



Super Simple Song®: The Potential use of Educational Kids' Songs to Boost Young Learners' Vocabulary

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to explore the potential use of *Super Simple Song®* to boost young learners' vocabulary instruction. *Super Simple Song®* is a popular YouTube channel dedicated to offering a wide range of educational kid's songs and classic nursery rhymes meticulously designed for young students to make their learning easy, simple, and fun. By means of qualitative approach, all songs featured on the channel were reviewed based on related theories and relevant research results regarding the use of songs to teach English vocabulary to children. The findings confirmed that *Super Simple Song®* lyrics contain typically few and repetitive words encouraging students to imitate, understand and memorize the lines they sing. In addition, they were also composed in children-familiar words aligned with basic yet rich of linguistic concepts which most likely meet young learners' curriculum needs. In other words, *Super Simple Song®* is significantly recommended to be utilized for classroom activities to teach vocabulary to young learners.

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INTRODUCTION

Song is a major part of EFL young learners' classroom instruction (Pinter, 2006). Particularly, it is a powerful tool to learn vocabulary, sentence structures, and sentence patterns (Murphey, 1992). Appropriate songs provide the opportunity for vocabulary practice usually based around a theme or topic that can provide the context for vocabulary learning. The song *Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes*, for example, could be used to review body parts. Further, most children's songs are characterized by monosyllabic words, many of which are frequently repeated. This repetition offers greater exposure to these words and can help to improve vocabulary acquisition. However, some of the vocabulary and language used in traditional and popular English songs can cause difficulties for young language learners due to the use of low-frequency and archaic words (Millington, 2011). In addition, children notice quickly that when songs were too fast, too lyrically complex, or too difficult to follow through gesture and dance, many of them would simply tune out. Therefore, Schoepp (2001) strongly recommended that the song and the lyrics need to be selected carefully to complement the target vocabulary. As the result, teachers often struggle to find and pick songs that are suitable in terms of both the words used and the subject or theme they cover.

Here, *Super Simple Song®* is an alternative for English teachers of young learners. *Super Simple Songs®* is a collection of original kids songs and classic nursery rhymes made simple for young learners. They focus on creating songs that are claimed by the creator to be appropriately paced, lyrically simple, full of space for movement, easily taught through gesture, and fun. They created songs that they hoped any child with developing language skills would be able to enjoy, even for EFL language learners. The songs were such a big hit that they started to share them with parents and teachers around the world.

Accordingly, the objective of this study is to examine the lyrics of *Super Simple Song®* to figure out the pattern of the words used and how the linguistic concepts are developed. This research is expected to serve as a valuable resource for English teachers who work with young learners, providing them with guidance in selecting appropriate songs that effectively facilitate vocabulary instruction for children.

Teaching English to EFL Young Learners

Teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) to young learners involves providing language instruction and support to children who are non-native English speakers in an environment where English is not the primary language (Pinter, 2006). It is important to design activities and materials that engage and suit their developmental stage. According to Zhogi & Shoari (2015), incorporating a multisensory approach that utilizes visuals, gestures, and real-life objects enhances comprehension and interactive learning. Focusing on age-appropriate vocabulary and basic phrases helps children grasp essential language skills, starting with concrete concepts and gradually introducing more abstract ones. Repetition and reinforcement play a crucial role in solidifying language acquisition, and activities like games, chants, and role-playing provide regular practice opportunities (Webb, 2007). Exposure to authentic English language use through stories, songs, and videos helps develop listening and speaking skills.

Teaching Vocabulary to Young Learners Through Songs

Teaching vocabulary to young learners through songs can be an effective and engaging approach. Here are some steps and strategies teachers can follow:

1. **Select age-appropriate songs:** Choose songs that are suitable for the age group and level of young learners. According to Pacheco (2013), selecting songs with clear pronunciation, simple lyrics, and catchy melodies is essential for effective vocabulary learning.
2. **Choose songs with relevant vocabulary:** Select songs that include vocabulary words or themes to teach. As suggested by Graham-Knight (2017), matching the song's content to the target vocabulary enhances the students' understanding and retention of new words.
3. **Pre-teach vocabulary:** Before playing the song, introduce and pre-teach the key vocabulary words that appear in the lyrics. Use visuals, gestures, and real objects to help young learners understand the meaning of the words (Graham-Knight, 2017). According to Saricoban and Metin (2017), pre-teaching vocabulary helps build a foundation for successful vocabulary acquisition through songs.
4. **Listen and sing along:** Play the song for the students and encourage them to listen and follow along with the lyrics. Teachers can provide printed copies of the lyrics or display them on a screen. As recommended by Castro et al. (2015), active engagement with the song helps students develop listening skills and familiarity with the vocabulary.

