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# Young Learners Preferences on Using Games and Songs for Learning English in EFL Context

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## Abstract

This study investigated young learner preference for using games and songs to learn English in the EFL context. Many ways have been found to assist young learners in acquiring English as a Foreign Language. The students' perceptions were taken from the questionnaire. The result showed that most students liked it better when the teachers used games and songs in teaching English in an EFL context. It is suggested that both games and songs can be utilized in teaching English to young learners in the EFL context.

**Keywords:** Young Learners, Games, Learning English, EFL Context

## 1. Introduction

The studies of using games and songs have invited many researchers to discover the contribution in teaching English to young learners, the so-called EYL (English for young learners) in the EFL context. First, previous studies have examined the efficacy of games in learning English for young learners in the EFL context Ahmed et al., 2022; Amal Shehadeh AlNatour & Dima Hijazi, 2018; Behnamnia et al., 2020; Ben El Moudden, 2021; Dashtestani, 2022; Fu et al., 2019; Hao et al., 2021; Kumar et al., 2022; Lin et al., 2020; Patra et al., 2022).

The efficacy of games occurs for some skills of language. Games bring a positive influence on vocabulary (Ben El Moudden, 2021; Dashtestani, 2022; Hao et al., 2021; Patra et al., 2022), grammar (Lin et al., 2020), writing (Fu et al., 2019; Dashtestani, 2022), pronunciation (Dashtestani, 2022), listening (Dashtestani, 2022; Kumar et al., 2022), speaking (Dashtestani, 2022), problem-solving (Ben El Moudden, 2021; Dashtestani, 2022), motivation (Dashtestani, 2022; Ahmed et al., 2022). These findings indicated that games helped learn English.

The previous research involved elementary school students called English for young learners (Behnamnia et al., 2020; Patra et al., 2022; Kumar et al., 2022). Although recent studies showed that students had shown positive responses for using the game in learning English, those studies applied varied research designs, applying

questionnaires (Ben El Mouddeh, 2021), interviews (Dashtestani, 2022), surveys (Dashtestani, 2022), case study (Behnamnia et al., 2020), experimental ones (Amal Shehadeh AlNatour & Dima Hijazi, 2018; Fu et al., 2019; Hao et al., 2021; Lin et al., 2020; Patra et al., 2022)

Second, previous studies have investigated the efficacy of songs in learning English for young learners in an EFL context (Al-efeshat & Baniabdelrahman, 2020; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2020), in ESL (Al-Smadi, 2020; Singh, 2020). Most of those researches examined the vocabulary skill (Agaj Avdiu, 2021; Al-efeshat & Baniabdelrahman, 2020; Islami, 2019; Lelawati et al., 2018; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2020; Putri et al., 2022; Rohmah & Indah, 2021; Sanjaya et al., 2022; Triwardani & Yuningsih, 2022; Yeni & Amelia, 2020), speaking (Yeni & Amelia, 2020; 2020; Putri et al., 2022), writing (Yeni & Amelia, 2020), reading (Yeni & Amelia, 2020), pronunciation (Agaj Avdiu, 2021; Al-Smadi, 2020; Putri et al., 2022; Yeni & Amelia, 2020), grammar (Al-Smadi, 2020; Yeni & Amelia, 2020), motivation (Al-Smadi, 2020; Ernawati et al., 2019; Singh, 2020), positive responses (Ernawati et al., 2019; Islami, 2019)

Songs contributed significantly, especially to vocabulary mastery for children (Sevik, 2014). Songs used as learning media can provide joy in learning English for children (Shen, 2009; Hadian, 2015). Songs help children easily obtain and remember new English vocabulary (Kuśnierek, 2016). The song is used as learning media to learn English vocabulary (Sukirmiyadi, 2017; Hadian, 2017; Almutairiri, 2017; Al-Azri, 2017). Some of the previous studies also showed that songs contributed significantly, especially to vocabulary mastery for children (Sukirmiyadi, 2017; Almutairiri, 2017; Ma'rifat, 2017; Sevik, 2014).

Previous researches also proved the effectiveness and efficiency of using songs as learning media (Sukirmiyadi, 2017; Shen, 2017). It can be said that songs help educators teach children English vocabulary. The effectiveness and efficiency of songs influence listening ability (Almutairiri, 2017). Songs used as learning media can provide joy in learning English for children (Ma'rifat, 2017; Al-Azri, 2017; Shen, 2009; Hadian, 2015), which means that the findings of this current study are in line with those of previous research. This finding was supported by Ernawati et al. (2019). Children do like songs as learning media. Regarding language acquisition, songs help children obtain and remember new English vocabulary easily (Kuśnierek, 2016). Prior studies have proven that songs used as learning media give children good pronunciation in the vocabulary they are learning (Al-Azri, 2017). The results of this research focus on the senses of sight, hearing, and correct pronunciation and the focus is not on the writing and spelling of the words being learnt (Almutairiri, 2017; Hadian, 2017).

Few studies are concerned with investigating English vocabulary at the elementary level using games (Gutierrez Arvizu et al., 2020; Song & Lee, 2019; Soria et al., 2020). No matter their research design, they claimed that games were very useful in improving vocabulary. This research focused on students' preference for young learners in EFL context. This study aimed to find the preference of young learners of teachers' speaking English, using games and songs while learning in an EFL context.

