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THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ENGLISH SONGS TO INCREASE VOCABULARY RETENTION AMONG STUDENTS WITH ADHD: A CASE STUDY AT CLASS VIII

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe and analyze the implementation of using English songs to improve vocabulary retention among students with ADHD characteristics in the eighth grade at a junior high school in North Sumatra. The method used in this study is a qualitative method with a descriptive approach supported by quantitative data in the form of screening results. Based on the screening results using the Conners Rating Scale, out of 300 students, 9 students (3%) were identified as having ADHD characteristics. The subjects of this study were focused on 3 students of Class VIII who have ADHD characteristics and one English teacher as the main informant. The data collection techniques were conducted through ADHD screening, questionnaires, and in-depth interviews. The data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The results of the study show that the use of English songs can improve students' attention, learning motivation, and help them remember and retain vocabulary for a longer period of time. Songs provide repetition, meaningful context, and an enjoyable learning atmosphere, which support the learning process of students with ADHD. Thus, it can be concluded that the implementation of English songs is an effective learning strategy in improving vocabulary retention among students with ADHD characteristics at Class VIII.

Keywords: *English Songs, Vocabulary Retention, ADHD, English Language Learning*

INTRODUCTION

English has evolved into a global language that is crucial for communication, education, science, and technology. In numerous countries, such as Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language and regarded as vital for academic and career growth. The educational curriculum in Indonesia mandates English as a required subject in both junior and senior high schools, as proficiency in English allows students to access global information and interact effectively in broader social situations (Agustin, 2011). In the process of learning a language, vocabulary is a critical element since it helps learners comprehend both spoken and written materials while articulating their thoughts clearly. Insufficient vocabulary knowledge can lead to challenges in enhancing the four primary language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Basri, 2014). Consequently, acquiring and retaining vocabulary are essential parts of teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

Vocabulary retention pertains to the capability of students to remember, keep, and access vocabulary after a learning experience over time. As noted by Nation (2001), repeated exposure and learning in meaningful contexts can enhance vocabulary retention. Additionally, Atkinson and Shiffrin's Information Processing Theory indicates that both repetition and focus play crucial roles in moving information from short-term memory to long-term memory. Moreover, Paivio's Dual Coding Theory highlights that retaining

information is more manageable when linguistic input is paired with non-verbal or sound-based stimuli. In this regard, English songs can serve as a powerful teaching tool since they integrate words, beats, and tunes at the same time, enabling learners to engage with vocabulary through various sensory pathways.

Even though mastering vocabulary is crucial, acquiring English vocabulary continues to be difficult for numerous English as a Foreign Language learners, especially those diagnosed with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). ADHD is a developmental condition marked by traits like inattention, excessive activity, and impulsive behaviors, which can disrupt students' learning and conduct in educational settings (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Learners with ADHD frequently struggle with focusing, organizing their responsibilities, managing urges, and keeping attention for extended durations during educational tasks. These challenges hinder their capability to effectively grasp and remember English vocabulary. Barkley (2014) indicates that youngsters diagnosed with ADHD often find it challenging to concentrate on the instructions in class and on educational assignments. In contrast, O'Regan (2007) points out that a significant number of ADHD students experience adverse educational situations because educators tend to misinterpret their behavioral traits. As a result, those students need instructional approaches that are more captivating, participatory, and centered on the learner to sustain their focus and enthusiasm throughout the learning experience.

One teaching method that has garnered significant focus in learning the English language is the incorporation of music. Music offers genuine language exposure and relevant scenarios that can assist learners in grasping vocabulary in a more organic way. By utilizing repetition, rhythm, and tunes, music facilitates enjoyable educational experiences that could enhance learners' ability to retain information and their enthusiasm for learning. Graham and Driscoll (2018) state that the traits of simplicity and repetition are vital for successful classroom songs as they facilitate the easier internalization of vocabulary by students. Additionally, Ludke et al. (2013) discovered that music can alleviate language learning anxiety and boost student involvement in classroom tasks. Furthermore, songs provide learners with multiple opportunities to experience vocabulary within meaningful sentences, thereby enhancing both their receptive and productive vocabulary skills.

