

Preschool Educators' Insights: Exploring the Role of Music and Movement in Enhancing Children's English Language Acquisition

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Abstract

This qualitative study explored preschool teachers' perspectives on the impact of music and movement activities on children's English language development. It was conducted in Bandar Sri Damansara and Rawang, Malaysia, using convenience sampling to collect the views of 10 preschool teachers. Data collection involved one-on-one interviews via the Zoom platform, with responses analyzed using ATLAS.ti 9 software. The analysis revealed eight main themes that reflected teachers' views: (a) fostering joyful engagement, (b) encouraging physical activity, (c) enhancing language acquisition through song lyrics, (d) improving phonetic pronunciation skills, (e) facilitating the use of new vocabulary from lyrics, (f) occasional mispronunciation (g) occasional mispronunciation during singing activities, (g) occasional mispronunciation during singing activities; appropriate practice lessons. These findings highlight the positive influence of music and movement on children's English language skills—particularly in pronunciation and vocabulary acquisition. This study contributes to understanding how educators perceive these activities as tools to support children's early language development.

Keywords: Preschool, Teachers' Insights, Music And Movement, Children, English Language Development, Pronunciation, Vocabulary

Introduction

The early years of childhood are a critical period for language development, and preschool educators play a vital role in fostering this growth. Among a variety of educational strategies, music, and movement activities have emerged as a creative approach that has the potential to enhance children's language skills. Research shows that integrating music into daily activities promotes literacy development and enhances language abilities, especially among English language learners (Magnussen, & Sukying, 2021). Music shares structural similarities with language, such as rhythm and pitch, which allow the brain to process both using similar neural pathways (Christina, & Pujiarto, 2023). This connection makes music an effective medium for teaching new vocabulary and grammatical structures through engaging songs and rhymes.

In our current day, English is used as a global language and as a worldwide language of communication (Chai et al., 2020). In Malaysia, studying English as a Second Language (ESL) is a demanding task that has caused challenges for the majority of Malaysian students. Children will start to adapt to the English language at an early age. However, according to Zhao (2025), children will officially start to learn English in Year 1 (age 7) and continue until Year 6 (age 12) when schooling becomes obligatory in Malaysia. In social environments, most of the children can obtain adequate listening comprehension but struggle to understand spoken language in academic settings.

Preschool educators' perspectives on these activities are invaluable because they provide firsthand insight into how music and movement can be effectively integrated into educational environments to support English language acquisition. Despite the recognized benefits of early childhood education—such as improving focus, creativity, motor skills, and social interaction—they remain underutilized in many preschool curricula due to factors such as inadequate teacher training or resource constraints (Bautista et al., 2024). Understanding teachers' perspectives on the impact of these activities can help identify barriers to implementation while highlighting successful strategies that enhance children's linguistic abilities.

Problem Statement

The acquisition of English as a second language in early childhood is a significant developmental milestone, particularly in multilingual and multicultural contexts. Preschool educators often face challenges in identifying effective, engaging, and developmentally appropriate methods to enhance young learners' English language skills. Traditional teaching approaches may not fully address the diverse learning needs of preschoolers, who benefit most from interactive and multisensory experiences (Batu, 2024).

Emerging research highlights the potential of music and movement as powerful tools for fostering language development. Studies have shown that musical activities, such as singing and rhythmic movement, enhance phonological awareness, vocabulary acquisition, and pronunciation skills in young learners. For example, rhythm supports phonemic awareness, while melody aids memorization and comprehension. Movement paired with music reinforces meaning through embodied learning, making abstract language concepts tangible for children (Newman, 2023).

Despite these promising findings, there is limited exploration of how preschool educators view and implement music and movement in their classrooms to support English language acquisition. Additionally, there is a need to understand the practical barriers educators face when integrating these methods into early childhood education settings. Without such insights, opportunities to optimize language learning through music and movement may remain underutilized. Many people reject the idea that music might aid youngsters with their schoolwork because they believe it will disrupt their focus. (Mohammad R. Hashemi and Nima Yousefi, 2021). Degé (2021), mentioned that music learning would increase children's intellectual abilities. Hence, the teachers play an important role to enhance music learning in preschool education. However, preschool teachers who have music educational backgrounds are still lacking in Malaysia.

This research aims to explore preschool educators' insights on the role of music and movement in enhancing children's English language acquisition. By examining their experiences, practices and challenges, this study seeks to bridge the gap between theoretical evidence and practical application, ultimately contributing to more effective early language education strategies.

