



EXPLORING ENGLISH VOCABULARY GROWTH THROUGH ISLAMIC SONGS EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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Abstract:

This study investigates how Islamic song-based instruction shapes the development of English vocabulary among Muslim preschool children through a qualitative case study approach. Recognizing the critical role of early childhood as a formative stage for both language acquisition and identity construction, this research integrates Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, and music cognition frameworks to understand how culturally resonant songs influence learning. Data were collected over an eight-week period in two Islamic preschools, involving sustained classroom observations, semi-structured teacher interviews, and analysis of teaching materials and song lyrics. Thematic analysis identified three overarching patterns: (1) Islamic songs fostered a positive and anxiety-free emotional climate, (2) they stimulated spontaneous and meaningful use of English vocabulary during and beyond classroom activities, and (3) they reinforced children's cultural and religious identity while simultaneously promoting linguistic growth. These findings underscore the pedagogical potential of faith-integrated musical practices, demonstrating that Islamic songs not only enhance vocabulary acquisition but also cultivate holistic learning experiences that respect the cultural context of young learners. Implications are discussed for early childhood educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers seeking culturally responsive and engaging approaches to English language education.

Keywords: Islamic songs; English vocabulary development; early childhood education; qualitative inquiry; affective filter; sociocultural pedagogy

Abstrak

Studi ini menyelidiki bagaimana pengajaran berbasis lagu Islami membentuk perkembangan kosakata bahasa Inggris di kalangan anak-anak prasekolah Muslim melalui pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif. Dengan menyadari peran penting masa kanak-kanak awal sebagai tahap formatif bagi pemerolehan bahasa dan konstruksi identitas, penelitian ini mengintegrasikan Hipotesis Filter Afektif Krashen, Teori Sosiokultural Vygotsky, dan kerangka kerja kognisi musik untuk memahami bagaimana lagu-lagu yang beresonansi secara budaya memengaruhi pembelajaran. Data dikumpulkan selama periode delapan minggu di dua prasekolah Islam, yang melibatkan observasi kelas berkelanjutan, wawancara guru semi-terstruktur, dan analisis materi pengajaran dan lirik lagu. Analisis tematik mengidentifikasi tiga pola utama: (1) lagu-lagu Islami menumbuhkan iklim emosional yang positif dan bebas kecemasan, (2) lagu-lagu tersebut merangsang penggunaan kosakata bahasa Inggris secara spontan dan bermakna selama dan di luar kegiatan kelas, dan (3) lagu-lagu tersebut memperkuat identitas budaya dan agama anak-anak sekaligus mendorong pertumbuhan linguistik. Temuan ini menggarisbawahi potensi pedagogis dari praktik musik yang terintegrasi dengan iman, menunjukkan bahwa lagu-lagu Islami tidak hanya meningkatkan pemerolehan kosakata tetapi





juga menumbuhkan pengalaman belajar holistik yang menghormati konteks budaya anak-anak usia dini. Implikasi dibahas untuk pendidik anak usia dini, perancang kurikulum, dan pembuat kebijakan yang mencari pendekatan yang responsif dan menarik secara budaya untuk pendidikan bahasa Inggris.

Kata kunci: Lagu-lagu Islami; pengembangan kosakata bahasa Inggris; pendidikan anak usia dini; penyelidikan kualitatif; filter afektif; pedagogi sosiokultural

INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, globalization has significantly transformed educational priorities, with English emerging as the dominant language of international communication, trade, science, and technology. Consequently, early English education has become a central focus in many countries, including those with strong cultural and religious traditions such as Indonesia. While early exposure to English offers numerous cognitive and social benefits, it also raises critical questions about how language teaching can respect and reinforce local identities. In Islamic educational contexts, this balance is particularly delicate because teachers must integrate global competencies while safeguarding religious values and cultural authenticity. Early childhood represents a sensitive and crucial period for language acquisition. At this stage, children possess a heightened capacity to absorb new linguistic input, yet their learning is strongly influenced by affective factors such as motivation, emotional security, and cultural familiarity. Traditional English teaching methods in early education often rely on rote memorization, drills, or isolated vocabulary lists, which can fail to engage learners and may even create anxiety or resistance. Thus, there is a growing need for pedagogical strategies that are not only linguistically effective but also emotionally supportive and culturally meaningful.

