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The Impact of Utilizing Songs on Enhancing English Vocabulary Development in Elementary Students at Private Schools

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فاعلية استخدام الأغاني في تنمية مفردات اللغة الإنجليزية لدى الصفوف الإعدادية في المدارس الخاصة

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Abstract

This paper aims to examine the impact of the use of songs on the development of English vocabulary in the elementary grades and also identify the use of songs by teachers in their classrooms. The paper shows some previous studies that support the research. It also focuses on the way in which data was collected in this study is a questionnaire that was directed to a sample of 16 teachers who were selected from five private schools in Libya (Zliten) with the aim of providing a deeper analysis of the effect of utilizing songs on vocabulary progress. The results of the questionnaire showed that many teachers have encouraging outlooks about the use of songs, including developing vocabulary and consolidating it in the minds of students and the correct pronunciation of words, as well as developing listening and speaking skills. Some teachers use songs to change the routine and create an atmosphere of activity within it. Based on the results of the analysis, some recommendations for teachers in schools come from research students at Alasmarya Islamic University about the intensification of the use of song activities and strategies for the elementary grades.

Keywords: Effectiveness, English vocabulary, Elementary Schools, Using songs, Zliten.



الملخص

يهدف البحث إلى اختبار تأثير استخدام الأغاني على تطوير مفردات اللغة الإنجليزية في الصفوف الإعدادية وكذلك التعرف على استخدام المعلمين للأغاني في فصولهم الدراسية. ويبين البحث بعض الدراسات السابقة التي تدعم الدراسة، كما تركز على الطريقة التي تم بها جمع البيانات في هذه الدراسة وهي عبارة عن استبيان تم توجيهه إلى عينة مكونة من 16 معلماً تم اختيارهم من خمس مدارس خاصة في ليبيا (زليتن). بهدف تقديم تحليل أعمق لتأثير التعليم المدرسي واستخدام الأغاني في تطوير المفردات. أظهرت نتائج الاستبيان أن لدى العديد من المعلمين اتجاهات إيجابية نحو استخدام الأغاني، بما في ذلك تنمية المفردات وترسيخها في أذهان الطلاب والنطق الصحيح للكلمات، وكذلك تنمية مهارات الاستماع والتحدث. يستخدم بعض المعلمين الأغاني لتغيير الروتين وخلق جو من النشاط داخله. وبناء على نتائج التحليل تأتي بعض التوصيات للمعلمين في المدارس من طلاب البحث في الجامعة الأسمرية الإسلامية حول تكثيف استخدام الأنشطة والاستراتيجيات الغنائية في الصفوف الإعدادية.

الكلمات الدالة: فاعلية، مفردات الإنجليزية، المدارس الإعدادية، استخدام الأغاني، زليتن.

1. Introduction

Language is a vital tool for communication worldwide, with each country having its own linguistic identity. Learning a new language, alongside one's mother tongue, requires a deep understanding of its culture and essential components. Language enables individuals to communicate ideas, emotions, and news through both spoken and written forms. According to Bloch et al. (1942), language is defined as "a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group cooperates," highlighting its role in facilitating communication and cooperation within a social group through the use of words and sentence structures.

The process of learning English as a foreign or second language is neither inherently easy nor difficult, but rather depends on the individual's self-effort, alongside the commitment of educators and institutions to foster language development. Today, English is recognized as a global communication tool, widely used for international interaction (Charise, 2007).

Teaching involves the transmission of knowledge from the teacher to students, using methods deemed effective for conveying information. In elementary education, especially when teaching English, it is crucial for educators to incorporate engaging strategies and activities that not only help students grasp the lesson content but also capture their attention. The primary aim in teaching English at the elementary level is to inspire and build students' confidence in their language learning journey. Teachers play a key role in assisting students in overcoming the challenges they face when learning a foreign language (Burhayani, 2013).

Vocabulary is one of the most critical elements of learning English, as it underpins both speaking and writing to convey meaning. Pigada and Schmitt (2006) defines vocabulary as the knowledge of words, encompassing an understanding of their meanings. Teaching vocabulary to elementary students through activities is an engaging and effective approach. For instance, private schools in Libya (Zliten) use various



methods, such as songs, to help students acquire vocabulary. The repetitive nature of song lyrics has been shown to reinforce word retention in students' minds.