The Significance of Study

Language acquisition during early childhood lays the foundation for future academic success, cognitive development, and social interaction. English, as a global language, is increasingly important in early education, especially in multilingual societies. However, many preschoolers struggle with English language acquisition due to limited exposure, lack of engagement, and traditional teaching methods that may not meet their developmental needs (Isaac, 2024). Given these challenges, there is an urgent need to explore alternative, engaging, and developmentally appropriate methods to enhance young children's English language proficiency.

Music has long been recognized as a powerful pedagogical tool, promoting memory retention, phonemic awareness, and motivation. Songs, rhythms, and melodies create a fun and interactive learning environment, making it easier for children to acquire language skills. However, integrating music into English language learning in preschool settings faces several challenges, including lack of teacher training, inadequate resources, and misconceptions about the role of music in language development (Bao, 2023). Understanding these challenges is essential in optimizing language learning strategies that leverage the benefits of music.

This study is important because it bridges the gap between theoretical research and real-world classroom practice. By exploring the perspectives of preschool educators, it highlights how music and movement can be used to create engaging multisensory learning experiences that cater to diverse learning styles. This approach can enhance phonological awareness, vocabulary retention, and pronunciation skills, ultimately contributing to more effective English language acquisition among preschoolers.

Furthermore, this research provides important insights for educators seeking innovative strategies to teach English as a second language in an engaging and developmentally appropriate way. The findings also contribute to policy and curriculum development by highlighting the long-term benefits of early intervention through music-based learning. Such interventions can lay a strong foundation for future academic success and holistic child development.

Beyond its practical implications, this study makes a significant contribution to the field of early childhood education by shedding light on the challenges of implementing music as a language acquisition tool. By identifying these barriers, the research informs educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers about how to more effectively integrate music into preschool curricula. While existing studies highlight the benefits of music in language learning, this research ensures that its practical application is feasible and impactful in real-world preschool settings.

In addition, this study empowers educators by addressing common challenges such as limited musical knowledge, inadequate teaching materials, and time constraints. These findings can serve as a basis for developing training modules and professional development programs, equipping teachers with the skills needed to incorporate music into language teaching. By supporting the integration of music, this study contributes to creating a more engaging and enjoyable language learning environment, fostering preschoolers' English language proficiency, confidence, and communication skills.

In a broader context, this research has the potential to shape future research and policy decisions related to early childhood education. It reinforces the idea that music is not just an extracurricular activity but a powerful pedagogical tool that enhances language development. By providing actionable insights, this study paves the way for more effective and engaging language learning methodologies, ultimately enriching preschoolers' learning experiences and preparing them for future academic success.

Research Objective

1. To explore the preschool teachers' perception towards implementing music and movement in children's English language acquisition.

Research Question

1. What are the preschool teachers' perceptions towards implementing music and movement in children's English language acquisition?

Methodology

Qualitative research methods are well suited to exploring complex and context-specific phenomena in educational settings, making them an ideal approach for this study of preschool educators' views on the role of music and movement in enhancing children's English language acquisition. Unlike quantitative methods that focus on numerical data and generalizability, qualitative research emphasizes understanding participants' experiences, beliefs, and practices in depth and in their natural contexts (Emon, 2024). This approach allows researchers to capture the nuanced perspectives of educators as they navigate the challenges and opportunities of integrating music and movement into early childhood language education.

In this study, qualitative methods enabled an exploration of how preschool educators perceive and implement music and movement-based strategies to support English language learning. Using tools such as interviews, focus groups, and classroom observations, this research aimed to uncover educators' lived experiences, the pedagogical rationale behind their practices, and the barriers they faced. Such methods are particularly valuable in early childhood education research, where contextual factors such as classroom dynamics, cultural influences, and individual teaching styles play a significant role in shaping outcomes.

Research Design and Setting

Qualitative research has traditionally been viewed as one of the best ways to provide information about minority people's perceptions, beliefs, experiences, and stories of ethnicity, language, and gender (Baldwin, Peters & Loney, 2024). Qualitative method included some major progress, which the researcher required to discover a problem and obtain an in-

depth understanding through philosophy, techniques, and procedures are the foundations of the current issues.

The objective of this research is to figure out what preschool teachers perceive on the influence of music and movement towards children's learning in English language development. To verify the completeness and validation of the data in the research, the researcher will modify one method, the qualitative approach, and apply triangulation of qualitative approaches.

