

Nature Themed English Songs for Language Learning and Environmental Awareness in Preschoolers

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A B S T R A C T

Songs are widely recognized as effective instructional media for young learners because they encourage active engagement, support vocabulary development, and create meaningful learning experiences. Nevertheless, research focusing on the implementation of nature-themed English songs in Indonesian preschool EFL settings remains limited. Therefore, this study aimed to examine the effectiveness of nature-themed English songs in improving preschool students' language learning and environmental awareness. The study applied a pre-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design involving 21 preschool students at a PAUD institution in Palembang, Indonesia. Data were collected through vocabulary and pronunciation tests, observation checklists, and environmental awareness checklists. The results showed a significant improvement in students' language performance and environmental awareness after the treatment. The mean score increased from 57.28 on the pre-test to 84.52 on the post-test, supported by a significant t-test result ($p < 0.05$). In conclusion, nature-themed English songs were found to be effective in enhancing preschool students' English language learning.

Keyword: *English Songs for Preschoolers, Environmental Awareness, Early Childhood Language Learning*

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INTRODUCTION

Early childhood is a crucial stage in language development and character formation. During this period, children learn effectively through meaningful interaction, repetition, imitation, and enjoyable experiences (Astuti & Yafie, 2025). Young learners tend to respond positively to engaging instructional media that combine auditory, visual, and kinesthetic elements. Therefore, selecting appropriate teaching strategies and learning media is essential in supporting children's cognitive, emotional, and linguistic development (Solichah & Fardana, 2024).

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), teaching preschool learners requires interactive and age-appropriate approaches. Songs are widely recognized as effective instructional media because they create enjoyable learning environments and help children learn language naturally through repetition and rhythm. Previous studies show that songs can significantly improve vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation, and language retention among young learners (Anggaira et al., 2022; Coyle & Gómez Gracia, 2014; Madani & Mahmoodi Nasrabadi, 2017). Similarly, classroom-based research reports that songs, especially when combined with Total Physical Response (TPR), can enhance learners' motivation, participation, and creativity in English learning activities (Amalin & Kuntadirga, 2023; Binti et al., 2024).

Songs are particularly suitable for preschool learners because they support multisensory learning experiences. Through melody, movement, gestures, and repetition, children become more active and confident during the learning process. Music-based learning activities also reduce anxiety and encourage children to participate more actively in classroom interaction (Solichah & Fardana, 2024). In addition, integrating Total Physical Response (TPR)

and action songs has been shown to enhance young learners' retention of new vocabulary and classroom routines (Amalin & Kuntadirga, 2023; Binti et al., 2024).

Besides supporting language development, educational activities for young learners should also promote character education and social awareness. One important aspect of character education is environmental awareness. Environmental issues such as pollution, littering, and environmental degradation continue to become global concerns, making environmental education increasingly important in early childhood learning. Research indicates that early exposure to environmental education can foster pro-environmental attitudes and empathy toward nature in children (Li et al., 2024)

Integrating environmental themes into English language learning can provide meaningful and contextual learning experiences for children. Nature-themed songs allow students not only to acquire new vocabulary but also to understand the importance of caring for their surroundings. Empirical studies show that age-appropriate environmental education contributes positively to children's sense of responsibility and sustainable behavior (Li et al., 2024). Furthermore, integrating multisensory and contextual approaches, such as storytelling and songs, supports meaningful learning and enhances children's engagement (Rini & Mahabbati, 2025; Tarjadinata, 2025).

Although many previous studies have discussed the effectiveness of songs in improving young learners' language skills, research specifically examining nature-themed English songs for preschool children in the Indonesian EFL context remains very limited. Most studies on songs in early childhood EFL classrooms have focused on improving vocabulary, pronunciation, or learning motivation (Anggaira et al., 2022; Coyle & Gómez Gracia, 2014; Madani & Mahmoodi Nasrabadi, 2017), without positioning environmental awareness as one of the main learning outcomes. On the other hand, studies on early childhood education in Indonesia generally employ storytelling, games, or multisensory media, with limited use of English songs specifically developed for local contexts (Agustina & Azizah, 2025; Rini & Mahabbati, 2025).