5. **Pause and discuss:** Pause the song at certain points to discuss the meaning of specific vocabulary words or phrases. Ask questions to check comprehension and encourage students to share their thoughts and ideas related to the lyrics (Graham-Knight, 2017). This interaction promotes a deeper understanding and connection to the vocabulary (Saricoban & Metin, 2017).
6. **Sing and repeat:** After listening to the song a few times, encourage students to sing along. Repeat the song multiple times to reinforce vocabulary learning and improve pronunciation. According to Graham-Knight (2017), repetition aids vocabulary retention and boosts students' confidence in using the new words.
7. **Fill in the blanks:** Create cloze exercises by removing certain words from the lyrics. Play the song again and ask students to fill in the missing words. This activity helps reinforce vocabulary and listening skills (Pacheco, 2013).
8. **Actions and gestures:** Incorporate actions and gestures into the song to make it more interactive. Encourage students to perform actions or use hand gestures that represent the meaning of the vocabulary words in the song (Graham-Knight, 2017). Actions and gestures enhance the students' understanding and make the learning experience more memorable (Saricoban & Metin, 2017).
9. **Create follow-up activities:** After the song, design follow-up activities to reinforce the vocabulary learned. This can include drawing pictures related to the song, creating a vocabulary word wall, or playing vocabulary games (Castro et al., 2015). These activities provide opportunities for students to use and review the new vocabulary in different contexts.
10. **Review and revisit:** Revisit the song and vocabulary periodically to reinforce learning. Use the vocabulary words in other contexts and activities to help students internalize the new words (Pacheco, 2013).

Remember to choose songs that match students' interests and cultural backgrounds. Songs with repetitive choruses, simple melodies, and clear pronunciation are especially effective for young learners. By integrating songs into vocabulary lessons, teachers can make the learning experience enjoyable and memorable for young students.

Selecting songs to teach vocabulary to young learners

When choosing songs to teach vocabulary to young learners, teachers should consider the following guidelines:

1. **Age-appropriate content:** Select songs that are suitable for the age and language proficiency level of your students. Choose songs with themes, lyrics, and vocabulary that align with their developmental stage and interests (Graham-Knight, 2017).
2. **Clear pronunciation:** Opt for songs with clear and intelligible pronunciation. This helps students hear and imitate the correct pronunciation of vocabulary words (Graham-Knight, 2017).
3. **Repetition:** Songs with repetitive structures and refrains are beneficial for vocabulary learning. Repetition enhances students' ability to recognize and internalize new words (Graham-Knight, 2017; Saricoban & Metin, 2017).
4. **Contextual relevance:** Choose songs that contain vocabulary words or themes related to the content or topic you are teaching. The relevance of the vocabulary to the students' lives and interests increases engagement and retention (Graham-Knight, 2017).

5. Catchy melody and rhythm: Songs with catchy melodies and engaging rhythms can captivate young learners' attention and make the vocabulary learning experience more enjoyable (Saricoban & Metin, 2017).
6. Visual support: Consider songs that have accompanying visual aids, such as music videos or lyric videos, to enhance comprehension and reinforce vocabulary learning (Graham-Knight, 2017).

Remember to preview and evaluate the song's lyrics and content for appropriateness, cultural sensitivity, and educational value.

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach, wherein the data were gathered, organized, coded, analyzed, and subsequently condensed and presented (Creswell, 2012). This study focuses on analyzing 17 songs obtained from the *Super Simple Song®* YouTube channel, which can be accessed at <https://supersimple.com/super-simple-songs/>. The selection of these songs was intentional and based on their popularity, determined by the number of viewers. After downloading the songs, they were carefully watched and listened to, and transcribed into song lyrics. To facilitate the analysis, a web-based text tool available at <https://www.tracemyip.org/tools/remove-duplicate-words-in-text/> was utilized to eliminate duplicate words within each song's lyrics.

