



Towards Humanistic and Adaptive Language Learning: The Role of Children's Songs in the Digital Era

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Abstract: This study investigates the effectiveness of children's songs as a medium for vocabulary learning in first-grade Indonesian language classrooms. Vocabulary acquisition plays a fundamental role in language development, particularly in early education. The research employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach with a Kemmis & McTaggart spiral model, consisting of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting stages. The study was conducted in the second semester of the 2024/2025 academic year at UPTD SDN 6 Marobo, involving 20 first-grade students. The findings indicate a significant improvement in vocabulary mastery, as demonstrated by an increase in the average score from 59.25 before the intervention to 85.00 in Cycle II, and a rise in the completion rate from 25% to 90%. Additionally, the study highlights the positive impact of integrating children's songs with visual media and movement, which not only enhances cognitive learning but also encourages active participation, boosts confidence, and supports the development of social-emotional skills. These results affirm that children's songs are an effective, enjoyable, and contextually relevant tool for teaching vocabulary, making it a viable strategy for enhancing literacy in elementary education.

Keywords: Children's Songs, Classroom Action Research, Indonesian Language Learning, Multisensory Learning, Primary School Education, Vocabulary Mastery.

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Introduction

Vocabulary mastery is a fundamental foundation of language skills in elementary school-aged children. Vocabulary not only serves as a tool for understanding oral and written messages but also plays a key role in expressing ideas, emotions, and concepts in a structured manner (Fitria, 2024; Namaziandoost et al., 2024; Taye & Mengesha, 2024). Recent research emphasizes that adequate vocabulary proficiency positively contributes to critical thinking skills, communication, and basic literacy among students (Firanda, 2025; Nurmanova & Komiljonova, 2024; Ünalđı & Yüce, 2021). Conversely, limited vocabulary can hinder students in constructing simple sentences and comprehending instructions, which impacts the effectiveness of the Indonesian language learning process in early grade classrooms.

Field observations reveal that many elementary school students, particularly in the lower grades, still face difficulties in mastering basic vocabulary. This issue is exacerbated by the use of monotonous

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teaching methods that are predominantly teacher-centered and insufficiently engage students actively. Recent studies highlight that conventional teaching approaches tend to decrease students' learning motivation and result in slow vocabulary acquisition (Bawamenewi et al., 2024; Feng & Xiao, 2024; Mundir et al., 2022). Therefore, there is a need for more innovative, contextual, and age-appropriate teaching approaches that align with early childhood learning styles, enabling students to better understand and use new vocabulary.

One medium with significant potential is children's songs. Songs provide a combination of rhythm, rhyme, and repetition that align with children's cognitive development and help strengthen language memory (Karolina, 2024; Mahmood, 2025; Rosati, 2024). Children's songs also present concrete contexts that are closely related to daily life, making it easier for students to connect words with real-life experiences (Sadiqzade, 2024; Zhang, 2025). Furthermore, song-based learning has been shown to create an enjoyable learning environment, increase active participation, and foster emotional engagement in the Indonesian language learning process (Rorintulus & Wuntu, 2023; Vallejo & Pérez Ortega, 2024). Therefore, utilizing children's songs is a relevant and innovative solution to address the challenges of vocabulary acquisition in lower elementary school classrooms.

Children's songs possess a unique quality as a learning medium because they combine elements of rhythm, rhyme, and repetition. These elements are not merely for entertainment; they serve to strengthen children's long-term memory of new vocabulary. Research shows that the repetition of words combined with musical rhythm facilitates language internalization and enhances vocabulary retention among young children (Assadi & Murad, 2024; Hanesova & Urban, 2025). Therefore, children's songs can be seen as a multisensory strategy that engages not only hearing but also emotions and movement.

Children's song lyrics typically present simple vocabulary that is closely related to students' daily experiences. This makes songs a contextual medium that allows students to more easily understand the meaning of words through their connection to social reality. Children's songs help students build relationships between language and their environment, thereby accelerating the process of vocabulary application in everyday communication (Assalamah, 2024; Karolina, 2024; Roland, 2024). The concrete context provided by songs acts as a bridge between the formal academic world and the personal experiences of students.

Previous research findings also demonstrate the effectiveness of children's songs in enhancing student motivation and engagement in language learning. Students who learned through songs exhibited higher concentration and participation compared to those using conventional methods. Songs provide an enjoyable learning atmosphere, stimulate enthusiasm, and reduce students' anxiety when attempting new vocabulary, which aligns with the concept of edutainment, combining education and entertainment to achieve optimal learning outcomes (Abdelghani & Mohammed, 2023; Akbar, 2024; Siagianto et al., 2024).

