

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter discusses about the definition and explanation about the importance of vocabulary in learning English, teaching English to young learners, teaching vocabulary through games, teaching vocabulary through songs, the role of songs in vocabulary learning, combining games and songs, assessment of vocabulary knowledge, previous studies.

A. The Importance of Vocabulary in Learning English

Vocabulary can be defined as the words we need to know to communicate effectively. Vocabulary can also be defined roughly as the words we teach in a foreign language. Diamond and Gutlohn (2006) stated that vocabulary is knowledge of words and the meaning of words. From a previous study by Alqahtani (2015) that vocabulary is the total number of words needed to communicate ideas and express the speaker's meaning. That is why it is important to learn vocabulary in learning English.

Vocabulary mastery is widely recognized as a fundamental component in learning a foreign language. Without grammar, very little can be said, without vocabulary, nothing can be said, emphasizing the central role of vocabulary in communication. In a foreign language context, vocabulary knowledge is important not only for receptive skills such as reading and listening, but also for productive skills such as speaking and writing (Nation, 2001).

Vocabulary serves as a communication tool for language comprehension and production that plays an important role in human life. According to Mukhtar and Ali (2023), a strong vocabulary base significantly improves reading comprehension among Foreign Language learners. Without sufficient vocabulary, learners often struggle to understand texts and actively participate in communicative tasks.

Young learners, in particular, benefit from engaging and interactive vocabulary teaching methods. Games and songs provide a fun and low-stress learning environment, which is critical for early language acquisition. Moto et al.

(2021) found that integrating games and songs into English classes resulted in significant improvements in vocabulary test scores among junior high school students in Indonesia. The multisensory nature of these tools, combining auditory, visual, and kinesthetic elements, supports better vocabulary retention and recall.

Furthermore, music and games increase intrinsic motivation. Adara (2019) highlighted that the rhythm and repetition found in songs can help learners internalize vocabulary naturally, making learning feel like a game rather than a formal academic task. This enjoyment leads to increased class participation and reduced anxiety, which are important factors for successful language learning at a young age. The use of songs and games is in line with multisensory learning theory and contextual instruction. Songs provide context, melody, and rhythm that support memory. Games introduce elements of competition and cooperation that foster a dynamic and collaborative classroom environment (Paquette and Rieg, 2008). According to Nation (2001), repeated and meaningful exposure to vocabulary in a variety of contexts is essential for deep learning, and both songs and games naturally provide such repeated exposure.

Given the importance of vocabulary in overall language development, vocabulary instruction should be prioritized, especially through student-centered and engaging strategies. Educators should select songs and games appropriate to the age and proficiency level of students and integrate them into regular classroom routines to enhance vocabulary learning and student motivation.

B. Teaching English to Young Learners

Teaching English to young learners, especially those in kindergarten, requires a unique and age-appropriate approach that is very different from teaching older learners or adults. (Pinter 2017) says that at this early stage of life, children are in the process of developing their cognitive abilities, social skills, emotional awareness, and language foundations. They are naturally curious, active, and eager to explore their environment through hands-on experience, rather than through abstract instruction or memorization. Therefore, they learn best when they are engaged in fun and meaningful activities that involve play, movement, imagination, and interaction.

Cameron (2001) emphasizes that young learners need to be exposed to language in real-life or familiar contexts rather than receiving language as isolated items. For example, learning vocabulary through stories, songs, games, or daily routines is more effective than rote learning or drilling. These contexts help children make sense of the language and remember it more easily. Additionally, young children often enjoy repetition, which is a natural part of their language development process. Repeating words and phrases through songs, chants, and games reinforces their memory and builds confidence.

Another important aspect of teaching young learners is recognizing their short attention span. Unlike older students, young children cannot sit and focus on one activity for an extended period. Therefore, lessons should include a variety of short, engaging activities that keep them active and interested. These might include singing, matching games, or using flashcards. Young learners also benefit from an emotionally supportive and encouraging classroom environment. Because they are still developing their self-esteem and communication skills, they need teachers who are patient, warm, and responsive. When children feel safe and supported, they are more willing to take risks in using a new language, even if they make mistakes. Teachers should use positive reinforcement, simple instructions, and clear routines to create a structured yet enjoyable atmosphere (Wulandari 2023). In designing lessons for young learners, teachers must choose simple vocabulary that is relevant to the children's everyday lives such as colors, animals, family members, food, and common classroom objects. This vocabulary can be introduced and practiced through songs, stories, games, and interactive media. Combining listening, speaking, visual, and physical elements ensures that different learning styles are addressed and helps children retain the language more effectively.