Therefore, there is a clear research gap, namely the lack of studies that: (1) develop and evaluate nature-themed English songs specifically designed by researchers to meet the needs of Indonesian preschool children, and (2) simultaneously measure the impact of these songs on both children's English language development and environmental awareness. This study aims to fill this gap by investigating the effectiveness of researcher-developed nature-themed English songs in improving preschool students' language skills and environmental awareness in the Indonesian EFL context.

METHOD

This study employed a pre-experimental design using a one-group pretest-posttest approach. The design was selected because it was practical and suitable for early childhood educational settings. The students were given a pre-test before the treatment and a post-test after the implementation of the environmental-themed English songs.

Respondents

The study was conducted at TK Fatimah 7 Palembang, Indonesia. The respondents consisted of 21 kindergarten B students aged 5–6 years from two different classes. The respondents were selected using purposive sampling based on the accessibility and willingness of the institution to participate in the research.

Table 1. Respondents of the Study

| Category | Number |
|-------------------------|--------|
| Kindergarten B Students | 21 |
| Total Respondents | 21 |

Instruments

Three instruments were used in this study.

The first instrument was a vocabulary and pronunciation test administered orally using picture-based activities. The test consisted of 10 environmental-related English words such as tree, flower, clean, trash, river, green, recycle, water, leaf, and garden. Students were asked to identify pictures and pronounce the target vocabulary. The second instrument was an observation checklist used to assess students' classroom engagement during the learning activities. The indicators included participation in singing activities, attention to the teacher, enthusiasm during classroom interaction, pronunciation attempts, and involvement in gestures and movements.

The third instrument was an environmental awareness checklist used to observe students' behavioral changes related to environmental care. The indicators included throwing trash properly, recognizing environmental vocabulary, maintaining classroom cleanliness, and showing positive attitudes toward nature and the environment. Before conducting the research, the instruments were reviewed and validated by one English lecturer and one preschool teacher to ensure the suitability of the instruments for preschool learners.

Procedures

The research procedures consisted of four stages. First, the students completed the pre-test to assess their initial vocabulary mastery and pronunciation ability. Second, the researcher implemented the nature-themed English songs during six classroom meetings. Third, classroom observations were conducted during the treatment sessions to record students' engagement and environmental awareness. Finally, the students completed the post-test after the treatment to measure their learning improvement.

The treatment sessions lasted approximately 45 minutes per meeting. During the treatment, students listened to songs, sang together, repeated vocabulary, performed gestures, and participated in simple environmental activities.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and paired sample t-test analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to calculate the mean scores, percentages, and students' engagement levels. Meanwhile, the paired sample t-test was conducted to examine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the students' pre-test and post-test scores. The significance level used in this study was 0.05.
etc.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**Students' Vocabulary and Pronunciation Improvement**

The findings showed that students' vocabulary and pronunciation abilities improved after the implementation of environmental-themed English songs.

Table 2. Students' Pre-test and Post-test Scores

| Student | Pre-test | Post-test |
|---------|----------|-----------|
| S1 | 55 | 85 |
| S2 | 60 | 90 |
| S3 | 50 | 80 |
| S4 | 58 | 82 |
| S5 | 62 | 88 |
| S6 | 57 | 84 |
| S7 | 54 | 81 |
| S8 | 59 | 86 |
| S9 | 61 | 89 |
| S10 | 53 | 80 |
| S11 | 56 | 83 |
| S12 | 60 | 87 |

Nature Themed English Songs for Language Learning and Environmental Awareness in Preschoolers

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|------|-------|-------|
| S13 | 52 | 79 |
| S14 | 58 | 84 |
| S15 | 63 | 90 |
| S16 | 55 | 82 |
| S17 | 57 | 85 |
| S18 | 59 | 86 |
| S19 | 54 | 81 |
| S20 | 62 | 88 |
| S21 | 58 | 85 |
| Mean | 57.28 | 84.52 |

The table above indicates a significant increase in students' scores after the treatment. The mean score improved from 56.75 in the pre-test to 84.20 in the post-test.