This process aimed to compare the word count before and after the removal of duplicate words, providing insights into the frequency of song repetition during singing. Additionally, this approach enables researchers to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the vocabulary content present in each song more effectively. Once the vocabulary quantity for each song has been determined, the next step involves analyzing the theme, words use, and linguistic concepts present within the lyrics of each *Super Simple Song®*. This analysis aims to identify patterns in the development of linguistic concepts within these songs and ultimately ascertain their suitability for teaching vocabulary to young learners. Finally, the findings were concluded and reported in this paper.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

These findings are to answer research questions dealing with the pattern of vocabulary use and the linguistic concepts contain in song lyrics of *Super Simple Song®* YouTube channel. The results and discussion are presented as follows:

The Pattern of Vocabulary Usage in *Super Simple Song®* Lyrics

Based on the results of the analysis using a simple descriptive statistical approach, it was found that out of 17 song lyrics studied, the average used only 139 words. The song with the greatest number of words in the lyrics is titled *ice cream song* with 272 words while the one with the least number of words is *Days of The Week* song which contains only 7 words. Further, by eliminating the same words in each of the song lyrics, a significant difference was obtained regarding the number of words used in each of the song lyrics. The song with the most words only uses 40 words while the fewest words song only uses 7 words. This also indicates that the song collection in the YouTube channel, *Super Simple Song®* uses a lot of repetition. The song with the most repeated lyrics is *The Happy Face* with approximately 11 repetitions, while the least repetition of the lyrics is *Days of The Week* with 3 repetitions. Overall, the average number of repetitions for each lyric is 7 repetitions. In other words, it can be concluded that *Super Simple Song®* are really simple songs, use only a small amount of

vocabulary, and are sung with repetitive lyrics. Table 1 displays in detail a sample of vocabulary usage in *Super Simple Song®* Lyrics.

Table 1. Sample of The Pattern of Vocabulary Usage in *Super Simple Song®* Lyrics

Song title	Do You Like Spaghetti?	
Words in original lyrics	Do you like spaghetti?	Do you like tomatoes?
	Yes, I do Yes, I do	Yes, I do Yes, I do
	Do you like yogurt?	do you like pancakes
	Yes, I do Yes, I do	Yes, I do Yes, I do
	Do you like spaghetti yogurt?	do you like tomato pancakes?
	No, I don't yucky	No, I don't yucky
	do you like cookies?	do you like carrots?
	Yes, I do Yes, I do	Yes, I do Yes, I do
	Do you like salad?	you like cereal?
	Yes, I do Yes, I do	Yes, I do yes, I do
Do you like cookie salad?	Do you like carrot cereal?	
No, I don't yucky	No, I don't yuck	
Words in lyrics	do you like spaghetti yes I yogurt no don't yucky cookies salad cookie tomatoes pancakes tomato carrots cereal carrot yuck	
Total Words in original lyrics	116	
Total Words in lyrics	20	
Estimation of repetition	6	

The Pattern of Linguistic Concepts in *Super Simple Song®* Lyrics

The linguistic concepts referred to in this study is the theme and language focus found in the lyrics of the *Super Simple Song®* s®. The analysis result indicated that the songs' lyrics cover various topics. Out of the 17 song lyrics available, there are 11 different themes, which include numbers, daily routines, classroom activities, emotions, occupations, animals, body parts, transportation, clothing, days of the week, and food. While there are songs with similar themes, each of them emphasizes different vocabulary content. Furthermore, every song is designed to incorporate diverse conceptual language elements, thereby enhancing the existing vocabulary themes. The song "I Like Spaghetti" for instance, explores the topic of food as well as discusses "questions and answers" about "likes and dislikes". Table 2 provides a sample of a comprehensive overview of the detailed explanation.

Table 2. Sample of The Pattern of Linguistic Concepts in *Super Simple Song®* Lyrics

No	Tittle	Theme			Language Focus
1	The Bath Song	Part of body			Question and Answer
		Feet	knees	toes	Can you wash...?
		face	shoulders	hands	I can wash...
		nose			
					Possessive
					My ..
					Your...