In summary, teaching English to kindergarten students is most successful when it is fun, interactive, and based on children's natural ways of learning. Teachers must adjust their strategies to fit the developmental stage of the learners by using creative and multisensory methods. By doing so, children are not only

more engaged but also more likely to develop a positive attitude toward learning English at an early age.

C. Teaching Vocabulary Through Games

Teaching vocabulary through games is considered one of the most effective and engaging methods, especially for young learners in kindergarten. At this stage of development, children naturally learn through playing. They are active, curious, and enjoy activities that allow them to explore, move, and interact with others. Games combine learning with play, making the process of acquiring new vocabulary enjoyable and meaningful. When vocabulary is presented in the context of a game, children are more likely to pay attention, participate actively, and remember what they have learned.

Games provide a relaxed and low-pressure environment where students can experiment with language without fear of being wrong. (Hashemian and Fadaei, 2018) In traditional learning situations, students may feel anxious or embarrassed when they make mistakes, especially in front of others. Games reduce that fear by shifting the focus from perfection to participation and enjoyment. This allows children to try using new words freely and build confidence in their speaking and listening skills.

According to Pinter (2017), games encourage active involvement, teamwork, and a healthy sense of competition among learners. These aspects are especially important for kindergarten students, who often enjoy social interaction and need activities that match their energy and attention span. Moreover, games naturally include repetition, which is key to vocabulary retention. Children may hear or say a new word many times during a single game, helping them to internalize the meaning and pronunciation without realizing they are studying.

There are many types of games that are suitable for vocabulary learning in early childhood classrooms. Memory games or matching cards help students connect words with pictures, which strengthens their word-image association. Board games can introduce vocabulary related to colors, numbers, or objects as children move pieces and follow instructions. Action based games, such as Simon Says, allow children to physically respond to language, which supports kinesthetic

learning and makes words more memorable. Other examples include vocabulary bingo, picture puzzles, scavenger hunts, or word races all of which can be adapted to fit specific themes and vocabulary sets. Games also help create meaningful contexts for language use. Rather than learning vocabulary in isolation, children use words as part of real interactions during the game (McLean and Kramer, 2015). For example, in a shopping role-play game, students can practice words related to food, numbers, and greetings while pretending to buy and sell items. This contextual use of language is essential for deep learning and long-term memory.

In summary, games are not only fun but also highly beneficial for teaching vocabulary to young learners. They support language development by increasing motivation, encouraging participation, providing meaningful repetition, and making new vocabulary easier to understand and remember. When used thoughtfully, games can turn a simple vocabulary lesson into an exciting and effective learning experience for children.

D. Teaching Vocabulary Through Songs

Using songs in teaching English vocabulary to kindergarten students has proven to be a highly effective and enjoyable method. Songs are naturally loved by young children because they bring fun, rhythm, movement, and joy into the classroom. Music has the unique ability to catch children's attention and keep them engaged longer than traditional instructional methods. According to Pinter and Larson (2021), music activates emotional and cognitive parts of the brain, which helps children store and recall information more effectively. Vocabulary taught through songs tends to stick longer in children's memories because they are connected to melody and rhythm, making them easier to remember.

Songs are particularly helpful in supporting language features such as pronunciation, intonation, stress, and rhythm. When children sing along, they imitate how the words are pronounced in natural speech. This kind of repeated, patterned language input helps them to internalize the correct pronunciation and sentence stress. As Fadilah (2021) explains, children tend to mimic what they hear in songs, and this improves their oral skills without them feeling pressured to

speak perfectly. Singing also allows for a natural flow of language, where new words are presented in complete phrases or sentences, rather than in isolation. This gives learners better context for understanding and using the vocabulary.

In addition to helping with pronunciation and memory, songs also offer meaningful exposure to everyday English expressions and vocabulary. Many children's songs introduce useful themes such as animals, colors, numbers, weather, greetings, and daily routines. Songs like "Old MacDonald Had a Farm," "The Wheels on the Bus," or "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" help children become familiar with simple yet functional vocabulary. According to Nurfakhira (2021), thematic songs support children's comprehension because they combine familiar situations with repeated language, making learning more natural and connected to real life.