Numerous past research efforts have explored the connection between music and vocabulary acquisition. Gholami and Lashkari (2012) discovered that music had a beneficial effect on vocabulary learning and memory retention among Iranian students learning English as a foreign language. Similarly, Wang (2013) indicated that songs notably enhanced second language vocabulary learning for young learners in Taiwan's preschool system. In addition, Wong (2018) presented evidence that songs improved vocabulary retention for pre-primary children in Hong Kong, while Arslan (2014) noted that music aids memory recall by using gist-based cognitive processes. These findings suggest that songs can serve as powerful educational tools for teaching vocabulary. Nonetheless, the majority of earlier research concentrated primarily on general EFL students, preschool age children, or younger students in non-integrative classrooms. Research specifically focusing on the use of English music for students displaying ADHD traits, especially in junior high school within inclusive educational environments, remains scarce.

The absence of studies concentrating on students diagnosed with ADHD results in a significant gap in research. Despite the existence of numerous investigations examining vocabulary acquisition through music, there remains a lack of adequate evidence concerning the effectiveness of English songs in aiding vocabulary retention for ADHD students in inclusive educational settings. This matter is crucial since students with ADHD necessitate unique teaching techniques that are distinct from standard pedagogical approaches. Conventional methods of vocabulary teaching that depend heavily on textbooks, memorization practices, and repetitive writing tasks are frequently not effective for learners facing attention challenges. Consequently, there is a need for more creative and multisensory

teaching methods to facilitate their educational experiences. Furthermore, many past studies focused solely on immediate vocabulary learning and failed to investigate how songs help with the long-term retention of vocabulary for students with special educational needs.

This research seeks to address the existing void by exploring the use of English songs to enhance vocabulary retention for students exhibiting ADHD traits in an inclusive junior high school setting. The originality of this study is highlighted by its concentration on ADHD learners within the Indonesian EFL environment, especially in inclusive junior high classrooms, a topic that has seldom been investigated in earlier research. Additionally, this research integrates the examination of vocabulary retention, the role of English songs, and ADHD traits within a cohesive research approach. In contrast to earlier studies that predominantly targeted general students, this research specifically investigates how learning strategies based on songs can aid students with attention challenges in improving their retention of English vocabulary.

According to initial findings gathered at a junior high school located in North Sumatra, 9 individuals from a total of 300 students exhibited traits associated with ADHD as determined by the Conners Rating Scale assessment. These students typically faced challenges in sustaining their attention, recalling vocabulary, and adhering to instructions in the classroom during English sessions. Consequently, this research explores the use of English music as an alternative educational approach that could offer more captivating and significant learning opportunities for students diagnosed with ADHD.

Thus, the aim of this research is to examine and articulate the ways in which the use of English songs aids in enhancing vocabulary retention in students exhibiting ADHD traits in Class VIII. This research utilized a qualitative descriptive method, supplemented by quantitative screening information. Data gathering occurred through ADHD assessments, surveys, and comprehensive interviews with students who show characteristics of ADHD and an English instructor. The outcomes of this research are anticipated to add to the theoretical framework for creating inclusive strategies in English language instruction while also offering practical alternative methods for teaching vocabulary to learners with special educational requirements.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive method, supported by quantitative screening data, to investigate the impact of English songs on vocabulary retention among students showing ADHD characteristics in an EFL environment. The qualitative aspect sought to explore students' learning experiences, their in-class reactions, and their perceptions of using English songs for vocabulary learning. Concurrently, quantitative information from ADHD assessments significantly contributed to the participant selection process.

The research was conducted at a middle school situated in North Sumatra during the school year 2025/2026. The study's participants consisted of students in the eighth grade. To identify individuals meeting the necessary criteria for the study, purposive sampling was utilized. With the assistance of teachers and the Conners Rating Scale, 9 out of approximately 300 students were identified as exhibiting ADHD characteristics and were chosen as the main subjects for the research. Additionally, an English teacher participated as a supplemental informant.