No	Title	Theme	Language Focus
2	Driving In My Car	Transportation car train boat airplane bike	How to work with transportation Driving car Rowing boat Riding bike Riding train Flying aeroplane The sound of transportation Car - vrom Bike - Pedal Plane - whoosh Train - choo Boat - splash
3	Do You Like Spaghetti?	Food spaghetti yogurt cookies tomatoes pancakes cereal salad	Question and answer Do you like...? Yes, I do. No, I don't

The results of this research have revealed that *Super Simple Song®* are written in simple lyrics. The songs typically contain a small number of words, and the vocabulary employed is pretty familiar to children's everyday experiences. According to Schoepp (2001), young learners are still developing their language skills and still have limited vocabulary and understanding of complex sentence structures. Simple lyrics with clear and concise language make it easier for them to comprehend and follow the song's message (Millington, 2011). They are more memorable for young children, allowing them to easily grasp and remember the words and internalize the content of the song. Besides, they are more engaging for young learners, enabling them to actively participate in singing and dancing. Kusnierek (2016) claimed that songs with simple lyrics provide an opportunity for active participation, promoting a positive and enjoyable learning experience. Moreover, simple lyrics help convey basic concepts such as numbers, colors, shapes, and alphabet recognition clearly and effectively. They also aid in practicing correct pronunciation and improving phonetic skills through the repetition of simple words and sounds. Furthermore, simple lyrics in songs for young learners promote comprehension, engagement, memorization, and concept acquisition, fostering their language, cognitive, and social development.

In addition to having simple lyrics, *Super Simple Song®* also feature repetitive lines. Repetitive songs are effective for teaching young learners since they enhance memory by reinforcing information and aiding retention (Zhogi & Shoari, 2015). They facilitate language acquisition by familiarizing children with the sounds, rhythm, and structure of a language. The predictability and rhythm of the repetition make them engaging and enjoyable for young learners, capturing their attention and making the learning process fun. Through repetitive songs, children gradually master the content, building confidence and motivating active participation.

In addition to being simple and repetitive, *Super Simple Song®* s are also composed with diverse themes and are rich in basic linguistic concepts. According to

Schoepp (2001), songs that incorporate vocabulary words or themes relevant to the content or topic being taught to young learners have multiple advantages. It provides a meaningful and contextual learning experience. When children hear and engage with vocabulary words and concepts in the context of a song, they can better understand and relate to the subject matter they are studying. This connection helps solidify their comprehension and enables them to apply the vocabulary in real-life situations.

Additionally, the *Super Simple Song®* collections that incorporate relevant vocabulary words or themes facilitate the integration of language skills. In addition to learning new words, children have the opportunity to practice using them in a meaningful and natural way. They engage in listening, speaking, reading, and even writing activities related to the content, which promotes a well-rounded language learning experience. Using songs with vocabulary words or themes related to the content or topic being taught supports long-term retention and transfer of knowledge (Campillo, 2010). When children encounter these words or themes outside of the song, they can easily recall and apply their understanding. This ability to transfer learning to different contexts further reinforces their comprehension and ensures a deeper level of mastery. In summary, selecting songs that incorporate relevant vocabulary words or themes enriches the learning experience by providing context, reinforcing learning through repetition, promoting language integration, and facilitating long-term retention and transfer of knowledge.

It is important to acknowledge that the data utilized in this research is based on real-time information obtained during the research period. It is crucial to recognize that this data is subject to change, as the content creator of the Super Simple YouTube channel may add new songs in the future. Nonetheless, it is pertinent to emphasize that the findings of this study remain relevant as they were not influenced by the specific time period during which the research was conducted.

CONCLUSION

Song is a powerful tool for teaching vocabulary to young learners, yet selecting an appropriate one for classroom instruction is quite challenging. Here, *Super Simple Song®* is the best alternative since it provides dozens of songs meticulously designed for classroom learning activities. The empirical data from the findings indicate that the lyrics of the songs consist of only a few simple and repetitive words, making it easier for children to memorize and understand the meaning of the vocabulary. Apart from that, the song lyrics are also created in various themes, comprising children-familiar words and functional linguistic concepts. This, further, encourages students to practice and improve their basic speaking skills. Moreover, these findings serve as valuable insight for young learners English teachers on how to select appropriate songs which meet the classroom needs and ultimately support them to optimize their teaching and learning process.

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