Furthermore, songs promote a relaxed and positive classroom environment. Since music is enjoyable and non-threatening, it helps reduce anxiety in language learning. This is especially important for young children, who may be shy or afraid to speak in a new language. Through group singing, children feel less self-conscious, and they learn that making mistakes is a natural part of the process. As stated by Fauzi (2022), incorporating action songs and singing routines into classroom activities increases students' confidence, improves their participation, and helps them build stronger connections with the teacher and classmates. Songs also cater to different learning styles. Auditory learners benefit from listening and repeating lyrics, visual learners can follow along with images or video clips, and kinesthetic learners engage through movements or gestures that accompany the songs. This multisensory learning approach makes vocabulary more understandable and memorable. For example, when teaching the parts of the body, the song "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes" allows learners to physically touch and move to the vocabulary words being learned. This combination of movement and language input is highly effective for children in early education.

To implement songs effectively, teachers need to choose appropriate songs that match the learners' age and language level. The lyrics should be simple, repetitive, and easy to follow. Visuals, flashcards, real objects, or even puppets

can be used to enhance meaning. It is also helpful to repeat the same song over several days, as repetition builds familiarity and confidence. Teachers can also involve students in actions or dancing during the song to keep their interest high and support comprehension. The use of singing as part of daily routines—for example, greetings, tidying up, or saying goodbye can make language learning a natural part of the school day (Nurfakhira (2021).

Songs provide a powerful and enjoyable way to teach vocabulary to kindergarten students. They support memory, pronunciation, and sentence structure while also creating a fun and stress-free environment for learning. By combining sound, rhythm, movement, and meaningful language, songs help young learners acquire vocabulary in a way that feels natural and joyful. With careful selection and consistent use, songs can become a central tool in early childhood English education.

E. The Role of Songs in Vocabulary Learning

Songs are widely recognized as a powerful and versatile tool in teaching English especially to young learners. Their melodic, rhythmic, and repetitive nature makes them ideal for engaging children in language learning in a natural and enjoyable way. According to Milington (2019) songs are not just a form of entertainment, they can be a structured and purposeful language learning activity that enhances vocabulary acquisition, improves listening skills, and supports pronunciation development. Songs stimulate both the left and right hemispheres of the brain, combining logical language with musical and emotional engagement, which enhances memory retention. Milington (2019) explains that the multisensory input from the auditory, movement, and visual aids of songs increases the likelihood of retention and recall, especially when the song is combined with action or imagination.

Shen (2019) study showed that songs are effective tools for language learning because their repeated patterns help strengthen students' understanding of vocabulary and sentence structure. Unlike mechanical drills that may feel tedious, songs present repetition in a more dynamic and meaningful context. This makes it easier for learners to absorb and remember new words and expressions. Through

frequent exposure to natural language patterns in songs, students gradually become more familiar with how vocabulary and grammar are used in real life communication, which supports the development of practical language skills.

One of the most prominent benefits of using songs in learning is improved listening comprehension. Shen (2019) study showed that emphasized that songs present the target language in an authentic and context-rich format, which trains learners to recognize sounds, distinguish similar words, and understand meaning through tone and context. Repeated exposure to the same song improves learners' ability to interpret spoken English and infer meaning even when some words are unfamiliar. Songs also introduce real-life communication patterns, such as common expressions, idioms, abbreviations, and informal language usage. Learners become familiar with the vocabulary and grammatical constructions used in everyday conversation, thereby improving their functional language skills. Songs play an important role in boosting students' motivation and active participation during language learning. The emotional appeal of music can help create a positive classroom atmosphere, making students feel more relaxed and eager to learn. Many songs tell simple stories or present themes that are familiar and enjoyable for children, which helps maintain their interest. When students feel emotionally connected to what they are learning, they are more likely to remember vocabulary and join in activities. Furthermore, songs often introduce commonly used words and phrases, making them an effective tool for teaching everyday language.