Songs have become a vital part of language learning, offering considerable value when integrated with language lessons (Schoepp, 2001). There is a noticeable distinction between teaching secondary and primary learners, and teachers must tailor their approach accordingly when working with elementary students (Harb, 2007). Kohli (2007) advises that teachers select words that are reliable, practical, common, and have broad applicability, while Selvamalini (2012) suggests considering criteria such as utility, suitability, teachability, and simplicity when choosing vocabulary.

Songs are an effective and motivating tool for language learners, providing authentic language materials and opportunities for vocabulary development, pronunciation practice, and cultural exploration. In listening activities, it is important to engage students' prior knowledge and structure the learning experience, with a clear focus on the purpose and outcomes of the listening task (Brown, 2006). While no single teaching method suits all learners, experience plays a crucial role in helping teachers determine the most effective strategy for their students (Purcell, 1992).

Various techniques can be employed to incorporate songs into English language classes. Teachers should adjust the songs to suit the needs of their students. Ersöz (2007) recommends that teachers select songs that align with the topic or language being taught, feature clear and simple lyrics, include repetitive phrases, and facilitate engaging activities that help reinforce the meaning of the words. It is therefore essential to thoughtfully choose songs before using them in the classroom. Kuśnierek (2016) also provides guidelines for song selection, focusing on four key areas: the class, the teacher, classroom opportunities, and the music itself.

The process of teaching English vocabulary through songs generally includes stages such as the introduction, main activity, follow-up, and conclusion, all of which have been shown to elicit positive responses from students. Songs play a significant role in enhancing language learning for young children, improving their listening abilities, pronunciation, vocabulary, and sentence structures. Additionally, the integration of music serves as a powerful motivator, helping to sustain students' attention (Siskova, 2009). Furthermore, music has been found to facilitate learning by stimulating the brain, with language processing primarily engaging the left hemisphere and music stimulating the right hemisphere (Priester, 2011).

1.1. Statement of the problem

Instructing English as a foreign language (EFL), especially for elementary school students, involves using creative and motivating techniques. Many students face a lack of vocabulary acquisition, and this is considered one of the problems when learning English. Students must have a sufficient stock of words to



develop vocabulary in their language. This study is concerned with discussing the effect of using songs to develop vocabulary and how to solve this problem, or lack thereof, faced by students.

1.2. Research Questions

- In what ways can educators integrate songs into their teaching strategies to enhance English vocabulary development?
- What are the benefits of incorporating songs into English language instruction?
- What makes the use of songs particularly effective in promoting vocabulary acquisition among elementary school students?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

- To explore the various methods through which educators can utilize songs to facilitate English vocabulary development in the classroom.
- To examine the benefits of incorporating songs into the process of teaching English.
- To investigate the factors that contribute to the effectiveness of songs in supporting vocabulary development among elementary-grade students.

1.4. Significance of the Study

- Focusing on the use of activities and fun teaching methods such as songs to develop students' vocabulary well when learning English
- To change the classroom routine as songs, help to make the class active and may support English language teachers construct an active education setting.
- Affect students' acquisition and understanding of vocabulary, as learners need a wide range of words.
- To relate the lesson, which focuses on the main vocabulary, is effective and helps students recognise the meaning of words.

2. Method

The research methodology used in this study is a quantitative method. Data was collected through a questionnaire that was prepared for teachers in private schools. (5) private schools were covered in this study, which are Sanabel Al-Ghad, Al-Fath Al-Mubin, Noor Al-Taleq, Al-Dhaw Al-Munir, and Safwat Al-Maaref in Zliten, Libya. The study was conducted with 16 teachers from the selected schools. The type of questionnaire was close-ended, and it consisted of 14 statements to select from: strongly agree, agree, uncertain, disagree, and strongly disagree. The paper suggests specific methods for teachers to use when incorporating songs in

their teaching, such as getting the attention of the class, listening to and reading the song, analysing repetitive lines, and allowing students to easily do actions to emphasise meaning.

3. Results and Discussion

Statement 1: *Using songs can contribute to automatic language pattern recognition and usage.*

Figure (1) shows that the highest percentage, 62%, of teachers agree that the usage of songs by students contributes to the recognition and use of language patterns, also 25% strongly agreed about using it, while 13% were uncertain.