The researcher will solely use a qualitative approach to collect primary data. The research setting refers to the location where data is collected; thus, two preschools in the Selangor district, Rawang and Bandar Sri Damansara, were chosen as research settings. The study sample included of ten preschool teachers who were teaching children from the aged 4 to 6 years old. 4 out of 10 preschool teachers are from Sunbeam Kindergarten, Rawang; 6 out of 10 preschool teachers are from Manjaria Kindergarten, Bandar Sri Damansara, who were volunteered to take part in the study.

Qualitative data was collected using a one-on-one online interview method as a survey, which contained six interview questions to focus solely on the preschool teacher's perspectives on the impact of music and movement on children's language development, such as pronunciation and vocabulary skills. To verify the completeness and validation of the data in the research, the researcher will modify one approach, which is a qualitative method, and apply triangulation of qualitative methods.

Findings and Discussion

RQ: What are the preschool teachers' perceptions towards implementing music and movement in children's English language acquisition?

Results

Based on Research Question 1, the researcher sought to explore preschool teachers' perceptions regarding the implementation of music and movement to enhance children's English language development. The analysis revealed four distinct coding themes that emerged from the data, as presented in Table 4.3. These themes provide insight into the teachers' views on how music and movement contribute to language acquisition, highlighting both the benefits and challenges associated with integrating these methods into early childhood education.

Table 4.3
Teacher Perceptions

	Feeling joyful	Promote physical movement	Pickup language from the song lyrics
P1	1	1	1
P2	1	1	1
P3	1	1	1
P4	1	0	1
P5	0	1	1
P6	0	0	1
P7	1	1	1
P8	1	1	1
P9	1	0	0
P10	1	1	1
Totals	8	7	9

Feeling Joyful

Music can be useful to relieve stress to support the children during their early years in order to help them develop different abilities, building their self-esteem, shaping the child's emotional intelligence. These supported by Participant 1, P2, P3, P4, P7, P8, P9 and P10 where have responded about what the preschool teachers' perceptions of towards implementing music and movement to improve children's English language development are as what the participants has stated:

Kindergarten classes where kids are very happily dancing to a song that is playing in the background. P1: Based on my understanding, music is a universal language, and it can express different feelings. (P1: 22nd Nov 2021; L2-L4)

For me, music and movement are an activity that can enhance children's language and body movements through music, and a fun learning session for children. (P2: 23rd Nov 2021; L1)

Create a high enjoyment and emotion satisfaction. (P3: 24th Nov 2021; L1)

For me, music and movement are to spice up children's feeling and boost up their mood before the lesson starts. For example, fast movement song will bring up their joy when there are down. (P4: 25th Nov 2021; L4- L5)

They feel it physically and emotionally. (P7: 26th Nov 2021; L1)

Music and Movement is about songs and body movement which will bring joyful to the children to express their emotions during the activity. (P8: 29th Nov 2021; L2)

Music and Movement is a fun and interesting activity. (P9: 26th Nov 2021; L1)

I can see that my children are happy and enjoy when we have the music and movement session. (P10: 30th Nov 2021; L8)

Promote Physical Movement

Psychomotor is an aspect that helps children to develop their physical skills during their preschool education. Music and movement are able to promote physical movement for children by dancing and doing actions together. These supported by Participant 1, P2, P3, P5, P7, P8 and P10 where have responded about what the preschool teachers' perceptions of towards implementing music and movement to improve children's English language development are as what the participants has stated

Besides, music and movement are any physical movement that involves the body. Kindergarten classes where kids are very happily dancing to a song that is playing in the background. (P1: 22nd Nov 2021; L4-L6)

music and movement are an activity that can enhance children's language and body movements through music, and a fun learning session for children. (P2: 23rd Nov 2021; L3-L4)

Music and movement are about moving from a location to another, create by using my gross and fine motor, and an action. A dance or body movement activity with a beautiful music or song. (P3: 24th Nov 2021; L3-L5)

Music with an action. (P5: 26th Nov 2021; L3)

They feel it physically and emotionally. (P7: 29th Nov 2021; L5)

Music and Movement is about songs and body movement (P8: 29th Nov 2021; L3- L4)

Music and movement are a warmup and joyful activity for children. (P10: 30th Nov 2021; L3)