## 2. Method

This research uses a survey method to study young learners' preference for learning English in elementary school. We selected a research sample using a cluster method. There are two clusters, namely public elementary schools and private elementary schools. Questionnaire was applied to examine students' preference on learning English. The questionnaire was addressed to the students in the Indonesian language to obtain an understanding from the students. The questionnaires in three questions asked about the frequency of using songs and games in English learning. This study involved six elementary schools where the participants were the students and the teachers or English teachers of grade 4<sup>th</sup>. One school was private school, and five public elementary schools. There were 569 students taking part in this study.

## 3. Results

Table 1 reports the results of question 1, the way of teaching used by the teachers, showing the percentage of teachers who were speaking English whilst teaching was 91%, using English songs was 56%, using games was

63%. It showed teachers' speaking (91%) when teaching helped and improve the students' listening ability (50%) in Table 1. This was also supported by the use of English songs by teachers (56%). In short, students' ability of listening was improved by the teachers' speaking English and the use of songs English.

Table 1: Survey items on students' perception of methods used by the teachers

My teachers speak English mostly when teaching English	Yes	91%
	No	9%
My teachers use English songs when teaching English	Yes	56%
	No	44%
My teachers use games when teaching English	Yes	63%
	No	37%

The table above showed a positive response from the students dealing with the use of English by their teachers. It was indicated that 91% of students answered that the teachers spoke English while teaching the English lesson, and only 9% said that their teacher used English for teaching. On the contrary, Song (2018) suggested that EFL teachers use code-switching rather than only English instruction to make students comprehend the target language. According to Said (2018), the teachers' ability in speaking is necessary to deliver the lesson. It is in line with Shyebani (2019), there is high correlation between students respond and teachers speaking.

Students' preferences of using games, songs, and other fun activities to study English reported that using English songs found 56% of students and using games was 63% of students. It can be inferred that many teachers applied songs and games in teaching English. The finding indicated that the young learners like better games than song although the different was not significant.

The previous studies proved that there were many beneficial outcomes by using games for young learners. There were two areas covered by the previous studies that was in line with the finding of the study. First area was relating to the English aptitude. Using games in teaching English also improved grammar (Lin et al., 2020), writing (Fu et al., 2019; Dashtestani, 2022), pronunciation (Dashtestani, 2022), listening (Dashtestani, 2022; Kumar et al., 2022), speaking (Dashtestani, 2022), problem-solving Ben El Moudden, 2021; Dashtestani, 2022). The second area was delating with aptitude such as motivation (Dashtestani, 2022; Ahmed et al., 2022), and positive influence (Boyinbode, 2018; Chen et al., 2019; Fithriani, 2021; Kohnke, 2020). In addition, Zhonggen (2018) said that gaming is better than traditional approach.

Besides the effectiveness of using games, songs also contributed significantly to learning English for young learners. Songs influenced positively, especially to vocabulary mastery for children (Sevik, 2014). This findings were in line with the studies recently which claimed that games bring the positive influence on vocabulary Ben El Moudden, 2021; Dashtestani, 2022; Hao et al., 202; Patra et al., 2022). Song used as learning media can provide joy in learning English for children (Fransischa, 2017; Shen, 2009; Hadian, 2015). In regard to language acquisition, songs help children to obtain and remember new English vocabulary easily (Kuśnierek, 2016). This is in line with the previous finding proposed by (Hao et al., 2021).

Students' perspective in using games in learning English for young learners. Some positive respond and negative respond. The studies which have examined the students' perception of EFL learning like positive respond (Abdelrady et al., 2022; Abdullah, 2020; Alghasab, 2020; Hussain Al-Qahtani, 2019; Bsharat et al., 2021; Ika Dhamayanti, 2021; Fithriani et at., 2019; Sheybani, 2019; Tragant & Vallbona, 2018; Wang et al., 2021; Behnamnia et al., 2020; BEN EL MOUDDEN, 2021), while other studies report the negative respond from students (Klimova & Polakova, 2020; Cabrera-Solano et al., 2019).

Both games and songs might contribute the similar improvement in acquiring English for young learners. The improvement occurred in speaking (Yeni & Amelia, 2020; Putri et al., 2022; Dashtestani, 2022), grammar (Al-

Smadi, 2020; Yeni & Amelia, 2020; Lin et al., 2020), writing (Yeni & Amelia, 2020; Fu et al., 2019; Dashtestani, 2022), pronunciation (Agaj Avdiu, 2021; Al-Smadi, 2020; Putri et al., 2022; Yeni & Amelia, 2020; Dashtestani, 2022), motivation (Al-Smadi, 2020; Ernawati et al., 2019; Singh, 2020; Dashtestani, 2022; Ahmed et al., 2022), improvement of vocabulary (Agaj Avdiu, 2021; Al-efeshat & Baniabdelrahman, 2020; Islami, 2019; Lelawati et al., 2018; Ben El Mouddeh, 2021; Dashtestani, 2022; Hao et al., 202; Patra et al., 2022).

There were six skills of language which were covered by using games and songs. They were vocabulary, grammar, writing, speaking, pronunciation, and motivation. But they were only two skills (listening and reading). Listening improvement was effective for using games while reading improvement was good for using songs. Wallace & Leong (2020) argued that songs and game are students favorite as an intrinsic motivation to learn English.

#### 4. Conclusion

Teaching young learners needs sufficient creativity from the teachers. The creativity method would be fruitful by applying games and songs since young learners loved and enjoyed games and songs. Further studies should explore the use of games and songs in improving EYL in EFL context. For example, facilitating students' preference in learning English as foreign language by using technology like table, electronic dictionary, mobile phone etc.

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