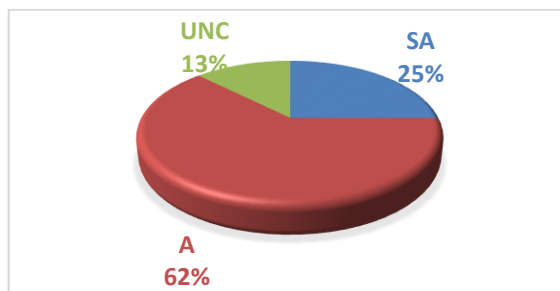


Figure 1. Percentage of participants' responses to Statement 1

Statement 2: *Using songs to teach vocabulary is effective.*

Figure (2) illustrates that 56% of teachers strongly agree that incorporating songs has a significant impact on teaching vocabulary. The repetition of words through song helps students memorize them in an engaging manner. Additionally, 44% of teachers agree that songs positively influence vocabulary learning. The combination of words with rhythm aids in reinforcing the song's structure, enhancing the brain's ability to recall vocabulary, thus facilitating vocabulary acquisition (Siskova, 2009). Keskin (2011) further emphasizes the beneficial effects of music and melody in reducing stress and anxiety, suggesting that activities involving songs positively impact students' language learning processes and motivate them to learn foreign languages.

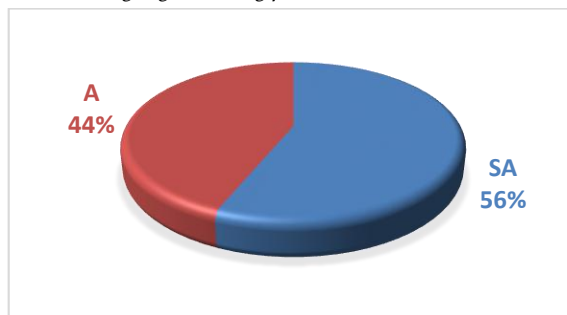


Figure 2. Percentage of participants' responses to Statement 2

Statement 3: *Songs can serve as valuable resources for vocabulary instruction.*

About 50% of teachers strongly agree and 50% agree as shown in Figure (3). It is clear that teachers utilize songs as an operational instrument for learning vocabulary and that they have a positive effect on vocabulary acquisition. Murphey (1992) highlights the versatility of songs in the classroom, particularly for young learners. They serve a variety of educational purposes, making them a valuable pedagogical resource. Songs can enhance young learners' speaking abilities and are effective tools for acquiring vocabulary, understanding sentence structures, and learning sentence patterns. Additionally, they provide insight into the culture of the learners' native language.

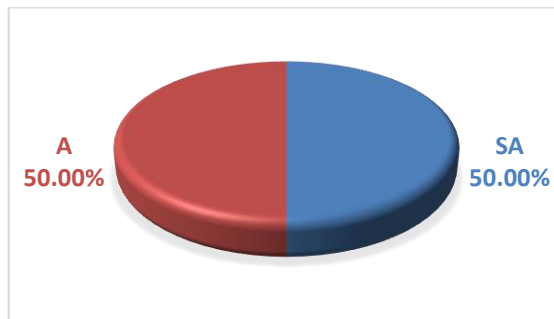


Figure 3. Percentage of participants' responses to Statement 3

Statement 4: *Integrating songs into the classroom routine enhances student engagement and makes the learning experience more dynamic.*

This statement was obtained by a high percentage of teachers who strongly agree, which is 56.25% as shown in Figure (4). Some teachers use songs to change the routine of the class, as the songs make the class more fun and active. Teachers can use songs as an addition to the classroom routine and atmosphere. This is agreed upon (Burhayani, 2013). Incorporating songs into language instruction enables students to comprehend challenging vocabulary with greater ease. The act of singing, coupled with associated physical actions, facilitates the retention of new words. This method allows learners to grasp the meanings of unfamiliar terms independently, without the need for external assistance or consulting a dictionary. Additionally, using songs in the classroom transforms vocabulary acquisition into an enjoyable, engaging, and stimulating experience, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of vocabulary teaching.