One promising approach is the use of songs as a medium for language instruction. Songs are inherently enjoyable, repetitive, and memorable, which makes them powerful tools for vocabulary acquisition. They offer rhythm and melody that help children internalize new words and phrases effortlessly. Furthermore, songs can lower anxiety levels and increase motivation by creating a playful, engaging learning environment. Research has consistently shown that musical input enhances memory retention, improves pronunciation, and supports holistic language development. Within Islamic early childhood education, the integration of religious content into learning activities is essential to ensure that pedagogical practices align with spiritual and moral development. Islamic songs, which typically convey positive messages about values, daily practices, and moral teachings, present an opportunity to merge language learning with faith-based content. When these songs incorporate English vocabulary, they become a dual-purpose educational tool: they teach the language while reinforcing cultural and religious identity.

However, despite the acknowledged benefits of songs in language acquisition, limited research has examined how Islamic songs specifically influence English vocabulary learning in early childhood settings. Most studies have focused on secular songs or generic language-learning music, leaving a gap in understanding the unique role of culturally integrated musical instruction.

Moreover, much of the existing research relies on quantitative methods, focusing on measurable outcomes such as vocabulary test scores, while overlooking the rich qualitative dimensions of how children experience and engage with song-based learning. This study seeks to address these gaps by exploring the use of Islamic English songs in early childhood education through a qualitative case study. Rather than focusing solely on statistical





vocabulary growth, it investigates the lived experiences of teachers and children, examining how song-based instruction shapes classroom dynamics, emotional engagement, and cultural integration. By adopting a qualitative lens, this research provides deeper insights into the processes through which Islamic songs support English vocabulary acquisition while fostering a learning environment that is both linguistically enriching and culturally grounded. Ultimately, the findings of this study aim to contribute to the field of early language education by highlighting the potential of faith-integrated musical pedagogy. The results are expected to inform not only classroom practices but also broader discussions on how to design language curricula that are contextually relevant, emotionally supportive, and culturally respectful in Islamic educational settings.

Literature Review

The literature on early language learning highlights the interconnection between emotional, cognitive, and sociocultural dimensions of vocabulary acquisition. While a substantial number of studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of music in supporting language learning, research focusing on Islamic songs in early childhood English education remains scarce. This section reviews the theoretical frameworks guiding this study, examines existing research on the use of Islamic songs for vocabulary development, identifies critical gaps, and synthesizes insights that inform the present investigation.

Theoretical Frameworks for Exploring English Vocabulary Growth through Islamic Songs in Early Childhood Education

The theoretical foundation of this study draws upon several frameworks that explain how songs particularly those integrated with cultural and religious elements facilitate language learning.

First, Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982) is central to understanding how emotional factors influence language acquisition. This hypothesis posits that learners with lower anxiety, higher motivation, and greater self-confidence are more receptive to linguistic input. Islamic songs, by being culturally familiar and spiritually uplifting, contribute to lowering anxiety and fostering a positive emotional climate. When children sing songs that reflect their beliefs and traditions, they are likely to feel secure and motivated, thus reducing the affective filter and enabling more effective vocabulary acquisition.

Second, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978) underscores the significance of social interaction and cultural tools in cognitive development. Language learning, in this perspective, occurs most effectively when children interact with peers, teachers, and learning materials within meaningful cultural contexts. Islamic songs serve as cultural tools that mediate learning, bridging the gap between children's existing knowledge and new linguistic input. Through singing activities, children engage in collaborative learning, scaffolding each other's understanding, and internalizing new vocabulary in a socially rich environment.

Third, theories of music cognition explain how rhythm, melody, and repetition enhance memory and language processing. Research has shown that musical structures facilitate the encoding and retrieval of verbal information (Hallam, 2010). Songs also promote phonological awareness and pronunciation skills, which are crucial in early vocabulary development. When songs integrate both linguistic and cultural elements, they simultaneously stimulate cognitive, emotional, and spiritual aspects of learning.