F. Combining Games and Songs

Combining games and songs in the language learning process creates an interactive and sensory-rich environment, engaging multiple sensory channels such as sight, hearing, and body movement in a way that supports natural and enjoyable language acquisition. According to Taheri (2021), young learners respond very well to teaching methods that combine diverse sensory and cognitive experiences. This means that children will understand and remember vocabulary or language structures more quickly if they are actively involved in various ways, such as listening to songs while moving or role-playing while singing certain

lyrics. Songs strengthen the auditory and rhythmic aspects of language, while games add interactive and kinesthetic elements. The integration of the two creates a dynamic and energetic classroom atmosphere. When students feel comfortable, not stressed, and motivated, they will be more willing to take risks in using a foreign language. According to Hashemian and Fadaei (2018), a sense of security and emotional involvement in the classroom are important prerequisites for effective language learning at an early age.

Especially in the early stages of vocabulary learning, this combined approach is very effective. Vocabulary presented through catchy songs and meaningful games tends to be more easily remembered because it is processed through multiple sensory pathways at once. Hashemian and Fadaei (2018), songs reinforce sound and meaning associations, while games provide real-world contexts for use.

Implementation Examples :

1. Thematic Song + Movement Game: The teacher sings a song about body parts while students play "Simon Says" involving instructions such as "Touch your head" or "Clap your hands."
2. Role Play with Supporting Song: Students play shop using expressions taught through the song such as "Do you have...?" or "How much is it?"
3. Matching Game with Song Lyrics: Students match pictures to snippets of lyrics from songs they have heard.

G. Assessment of Vocabulary Knowledge

Vocabulary assessment is an important component in language learning, because it provides an overview of the extent to which learners have developed their lexical knowledge and how effective the teaching methods used are. According to a previous study by Nation (2001), this assessment not only helps teachers in assessing student progress, but also in designing interventions or adjusting more targeted teaching methods. Along with the increasing understanding that language learning cannot be assessed with just one single approach, it is necessary to carry out vocabulary assessment through various

techniques that are appropriate to the characteristics and needs of learners, especially children.

According to Nation (2011) vocabulary assessment can generally be classified into two broad categories: receptive and productive. Receptive tests assess the extent to which students can recognize or understand the meaning of a word, for example through tests matching words to definitions, choosing synonyms, or identifying the meaning of words in context. On the other hand, productive tests test students' ability to produce words actively, for example by filling in blank sentences, answering open-ended questions, or using words in meaningful sentences. Some vocabulary assessment techniques commonly used with young learners include :

1. Multiple-choice : Providing several answer choices for one question. While quick to administer and score, this format can be a bit of a guessing game.
2. Fill-in-the-blanks : Filling in the blanks in a sentence or paragraph, which tests contextual understanding. This format is suitable for students who already have basic reading skills.
3. Picture labeling : Labeling pictures. This is especially effective for visual learners and young learners who are not yet able to read fluently.
4. Matching pictures with words : Suitable for students with basic reading skills, and supports the integration of visuals with lexical understanding.

The diversity of assessment techniques also reflects differences in learning styles and levels of readiness for students to demonstrate their knowledge. Therefore, assessors or teachers must consider the balance between reliability, validity, and student comfort in choosing an assessment method.

H. Previous Studies

Several previous studies have highlighted the effectiveness of using songs and games in vocabulary learning, especially for young learners. These studies have shown that entertainment and interaction based approaches can significantly increase student engagement and enhance vocabulary.

Chou (2014) examined the impact of fun based learning techniques on young learners' vocabulary development. In this study, games and songs were used as

part of a teaching intervention in a primary English classroom. The results showed that both methods significantly increased students' vocabulary, strengthened vocabulary retention, and created a fun and productive learning environment.

Shen (2019) in his work *Teaching Young Language Learners*, stated that the interactive nature of games makes them a very effective tool in increasing students' vocabulary use and active participation. He emphasized that when children are involved in activities that require them to use vocabulary in contextual and collaborative ways, they are more likely to understand and remember the vocabulary.

Despite the growing evidence of the benefits of songs and games in vocabulary learning, there is a lack of literature that directly compares the effects of different assessment techniques on motivation and vocabulary performance, especially in young learners. Many studies focus more on instructional interventions than on the evaluation aspect of learning. In fact, the format and assessment techniques used can affect how students perform their skills, as discussed by McLean and Kramer (2015).

Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by exploring how different vocabulary assessment techniques (such as multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, and picture labeling) impact the performance and motivation of students of different age groups. By understanding the relationship between assessment techniques, age, and vocabulary performance, this study is expected to contribute to the development of more fair, accurate, and appropriate assessment strategies for young learners.