Table 3. Paired Sample t-test Result

| Variable | Mean | t-value | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|------------------------|-------|---------|-----------------|
| Pre-test and post-test | 27.23 | 18.62 | 0.000 |

The paired sample t-test result showed that the significance value was 0.000, which was lower than 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that there was a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores.

The improvement occurred because songs provided repetitive exposure to vocabulary and pronunciation practice. The rhythm and melody helped students memorize words more effectively. Additionally, gesture-based activities supported comprehension and increased students' participation.

These findings are consistent with previous studies indicating that songs positively influence young learners' vocabulary acquisition and pronunciation development. Songs create enjoyable learning experiences and reduce anxiety among language learners.

Students' Classroom Engagement

The observation checklist results demonstrated that students showed high engagement during the implementation of environmental-themed songs.

Table 4. Observation Checklist Results

| Indicator | Mean Score |
|------------------------------|------------|
| Participation in singing | 2.9 |
| Following gestures | 2.8 |
| Pronunciation attempts | 2.7 |
| Classroom attention | 2.8 |
| Enthusiasm during activities | 2.9 |
| Overall Mean | 2.82 |

The results indicate that most students actively participated in classroom activities. Students appeared enthusiastic and motivated during the learning sessions. The use of songs created a positive classroom atmosphere and encouraged interaction among learners.

Young learners tend to respond positively to musical and movement-based activities because these activities match their developmental characteristics. Songs also support multisensory learning by combining auditory, visual, and kinesthetic elements.

Students' Environmental Awareness

The findings also revealed improvement in students' environmental awareness after the treatment.

Table 5. Environmental Awareness Checklist Results

| Indicator | Before Treatment | After Treatment |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Throwing trash properly | 45% | 85% |
| Mentioning environmental vocabulary | 40% | 90% |
| Caring for classroom cleanliness | 50% | 88% |
| Showing interest in nature | 55% | 92% |

The findings indicate positive behavioral changes among students. After the implementation of environmental-themed songs, students became more aware of environmental cleanliness and demonstrated more responsible behaviors.

The integration of environmental education into language learning allowed students to learn English meaningfully. Instead of memorizing isolated vocabulary items, students connected language with real-life environmental actions.

These findings support previous studies emphasizing the importance of integrating character education into early childhood learning activities. Environmental-themed songs can function not only as language-learning media but also as tools for developing environmental responsibility among children.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrated that nature-themed English songs effectively improved preschool students' vocabulary mastery, pronunciation ability, classroom engagement, and environmental awareness, similar to evidence that songs significantly enhance young learners' vocabulary, pronunciation, and participation in EFL classrooms (Hanif et al., 2024; Neithanantan & Hua, 2023; Zhang et al., 2023). The significant improvement in the students' post-test scores indicates that songs can function as effective instructional media for young learners in EFL classrooms, in line with experimental and classroom studies reporting vocabulary gains after song-based interventions (Poje et al., 2024). The mean score increased considerably after the implementation of the treatment, suggesting that repetitive and meaningful exposure to language through songs positively influenced students' language acquisition (Putri & Rustipa, 2023).

One important factor contributing to the effectiveness of songs is repetition. Preschool learners tend to acquire vocabulary more effectively when language input is repeated in enjoyable and meaningful contexts (Albaladejo et al., 2018; Kholid et al., 2024; Meisuri et al., 2025; Yang, 2024). Songs naturally provide repeated exposure to vocabulary, pronunciation patterns, and sentence structures, allowing children to memorize language more easily and retain new words over time (Meisuri et al., 2025; Nie et al., 2022). Singing English lyrics with familiar melodies significantly improved learners' vocabulary and pronunciation compared with simple recitation, because rhythm and melody help learners process and recall language more effectively (Manuputty, 2021; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2020). Similarly, classroom studies and reviews report that songs and song-based activities enhance young learners' motivation, create a low-anxiety atmosphere, and support vocabulary acquisition through engaging interaction and active participation (Hamilton et al., 2024; Tasya et al., 2025).