A range of instruments was employed to collect data, including ADHD evaluation forms, questionnaires, discussions, and observations taken during classes. The Conners Rating Scale was used to identify pupils displaying characteristics of ADHD, notably those related to lack of attention, hyperactivity, and impulsive actions. Questionnaires were distributed to obtain students' opinions on the use of English songs in their vocabulary learning process. Semi-structured discussions were conducted with both students and the English teacher to acquire in-depth understanding of their experiences in the classroom.

Furthermore, classroom observations were conducted to record students' engagement, concentration levels, and participation in various learning activities.

The investigation commenced with preliminary observations and teamwork with the English instructor to identify students who may show signs of ADHD. After the screening stage utilizing the Conners Rating Scale, selected participants took part in vocabulary acquisition activities that incorporated English songs as educational resources. These activities included listening to English songs, identifying unfamiliar words in the lyrics, completing exercises based on the lyrics, practicing vocabulary through singing, and examining the meanings of words in context. The songs used for this research were selected due to their repetitive structure, simplicity, clear pronunciation, and suitability for the students' proficiency levels. Data collection occurred over several sessions.

The collected data was analyzed utilizing descriptive qualitative techniques, adhering to the model proposed by Miles and Huberman, which comprises data compression, data representation, and conclusion development. The insights gained from interviews, questionnaires, and observations were organized, classified, and examined to identify patterns related to students' vocabulary retention and their responses to English music. The outcomes of the quantitative analysis were presented in a descriptive manner to facilitate the grouping of participants and to support the findings of the study.

In order to guarantee the accuracy and dependability of the results, this research utilized both source triangulation and technique triangulation. Information was gathered from various sources, involving students and the English instructor, as well as through several tools like surveys, interviews, observations, and assessment forms. Additionally, member checking was performed to verify the responses of participants and to minimize misunderstandings during the analysis of the data.

This study has several limitations. First, the number of participants was limited because the study focused only on students identified as having ADHD characteristics in one school setting. Second, the study employed a qualitative descriptive approach; therefore, the findings cannot be generalized broadly to all EFL learners or students with ADHD in different educational contexts. Nevertheless, the study provides important insights into the use of English songs as an alternative strategy for improving vocabulary retention among students with special learning characteristics.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of this research show that utilizing English songs had a beneficial impact on vocabulary retention in students exhibiting traits of ADHD. Through classroom observations, surveys, and discussions, it was found that these students displayed greater involvement, heightened enthusiasm, and enhanced recall of English vocabulary during song-based learning sessions. The enjoyable and repetitive format of English songs enabled students to sustain their focus for longer periods than traditional vocabulary instruction methods that primarily relied on rote memorization and textbook tasks.

The Conners Rating Scale's assessment process revealed that 9 out of roughly 300 eighth graders were identified as having ADHD traits, especially those related to lack of attention, impulsive behavior, and challenges in sustaining focus during lessons. Initial observations indicated that these students often lost their concentration, were easily distracted, and struggled to remember new vocabulary taught through standard methods. However, following the incorporation of English songs into class activities, significant improvements were noted in student participation and engagement in the classroom.

The activities in the classroom consisted of listening to English music, recognizing new words from the lyrics, practicing vocabulary through singing, and exploring the meanings of words within their contexts. Throughout these activities, the students seemed more eager and engaged in the learning experience. The majority of participants exhibited a greater readiness to respond to questions, practice pronouncing words, and engage in

conversations about the song lyrics. The beat and repetition found in the songs aided students in recalling vocabulary more effectively, particularly words that frequently occurred in the lyrics.