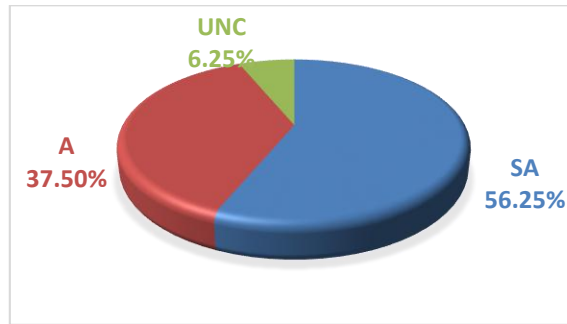


Figure 4. Percentage of participants' responses to Statement 4

Statement 5: *Songs can serve as an effective tool for practicing the four fundamental language skills.*

This statement got many choices from teachers about whether songs can be used to practice the four skills of learning English (L.S.R.W.). Figure (5) shows that the highest rate was 43.75%, and it is from the choice of teachers who agree that songs can be practiced with the four skills to develop the language in a good way, compared to the percentage of 31.25% of teachers who are not sure that using songs can be practiced with the four basic skills. The lowest percentage was for strongly agreeing and disagreeing, with the same ratio of 12.5%. Songs play a crucial role in motivating young learners and enhancing their abilities in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. They provide learners with opportunities to improve their understanding of pronunciation, rhythm, grammar, and vocabulary (Lo & Li, 1998). Additionally, Orlova (1997) outlines further advantages of incorporating songs into language learning. Firstly, songs can encourage learners to actively use the English language, addressing one of the most significant challenges in non-English-speaking communities. At the secondary school level, listening to songs aids students in recognizing words and meanings more easily. Ultimately, songs foster a positive attitude towards language acquisition and serve as an effective and natural medium for learning.

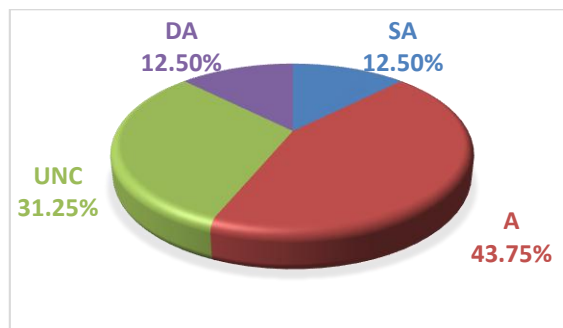


Figure 5. Percentage of participants' responses to Statement 5

Statement 6: *Integrating songs into English classes can be beneficial in various contexts.*

The percentage is 31.25% uncertain, 50% agree, which is the highest percentage, 18.75% strongly agree, and 0% disagree and strongly disagree as shown in Figure (6). According to Eken (1996), songs serve multiple pedagogical purposes. They can introduce topics, language points, and vocabulary; facilitate the practice of language structures and vocabulary; highlight common learner errors more effectively; promote both extensive and intensive listening skills; stimulate discussions about attitudes and emotions; foster creativity and imagination; and create a relaxed classroom environment that adds variety and enjoyment to the learning process.

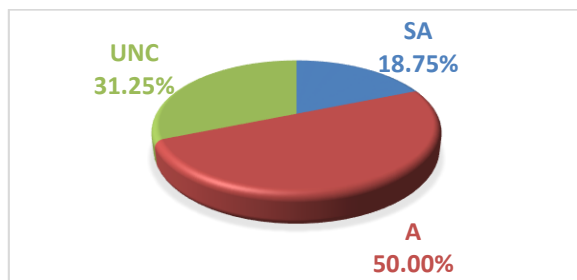


Figure 6. Percentage of participants' responses to Statement 6

Statement 7: *When using songs, use different activities.*

62.5% of the teachers agree that when using songs in class, Different activities can be used with the song to grab students' attention and learn the word in a fun way.

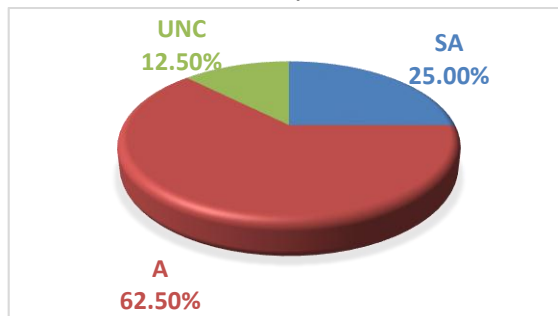


Figure 7. Percentage of participants' responses to Statement 7

Statement 8: *Use related lesson to the text songs*

The percentage of 87.5% indicates that listening to songs helps learners identify vocabulary and understand meaning simply, as the use of songs positively affects memorising words and remembering them through repeating the rhythm of the song, while 12.5% were uncertain as shown in Figure (8). Numerous researchers, including Burhayani (2013), Ara (2009), and Mardiyatun (2007), have noted the significant benefits of

incorporating songs into English lessons. They assert that a diverse selection of songs in the classroom allows students to choose their favorites, thereby enhancing their motivation and engagement in learning English.