Lastly, constructivist theories of early childhood education (Piaget, 1970) argue that children actively construct knowledge through experiences. Song-based learning provides an experiential platform where children not only memorize words but also associate them with meaningful contexts. The combination of these frameworks offers a comprehensive understanding of how Islamic songs can influence English vocabulary growth in preschool settings.

Current Research on Exploring English Vocabulary Growth through Islamic Songs in Early Childhood Education

Existing research has highlighted the effectiveness of songs in supporting language acquisition among young learners. For example, Sevik (2014) found that songs help learners internalize vocabulary through repetition and meaningful contexts. Similarly, Davis and Fan (2016) reported that songs enhance word recall, pronunciation, and learner engagement in kindergarten settings.

In Islamic educational contexts, studies have started to explore how faith-based music supports both linguistic and moral development. Rahmah et al. (2021) demonstrated that Arabic vocabulary mastery improves significantly when taught through Islamic songs, as children respond positively to lyrics that reinforce religious values. Ratnawati et al. (2022) found that integrating English words into Islamic songs in kindergartens increased children's vocabulary acquisition while maintaining cultural relevance. However, research comparing Islamic songs to secular songs or other pedagogical tools remains limited. While technological tools such as gamified virtual reality (VR) have gained attention in language learning research (Cerezo et al., 2024; Tsang et al., 2025), they often lack cultural resonance and accessibility in Islamic preschools. By contrast, Islamic songs provide a low-cost, contextually appropriate medium for teaching English vocabulary, yet they remain underexplored in the literature. Additionally, many studies on song-based learning emphasize quantitative measurements—such as pretest-posttest vocabulary scores without delving into how

learners and teachers experience these interventions. The current study addresses this gap by focusing on the qualitative aspects of how Islamic songs influence vocabulary learning processes, engagement, and identity development.

Gaps in Existing Research

Despite growing interest in music-based pedagogy, several significant gaps remain in the literature.

First, there is a lack of research specifically focused on Islamic songs for English vocabulary acquisition in early childhood. Most existing studies concentrate on secular songs or general musical activities, overlooking how faith-aligned music can enhance language learning while reinforcing cultural identity.

Second, studies that do explore Islamic songs primarily focus on Arabic language development (e.g., Wahyuni et al., 2023; Fatimah et al., 2022), leaving English acquisition relatively under-researched. As English becomes increasingly important in global communication, understanding how Islamic songs can support early English learning is crucial.

Third, there is a methodological gap. Much of the existing evidence is quantitative, focusing on measurable outcomes without exploring the rich experiential and contextual





dimensions of song-based learning. The few qualitative studies available do not sufficiently capture how learners emotionally and socially engage with faith-based songs.

Finally, there is a theoretical gap in connecting music cognition, affective theories, and sociocultural perspectives within the context of Islamic early childhood education. Existing research often examines these elements in isolation, failing to present an integrated view of how songs function as both linguistic and cultural mediators.

These gaps justify the need for a qualitative exploration of how Islamic songs influence English vocabulary growth, providing insights that go beyond numerical gains to include emotional engagement, cultural resonance, and classroom dynamics.

Synthesis of Insights

The reviewed literature converges on several critical insights relevant to this study. First, music enhances memory retention, pronunciation, and vocabulary acquisition through repetition, rhythm, and melody. Second, songs lower anxiety and increase motivation, aligning with Krashen's concept of reducing the affective filter. Third, cultural relevance matters: materials that resonate with learners' values and experiences lead to deeper engagement and more meaningful learning.

Integrating Islamic content into songs offers a unique pedagogical advantage, combining linguistic input with spiritual and moral messages. This approach not only supports language development but also nurtures children's cultural and religious identities, aligning with the holistic goals of Islamic early childhood education. Moreover, by situating vocabulary learning within a familiar cultural framework, Islamic songs help learners connect new knowledge to their existing experiences, facilitating better retention and application.

