhymes. The majority of their scores were categorized as excellent or very good. Folk songs, country music, and commercials all captivate young children and help expand their vocabulary. Designed specifically for young audiences, these rhymes incorporate regular, repetitive verses with rhymes and various other discourse features that make them easy to follow (Meitasari, 2019). Consequently, once a nursery rhyme is learned, it tends to remain in the students' memory throughout their lives, including its rhythmic patterns, grammatical structures, and vocabulary.

Based on the findings of this research, nursery rhymes effectively enhance vocabulary mastery by increasing students' active participation and vocabulary achievement. Exposure to nursery rhymes introduces new words, facilitating automatic learning. These results align with Nurvasari (2021), who found that nursery rhymes aid students in practicing and improving their vocabulary skills. This strategy made learning more engaging and enjoyable, thereby motivating students to actively participate. Harmes (2007) argued that fun and interactive teaching methods enhanced student motivation by increasing their engagement and participation in learning activities.

Using nursery rhymes created an engaging context that helped students comprehend and remember new vocabulary. This research demonstrated that nursery rhymes assist in understanding and memorizing specific words. After instruction using nursery rhymes, students grasped the words in the rhymes, thereby expanding their vocabulary. Nursery rhymes not only enhanced comprehension but also facilitated easier memorization, particularly of vocabulary. This supported Brandon's (2016) findings that nursery rhymes foster early literacy through repeated short words and phrases. Mustafa (2020) also noted that repetitive phrases in nursery rhymes improve memory and cognitive development, positively impacting students' vocabulary as they connect gestures to words.

CONCLUSION

Following the implementation of Classroom Action Research in the fourth grade at IGM Elementary School Palembang during the 2023/2024 academic year, it was concluded that the use of nursery rhymes effectively enhanced students' vocabulary, aiding in both retention and recall. This conclusion was supported by the observed evidence.

First, regarding student achievement, there was improvement in the students' vocabulary achievement before and after using nursery rhymes strategy. The use of nursery rhymes strategy was significantly effective to enrich the students' vocabulary achievement in fourth graders at IGM Elementary School Palembang. Most of the students in this class showed better improvement that can be seen from the results of the score distribution in the posttest. Second, observations indicated increased student activity and participation in the learning process, as reflected in improved student scores at each meeting.

In conclusion, this study effectively improved students' vocabulary through the use of nursery rhymes. Additionally, students became more active and engaged in the vocabulary learning process. Thus, nursery rhymes could serve as an alternative strategy for teachers in vocabulary instruction, as it enhanced and sustained students' vocabulary learning.

Based on the conclusion above, the researcher offered several suggestions for English teachers and future researchers. Firstly, for teachers, nursery rhymes could be an effective strategy to enhance students' vocabulary. English teachers was encouraged to use songs as an alternative technique to increase students' vocabulary, as students could easily understand and retain song lyrics. Sometimes, using this strategy made the students just focus to the media and

the media was too fast. Because of that, the teacher must play again the nursery rhymes to make the students more understand dan can catch the meaning of nursery rhymes.

Lastly, for those who wanted to do further research, the writer would like to give suggestions for other research in the future. To enhance the effectiveness of using nursery rhymes for vocabulary acquisition, future studies should consider several improvements. Increasing the number of sessions provided students with more opportunities to internalize new vocabulary and reinforce their learning over a longer period use nursery rhyme that were culturally relevant and appropriate to students' backgrounds so as to increase engagement and make learning more meaningful. By implementing these suggestions, future research could build on the findings of this study and further explore the potential of nursery rhymes and other interactive strategies in improving vocabulary acquisition and overall language proficiency among young learners. Using nursery rhymes proved effective in teaching vocabulary, suggesting that future researchers explored the significance of nursery rhymes across different levels. This study could serve as a resource for those aiming to enhance other skills through nursery rhymes. Ultimately, this thesis aspired to offer valuable insights for English teachers and future researchers.

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