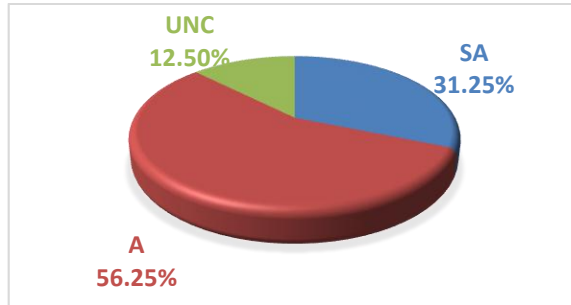


Figure 8. Percentage of participants' responses to Statement 8

Statement 9: *Songs can be enjoyable when using it in classroom*

Figure (9) shows that 62.5% of the teachers strongly agree and 31.25% agree that songs keep students entertained in class. It is natural that songs have an effective effect on students' activity and attention, and thus they will learn well. While 6.25% are uncertain. Shen (2009) posits that songs, with their blend of lyrics, composition, melody, and sounds, create a harmonious appeal that captivates audiences. This fusion of language and music makes songs an excellent resource for teachers to incorporate into English language lessons. Additionally, music serves a therapeutic role, promoting relaxation.

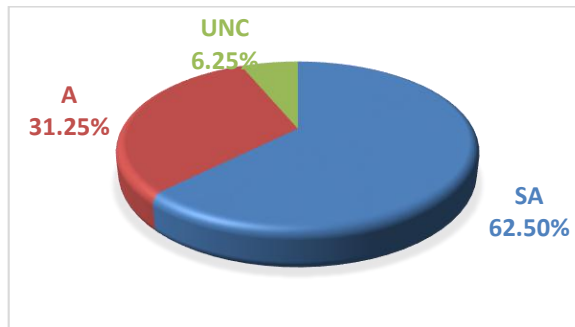


Figure 9. Percentage of participants' responses to Statement 9

Statement 10: *Songs assist English language teachers in establishing an effective learning environment.*

Figure (10) shows 56.25% strongly agree and 37.5% agree that songs affect the environment of learners, as songs help teachers create a fun and active environment for students to interact with each other in the classroom, and thus students will lean comfortably and focus.

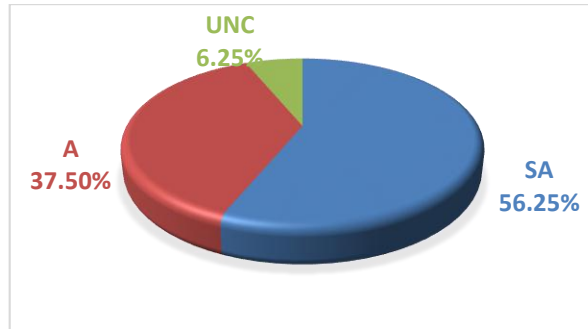


Figure 10. Percentage of participants' responses to Statement 10

Statement 11: *Teachers should vary their training methods and approaches*

Figure (11) shows that 56.25% of the teachers strongly agree that teachers should use strategies and techniques such as songs in the classroom because the elementary-grade students learn through these activities and strategies also 37.5% agreed. While 6.25% strongly disagree with this statement due to the fact that the class has a large numeral of pupils and they do not have techniques and aids from the school administration to help them use strategies. Wrenshall (2002, p. 43) said that “there is also quite of confirmation that songs help memorization, and the beat of the stanzas can positively help words too”.