The outcomes from the questionnaire revealed encouraging feedback regarding the incorporation of English songs into vocabulary acquisition. A significant number of students mentioned that music made learning English more fun and enhanced their focus during class activities. Many students indicated that they were able to retain vocabulary more efficiently when the words were paired with melody and recurring patterns. Furthermore, several students noted that songs alleviated feelings of tedium and anxiety in English classes. These results suggest that English songs fostered a more inviting and interactive learning environment for students exhibiting traits associated with ADHD.

The results from the interviews corroborated the insights gained from classroom observations and the survey responses. The English instructor noted that learners displayed a higher level of engagement and responsiveness during activities that involved songs compared to standard teaching methods. The educator observed that students who had difficulties maintaining attention in the past were more involved and showed increased interest when lessons included songs. Some students mentioned in their interviews that they favored acquiring vocabulary through songs because they found these activities to be more enjoyable and easier to engage with. They indicated that listening to and singing along with repeated lyrics assisted them in memorizing vocabulary without effort.

The outcomes of this research align with earlier theories concerning vocabulary retention and the benefits of multisensory learning. According to Nation (2001), repeated exposure to vocabulary in a meaningful context enhances long-term retention capabilities. In this research, students were frequently exposed to vocabulary through song lyrics, which facilitated a more effective recall of words. Additionally, Paivio's Dual Coding Theory suggests that integrating both verbal and auditory inputs improves memory retention. English songs intertwine lyrics with melodies, which allows students to engage with vocabulary through both language and sound at the same time. This combination seemed particularly advantageous for students exhibiting traits associated with ADHD, who often find it challenging to maintain focus during conventional learning experiences.

The findings align with earlier research that examined how songs contribute to vocabulary acquisition. According to Gholami and Lashkari (2012), music had a beneficial effect on the vocabulary learning and retention of EFL students, while Wang (2013) observed that songs aided in vocabulary development for young second language learners. Likewise, Ludke et al. (2013) highlighted that songs could boost motivation among learners and alleviate anxiety associated with language learning. This current study builds on these prior results by specifically examining students exhibiting ADHD traits within an EFL setting. In contrast to numerous earlier investigations that focused on typical learners, this study illustrates that learning activities involving songs may also benefit students facing attention challenges, facilitating their more active involvement in English classes.

Another significant outcome indicates that English songs aided not only in vocabulary retention but also enhanced interaction in the classroom and positively affected students' emotional reactions towards learning. Learners showed increased confidence while pronouncing English words and displayed a greater eagerness to participate in class activities. The enjoyable atmosphere fostered by the use of songs helped lessen anxiety and motivated students to engage freely without fear of errors. This finding is crucial, given that students with ADHD frequently encounter frustration and diminished self-esteem during academic activities due to challenges in sustaining attention and finishing assignments.

Nonetheless, the results must be considered with caution due to various limitations of the research. Firstly, the sample size was somewhat small, as the research targeted only those students displaying ADHD traits within a single educational environment. Secondly,

the study utilized a qualitative descriptive approach, meaning that the results cannot be widely applied to all EFL learners or to those with ADHD in various settings. Furthermore, the research primarily centered on observing classroom interactions and students' reactions instead of quantifying vocabulary success through experimental statistical methods. Future research should aim to include larger participant numbers, adopt experimental approaches, and explore the long-term vocabulary growth through instruction that incorporates songs.

In summary, the results indicate that English-language songs may serve as a beneficial alternative teaching method to enhance vocabulary retention for students exhibiting ADHD traits. These songs offer repetition, meaningful contexts, auditory engagement, and enjoyable learning opportunities, supporting students' focus and their ability to retain vocabulary. Thus, the inclusion of English songs in EFL vocabulary teaching could significantly enhance the creation of more interactive and supportive classroom atmospheres, especially for students with unique learning needs.

CONCLUSION

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Despite the constraints of a limited participant group and a qualitative descriptive framework, the results offer valuable insights for English language instruction, especially in the area of vocabulary teaching for learners with unique educational needs. It is suggested that future studies include a broader range of participants, utilize experimental approaches, and investigate the sustained impacts of song-oriented learning on vocabulary growth and language learning in students exhibiting traits of ADHD.

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