The integration of songs with visual media and movements has proven to further enhance the effectiveness of vocabulary learning. Using children's songs combined with images and kinesthetic activities improved language concept understanding by 30% more than songs alone. This suggests that children's songs not only serve as a linguistic tool but can also be adapted into a holistic multisensory learning experience (Hanesova & Urban, 2025; Karolina, 2024; Mohammed Cherif, 2024). Based on this theory and empirical evidence, utilizing children's songs as a medium for vocabulary learning can be positioned as an innovative strategy that aligns with the characteristics of elementary school students.

Based on the problem background and theoretical review presented, it is clear that vocabulary learning for lower-grade students requires an innovative strategy that can create an active, enjoyable, and contextual learning environment. The use of children's songs emerges as a promising alternative, as it not only serves as entertainment but also as an educational tool that aligns with the cognitive and affective development of young children.

This study specifically aims to describe the use of children's songs as a medium for learning Indonesian in first-grade classrooms. The main focus of the research is to analyze the effectiveness of children's songs in improving students' vocabulary mastery. This effectiveness is measured by comparing students' abilities before and after the song-based learning intervention, both in terms of average scores and completion percentage.

This study also explores the challenges faced by teachers and students in implementing children's songs as a learning medium, while offering solutions that can be implemented. Therefore, this research is expected to make a significant contribution to the development of Indonesian language learning strategies in elementary schools, while also enriching the body of knowledge on edutainment-based teaching methods that are relevant to the challenges of contemporary education.

Method

This study uses a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach with the spiral model of Kemmis & McTaggart, which consists of four stages: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2014). This model was chosen because it is suitable for continuously improving classroom teaching practices through reflective and collaborative action cycles (Altun & Yucel-Toy, 2023; Arefian, 2022; Yusron et al., 2023).

The study was conducted in the first-grade class of UPTD SDN 6 Marobo during the second semester of the 2024/2025 academic year, with 20 students participating, consisting of 11 boys and 9 girls. The focus of the research is on improving students' vocabulary skills through the use of children's songs as a medium for learning Indonesian. The songs selected were based on the relevance of the themes to the vocabulary needs of the children, such as body parts, the surrounding environment, and daily activities.

Each cycle of the research includes several stages. In the planning stage, the teacher prepares the lesson plan, selects relevant children's songs, and designs observation and evaluation instruments. In the action stage, the teacher integrates children's songs into Indonesian language learning through activities such as singing together, using movements, and incorporating visual media. The observation stage is conducted to record student participation, engagement in singing activities, and vocabulary understanding. Meanwhile, the reflection stage is used to analyze student learning outcomes and determine improvements for the next cycle.

Data collection techniques include observation, tests, and documentation. Observation is used to monitor student activity during the learning process. Tests are administered before and after the intervention to measure improvements in vocabulary mastery. Documentation, including field notes, student work, and photos of activities, is used to support the research data. The data are analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative analysis is used to calculate the average scores and the percentage of learning completion, while qualitative analysis is used to describe changes in student behavior and engagement during the learning process.

Result and Discussion

Before the intervention, the results of the initial evaluation indicated that the vocabulary skills of first-grade students at UPTD SDN 6 Marobo were still relatively low. The average score obtained by the students was only 59.25, with a completion rate of 25%. This means that only a small portion of the students were able to meet the minimum mastery criteria. This condition suggests that the conventional teaching methods previously used had not been effective in optimally helping students master basic Indonesian vocabulary.

In Cycle I, the teacher began integrating children's songs into vocabulary learning. The songs used were themed around body parts and the surrounding environment, but the learning was conducted without the support of visual media or explicit explanations of meaning. As a result, there was an improvement in student performance, with the average score reaching 72.50 and the completion rate at 60%. However, observations revealed that students' understanding of the meaning of vocabulary was still limited, as most students merely imitated the lyrics without fully grasping the meaning of the words.

Improvements were then made in Cycle II by adding explanations of word meanings, using images as visual media, and incorporating singing activities combined with gestures to point to objects or body parts according to the song lyrics. This multisensory strategy proved to be more effective, as indicated by a significant improvement in student learning outcomes. The class average score reached 85.00, with a completion rate of 90%. Almost all students were able to understand and use the

vocabulary they had learned, both in spoken and simple written forms. Overall, the development of student learning outcomes can be seen in the following Table 1.

Table 1. Average Scores and Percentage of Student Achievement

Stage	Average Score	Completion Percentage
Pre-Intervention	59.25	25%
Cycle I	72.50	60%
Cycle II	85.00	90%

The research results in Table 1 show a consistent improvement from pre-intervention to Cycle II, where the average score of students increased from 59.25 to 85.00 and the completion percentage rose from 25% to 90%. These findings affirm that children's songs are effective as a medium for vocabulary learning in lower elementary school classrooms. The improvement aligns with the view that songs strengthen long-term memory through rhythmic repetition that suits children's cognitive development (Chen & Wong, 2024; Karolina, 2024). Furthermore, song-based learning enhances student concentration and motivation, making it easier for them to understand new vocabulary (Fauzi, 2022; Vallejo & Pérez Ortega, 2024). The visual and movement support added in Cycle II also reinforces the findings that integrating songs with visual media improves concept understanding by 30% more than using songs alone (Fallin et al., 2021; Rahayu & Sutikno, 2025). Thus, the significant improvement observed in Cycle II proves that the multisensory strategy through children's songs is a relevant, adaptive, and effective approach to enhancing vocabulary mastery among first-grade students.