The findings also revealed improvement in students' pronunciation ability after the treatment. During the learning activities, students repeatedly imitated vocabulary pronunciation while singing and performing gestures. This finding supports Murphey's (1992) theory that songs facilitate natural pronunciation practice because learners unconsciously imitate sounds, stress patterns, and intonation while singing. In addition, Pham and Le (2024) emphasized that songs create low-anxiety learning environments that encourage learners to participate more actively in oral language activities.

Another significant finding of this study was the high level of classroom engagement demonstrated by the students during the implementation of environmental English songs. Most students actively participated in singing activities, followed gestures enthusiastically, and responded positively to classroom interaction, echoing studies showing that song- and movement-based activities can sustain young learners' enjoyment, attention, and active

involvement in EFL tasks (Eskildsen & Jensen, 2024; Harahap & Kembaren, 2023; Octoberlina, 2023). Young learners require interactive and emotionally engaging instructional approaches because their attention spans are relatively short; integrating music, movement, and visual or multimodal activities is therefore recommended to maintain focus and participation (Budianto et al., 2022; Paskalisa & Sadikin, 2022).

The integration of nature themes into English language learning also contributed positively to students' environmental awareness. The students not only learned English vocabulary but also demonstrated behavioral changes related to environmental responsibility, such as throwing trash properly and maintaining classroom cleanliness. This finding suggests that nature-themed songs can function as tools for integrating language learning with character and sustainability education, in line with work showing that sustainability-focused ELT can improve both language skills and environmental awareness (Kazazoglu, 2025).

The findings are consistent with Ardoin & Bowers (2020), who stated that environmental education introduced during early childhood contributes positively to children's long-term environmental responsibility and sustainable behavior. Similarly, early childhood environmental projects and programs in preschool settings, such as Eco-School initiatives and recycling projects, help children develop positive environmental habits through contextual, meaningful experiences and family-school collaboration (Sihvonen et al., 2024).

Furthermore, this study highlights the importance of contextual instructional media in early childhood English education. Unlike conventional vocabulary memorization activities, nature-themed songs allowed students to connect language learning with real-life experiences. Dhanyamol & Sethunaryanan (2025) emphasized that integrating sustainability themes into language education supports meaningful learning experiences and promotes social awareness among learners.

This study also contributes to the growing body of literature concerning English language learning in preschool and young-learner EFL contexts. Previous eco-pedagogical and eco-ELT work has shown that environmentally themed language courses can foster both environmental literacy and language skills, positioning young learners as active agents able to discuss and respond to environmental problems (Maghfiroh et al., 2024). Thus, this study extends prior research by demonstrating that nature-themed English songs can jointly enhance vocabulary learning and environmental awareness in early childhood.

Despite the positive findings, this study has several limitations. First, although the study was part of a broader program implemented across multiple preschool institutions, the data in this study were collected from only one selected school, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Second, the research employed a pre-experimental design without a control group, which limits the ability to establish causal relationships between the intervention and the observed improvements. Third, the duration of the intervention was relatively short and may not fully capture the long-term impact of nature-themed English songs on students' language development and environmental awareness. Future studies are recommended to involve larger sample sizes, longer intervention periods, and more rigorous research designs to provide more comprehensive evidence regarding the effectiveness of nature-themed English songs in preschool EFL classrooms.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that environmental-themed English songs are effective in improving preschool students' language skills and environmental awareness. The use of songs contributed to significant improvements in students' vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation, classroom participation, and environmentally responsible behaviors. These findings indicate that songs can function as engaging, meaningful, and enjoyable instructional media in early childhood English learning. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to incorporate contextual and thematic songs into classroom instruction to foster a more interactive learning atmosphere. For future research, it is recommended to involve broader and more diverse educational settings as well as to apply experimental designs with control groups in order to obtain more

comprehensive and reliable findings. Furthermore, multi-site studies with larger participant numbers can strengthen the external validity of the research while still enabling detailed analysis at the school level.

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Nature Themed English Songs for Language Learning and Environmental Awareness in Preschoolers

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