Pickup Language from the Song Lyrics

The lyrics of a song are an expression of feelings and emotions which putting the words together and form a poetry. These supported by Participant 1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8 and P10 where have responded about what the preschool teachers' perceptions of towards implementing music and movement to improve children's English language development are as what the participants has stated:

I will use rhyming by clapping our hands to play with the language. (P1: 22nd Nov 2021; L15-L16)

I will use jolly phonics as a syllabus to introduce the song/ movement for the children. (P2: 23rd Nov 2021; L17)

I will play the songs that included the words or alphabet for my students, such as ABC song, or other songs' lyrics content the terms that related to my topic. (P3: 24th Nov 2021; L12-L13)

I will use Jolly Phonics songs to recall the phonics sound and emphasize the respective vocabulary for each letter. (P4: 25th Nov 2021; L18-L19)

By teaching them the lyric of the song and explain the meaning of words. (P5: 26th Nov 2021; L11)

I would use some common nursery songs and change the lyrics of the songs. (P6: 29th Nov 2021; L11)

By singing and chanting will help make routine activities, such as gathering children into a circle or group activity, smoother and more enjoyable. (P7: 29th Nov 2021; L12-L13)

In terms of teaching vocabulary, I will attach with a song. (P8: 29th Nov 2021; L13)

I will use Jolly Phonics to introduce the letter sound by singing and showing them the movement through songs. (P10: 30th Nov 2021; L18-L19)

Discussion

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into preschool teachers' perceptions of using music and movement to enhance children's English language development. Three main themes emerged from the data: Feeling Happy, Encouraging Physical Movement and Picking Up Language from Song Lyrics. These themes highlight the diverse roles of music and movement in early childhood education.

Feeling Happy

Participants consistently emphasized that music and movement activities evoked feelings of joy and happiness in children. Teachers stated that these activities created a positive emotional environment, which is important for relieving stress and fostering emotional intelligence (P1, P2, P3, P4, P7, P8, P9, P10). This is in line with research suggesting that positive emotions improve learning outcomes by increasing engagement and motivation. By incorporating music and movement into their lessons, teachers aimed to improve children's mood and create a fun learning environment, which is important for early language acquisition.

Encouraging Physical Movement

The study also revealed that music and movement were seen as effective tools for promoting preschool children's physical development. Teachers highlight how this activity promotes gross and fine motor skills through dance and action (P1, P2, P3, P5, P7, P8, P10). This physical engagement not only supports psychomotor development but also enhances children's ability to express themselves physically and emotionally. By integrating music and movement, educators can ensure that children's physical skills are developed alongside their linguistic abilities.

Language Pickup from Song Lyrics

Participants further highlighted the role of song lyrics in language acquisition. Teachers use songs to teach vocabulary and phonics, often incorporating rhyme and action to make learning more engaging and memorable (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P10). This approach aligns with research showing that music aids in language learning by making new words and sounds more accessible and enjoyable. By leveraging song lyrics, educators can facilitate children's understanding of language structure and vocabulary in a playful and interactive way.

Conclusion and Suggestion

In conclusion, this study highlights the important role of music and movement in enhancing preschool children's English language development. The findings highlight three important themes: Feeling Happy, Encouraging Physical Movement, and Picking Up Language from Song Lyrics. Collectively, these themes demonstrate that music and movement are not only effective tools for fostering emotional well-being and physical development but also play an important role in language acquisition (MacDonald, 2024). By leveraging these methods, educators can create engaging learning environments that increase children's motivation and engagement, thereby improving their emotional intelligence, psychomotor skills, and linguistic abilities.

To further integrate music and movement into preschool education, several recommendations are suggested. First, professional development workshops should be offered to equip teachers with the skills and resources needed to effectively incorporate music and movement into their lesson plans. This could include training in designing engaging music-based activities and using movement to enhance language learning. Second, curriculum integration is essential; policymakers and curriculum developers should formally include music and movement in early childhood education standards to ensure consistency across different educational settings.

In addition, resource development is essential; Accessible resources such as songbooks and movement guides should be created to support teachers in teaching English language skills through music and movement. These resources should be multicultural and adaptable to a variety of learning environments. Furthermore, parental involvement is important; involving parents in music and movement activities through workshops or home-based training can extend the benefits beyond the classroom and foster a collaborative approach to early childhood education. Finally, future research should focus on conducting longitudinal studies to assess the long-term effects of music and movement on children's language development. By implementing this strategy, educators and policymakers can fully leverage the potential of music and movement to support children's holistic development and enhance their English language acquisition in early childhood education.

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