The improvement in learning outcomes from pre-intervention to Cycle II shows that children's songs are not only a source of entertainment but also a pedagogical tool that facilitates the process of vocabulary internalization. This is in line with the findings that children's songs function as a bridge between language and children's social experiences, allowing students to more easily understand and use words in real-life contexts (Meriläinen & Piispanen, 2022; Mpandashulu, 2024). In other words, children's songs are able to integrate linguistic elements with daily experiences, making vocabulary learning more contextual and meaningful.

In addition to enhancing cognitive aspects, the use of children's songs also has a positive impact on students' affective aspects. Singing together with cheerful rhythms creates an enjoyable learning atmosphere, reduces anxiety, and boosts students' confidence in using new vocabulary. Song-based learning strategies foster children's intrinsic motivation to learn language, as the process resembles play (Vallejo & Pérez Ortega, 2024). Thus, children's songs not only function as a linguistic tool but also serve as a means of building emotional and social engagement in the learning process.

Indonesian language learning that integrates children's songs has proven to create an enjoyable and meaningful learning atmosphere. Songs such as "Bangun Tidur," "Cicak di Dinding," and "Aku Anak Sehat" were chosen because they feature simple language structures, rich vocabulary, and are easy for students to remember and sing. The lyrics of these songs also contain repetition and rhyme, two important elements in the language acquisition process for children. Through singing activities, students are not only passive listeners but also actively engage in mimicking lyrics, performing relevant movements, and using vocabulary in simple contexts (Pilatuña Espinoza, 2024; Saputri et al., 2021). This multisensory involvement aligns with the findings of previous research, which emphasize that learning based on a combination of sound, movement, and visuals can accelerate language acquisition in early childhood (Assadi & Murad, 2024; Sadiqzade, 2024).

The effectiveness of children's songs as a vocabulary learning medium is clearly evident from the comparison of learning outcomes before and after the intervention. Quantitative data shows a significant improvement in average scores and student completion rates, while observation results confirm an increase in active participation during the learning process. Students appeared more confident when pronouncing and writing vocabulary found in the song lyrics, making the learning process more interactive. The songs also provided a concrete and enjoyable context, allowing students to more easily understand the meaning of words in real-life situations. These findings align with the views of a contextual approach based on children's culture, which can accelerate the language internalization process in the early stages of development (Erdemir, 2022).

The results of this study also have important implications for 21st-century learning practices, which emphasize student-centered learning approaches and the integration of multisensory strategies. Children's songs, when combined with visualization and movement, provide a holistic learning experience that aligns with the diverse learning styles of students. The integration of audio-visual elements in song-based learning enhances vocabulary retention while strengthening communication skills (Abdelghani & Mohammed, 2023; Ünalđı & Yüce, 2021). Therefore, the use of children's songs can be considered an innovative strategy for elementary school teachers in addressing early literacy challenges and equipping students with stronger vocabulary skills to support language proficiency at higher educational levels.

Conclusion

This study proves that children's songs are effective as a medium for learning Indonesian to enhance vocabulary mastery among first-grade students. The results of the intervention show an increase in the average score from 59.25 in the pre-intervention phase to 85.00 in Cycle II, as well as an improvement in the completion rate from 25% to 90%. These findings confirm that children's songs can serve as a learning tool that is not only enjoyable but also meaningful and adaptive to the needs of elementary school students.

In addition to contributing to cognitive aspects, the use of children's songs also has a positive impact on students' affective aspects. The activity of singing together, accompanied by movement and visualization, successfully created an interactive learning atmosphere, encouraged students' courage to use new vocabulary, and boosted their confidence in communication. Therefore, children's songs serve a dual function as both a linguistic medium and an edutainment tool that combines education and entertainment.

The implication of this study is the importance of teachers' creativity in integrating children's songs with multisensory-based teaching strategies. Teachers need to select songs that align with students' daily themes, modify lyrics if necessary, and supplement them with visualization and movement activities to make the learning process more effective. Therefore, children's songs are recommended as an innovative alternative in Indonesian language learning in lower-grade classrooms, as well as a strategic step to support the sustainable development of students' basic literacy skills.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this article. The research was conducted impartially and without any external influence from financial, personal, or professional relationships that could have influenced the study's design, execution, or interpretation of the results. The findings and conclusions presented in this study reflect the unbiased and objective work of the authors, ensuring the integrity and transparency of the research.

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