Finally, the synthesis suggests that while technological innovations like VR hold potential, they cannot replace the cultural intimacy and accessibility offered by Islamic songs. There is a clear need for more qualitative research to uncover how teachers and children experience these learning processes in naturalistic settings. Such insights are essential for designing contextually relevant, emotionally supportive, and culturally grounded approaches to early English education in Islamic contexts.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research employed a qualitative case study approach to deeply investigate how Islamic song-based instruction influences English vocabulary growth in early childhood education. The qualitative paradigm was selected because it allows for an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences, capturing the richness and complexity of language learning as a social and cultural process. Unlike quantitative methods that focus primarily on measuring outcomes through numerical data, the qualitative case study emphasizes contextual exploration, seeking to understand the *how* and *why* behind observed phenomena (Creswell, 2018).

The case study design was particularly suitable because it enables an intensive examination of a phenomenon within its natural setting (Yin, 2014). In this study, the phenomenon under investigation was the use of Islamic English songs as a pedagogical tool, examined within the real-life context of Islamic preschools where cultural and religious values strongly influence teaching practices.





Research Setting

The study was conducted in two private Islamic preschools located in an urban area of Indonesia. These schools were chosen because they actively incorporate Islamic values into their daily curriculum and have a track record of integrating music, particularly Islamic-themed songs, into classroom activities. Both schools follow a bilingual approach where English is introduced as a foreign language alongside the national language (Bahasa Indonesia) and Arabic for religious studies. The classroom environments were child-centered, incorporating interactive activities, moral storytelling, and faith-based singing routines, making them ideal sites to observe the interplay between cultural identity and language learning.

Participants

Participants consisted of a) Two teachers, one from each school, both females, with teaching experience ranging from five to ten years. Each had prior experience using songs as part of their teaching strategies, although not all songs previously used were specifically designed for English instruction. Their willingness to integrate Islamic English songs into the curriculum made them valuable collaborators for the study. B) Sixty children (thirty per school), aged four to six years, representing diverse socio-economic backgrounds. All children were from Muslim families and were in the pre-literate stage of English learning, meaning their exposure to English outside the school environment was limited.

Parental consent was obtained for all child participants, ensuring ethical compliance. The study also adhered to ethical guidelines by ensuring confidentiality, voluntary participation, and respect for cultural sensitivities.

Instructional Intervention

The instructional intervention lasted eight weeks, during which teachers incorporated Islamic English songs into regular classroom routines. These songs were carefully selected and adapted to contain simple English vocabulary embedded within religious and moral themes (e.g., songs about daily prayers, gratitude, good manners, and caring for others).

The songs were chosen based on three criteria:

1. Vocabulary simplicity – containing words and phrases appropriate for early learners.
2. Cultural relevance – integrating Islamic values to align with the preschool's philosophy.
3. Musical appeal – featuring repetitive lyrics, clear melodies, and rhythms that encourage participation.

Teachers were trained to use the songs interactively by including gestures, body movements, and call-and-response techniques to maximize engagement.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection spanned over the entire eight-week intervention and used three primary techniques:

1. Classroom Observations
 - a. Observations were conducted three times per week in each school.
 - b. The researcher recorded field notes focusing on children's behaviors, participation levels, and vocabulary usage during and after the song activities.
 - c. Video recordings were also taken to capture non-verbal expressions, gestures, and peer interactions that could provide insights into engagement and retention.
2. Semi-Structured Interviews with Teachers





- a. Teachers were interviewed three times: at the beginning (to understand their expectations and teaching approaches), at mid-point (to gather insights about ongoing experiences), and at the end (to reflect on perceived outcomes).
 - b. Interviews explored teachers' perceptions of children's vocabulary development, emotional engagement, and cultural responses to the songs.
 - c. Each interview lasted approximately 45–60 minutes and was audio-recorded with the participants' consent.
3. Document Analysis
- a. Supplementary data were gathered from lesson plans, song lyrics, and teachers' reflective notes.
 - b. These documents provided valuable contextual information about how the songs were selected, adapted, and implemented in the curriculum.

Using these multiple sources ensured data triangulation, enhancing the credibility and reliability of the findings.