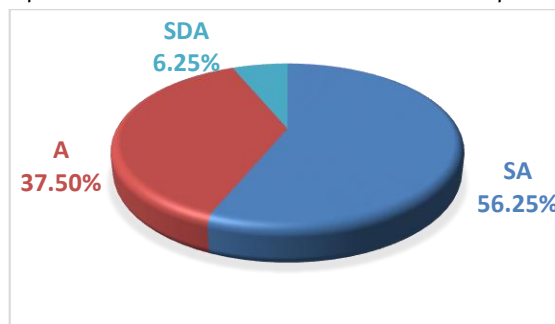


Figure 11. Percentage of participants' responses to Statement 11

Statement 12: *Songs play a significant part in encouraging pupils to learn English words.*

Figure (12) shows that equal percentages were obtained for two options (strongly agree and agree) 50%. Teachers in various schools recognize that songs are vital for motivating students to effectively learn English vocabulary. Slattery and Willis (2001) suggest that songs can prompt young learners to naturally repeat words and phrases, even if they don't fully grasp their meanings at first. Additionally, pairing songs with visuals and actions can enhance children's comprehension of the target vocabulary when the meanings are not immediately obvious. This approach improves their ability to learn new vocabulary in a seamless and enjoyable manner.

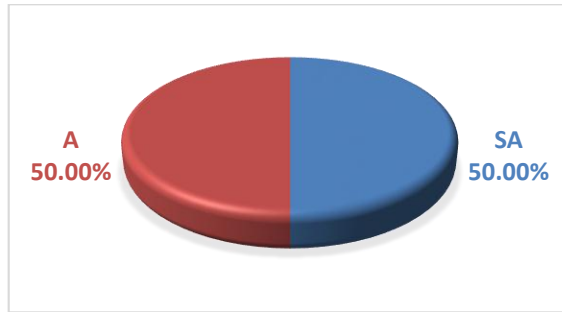


Figure 12. Percentage of participants' responses to Statement 12

Statement 13: *Songs can stimulate a positive emotional*

The agree option contains the highest percentage 50% and strongly agree 37.5% and uncertain 12.5%, and disagree and strongly disagree took 0% (Figure 13).

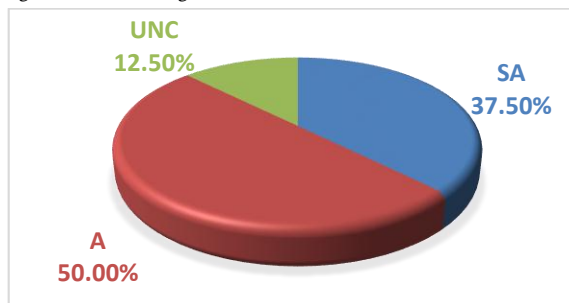


Figure 13. Percentage of participants' responses to Statement 13

Statement 14: *Listening to songs aids learners in more effectively recognizing words and comprehending their meanings.*

Figure (14) shows that the percentage of 50% indicates that listening to songs helps students identify vocabulary and understand meaning easily, as the use of songs positively affects memorizing words and remembering them through repeating the rhythm of the song. While 6.25% are uncertain.

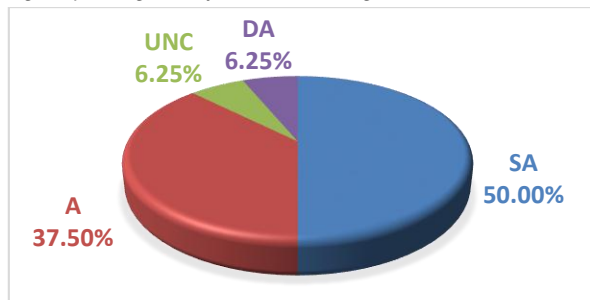


Figure 14. Percentage of participants' responses to Statement 14



3. Conclusion

Songs are found to be a useful and enjoyable strategy for students to learn vocabulary in the classroom. Many teachers use songs to teach vocabulary and progress listening and speaking skills in English as a foreign language. Songs have a great effect on vocabulary improvement as they help students remember words more easily. Students enjoy using activities like songs to learn and memorise vocabulary, while teachers use songs to save time, change the classroom routine, and clarify lessons with drawings and pictures. Teachers should incorporate modern activities and technologies to make lessons more interesting and understandable for learners. The study recommends that songs can be excellently used by teachers to teach vocabulary to elementary school students. Teachers should choose songs that are related to the lesson and contain the vocabulary being taught. To make the learning process fun and active, teachers should use activities, strategies, and modern techniques such as group work and creating an environment of collaboration. They should also use visual aids like pictures and drawings to enhance their understanding of the words in the songs.

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