Data Analysis

The collected data comprising observation notes, video transcripts, interview transcripts, and documents were subjected to thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework:

1. Familiarization – The researcher repeatedly read observation notes and interview transcripts to gain an overall understanding of the data.
2. Initial Coding – Segments of data were coded based on emerging patterns, focusing on aspects related to vocabulary acquisition, engagement, and cultural alignment.
3. Theme Development – Codes were organized into potential themes that reflected the underlying meanings and relationships.
4. Theme Review – Themes were reviewed and refined to ensure they accurately represented the data.
5. Theme Definition – Clear definitions were assigned to each theme to articulate their significance in relation to the research questions.
6. Report Writing – Themes were synthesized into a coherent narrative supported by verbatim quotes from teachers and descriptions of observed behaviors.

Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure trustworthiness, several strategies were employed:

- a. Credibility was enhanced through prolonged engagement in the field, member checking (sharing interpretations with teachers for validation), and triangulation across multiple data sources.
- b. Transferability was supported by providing rich, thick descriptions of the context, participants, and processes, enabling readers to assess applicability to other settings.
- c. Dependability was achieved by maintaining detailed field notes, coding records, and an audit trail of analytical decisions.
- d. Confirmability was strengthened by the researcher's reflexivity, acknowledging potential biases and ensuring interpretations were grounded in data rather than preconceived notions.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered strictly to ethical research standards. Parental informed consent was obtained for all child participants, and teachers voluntarily participated with full awareness of





the study's purpose. All data were anonymized to protect privacy, and the research was conducted with cultural sensitivity, respecting Islamic values and practices within the school environments.

RESULTS

The qualitative data analysis yielded three major themes that describe how Islamic songs influenced the English vocabulary development of preschool children. These themes emerged from repeated patterns across classroom observations, teacher interviews, and document analysis. For clarity, findings are presented thematically, supported by illustrative examples and analysis of the learning process involving all 60 student participants.

Theme 1: Positive Emotional Climate

One of the most prominent findings was the creation of a joyful and emotionally supportive learning atmosphere during song-based lessons. Across both preschools, children demonstrated visible excitement when the teachers introduced songs. They clapped, swayed, and sang along with enthusiasm. Observational data indicated that 96% of the children (58 out of 60) actively participated in singing activities, even those who were initially shy during the first sessions.

Process of Emotional Engagement

- a. Week 1–2: Children were initially hesitant during the first few lessons. Some required encouragement to participate. However, the teachers used gestures and facial expressions to make the activity enjoyable, gradually reducing the children's anxiety.
- b. Week 3–4: Participation increased dramatically. Students began anticipating the song sessions, often requesting their favorite songs at the start of the lesson. Observations revealed frequent laughter, smiling, and spontaneous movement to the rhythm.
- c. Week 5–8: By the later weeks, songs became an integral part of classroom culture. Even children who were initially passive started leading the singing with confidence. Teachers reported that these sessions were “the highlight of the children's day.”

Theme 2: Spontaneous Language Use

The second key finding was the emergence of spontaneous use of English vocabulary outside formal instruction. Observations revealed that children not only memorized words from the songs but also used them naturally during play, interactions, and other classroom activities. Analysis of Vocabulary Growth Process for 30 Students per School. To analyze how children progressed, researchers tracked vocabulary retention and spontaneous usage among three categories of learners in each school:

- a. Highly responsive learners (12 students per school): These children quickly absorbed and used new words from songs in both structured and unstructured contexts. For example, after singing about colors, one child pointed to a toy and said, “*This is blue!*” without teacher prompting.
- b. Moderately responsive learners (10 students per school): These children memorized song lyrics and could repeat words during lessons but required occasional prompting to use them in free conversation.
- c. Less responsive learners (8 students per school): Initially reluctant to use English words, these students gradually improved by the final weeks, often echoing peers or teachers when singing or speaking.





Observed Progression Over Eight Weeks

- a. Weeks 1–2: Children repeated words only within the context of the song lyrics.
- b. Weeks 3–4: Some began applying words outside of singing sessions (e.g., pointing and saying “big ball” during playtime).
- c. Weeks 5–6: Spontaneous vocabulary use spread among peers. Even less responsive learners started mimicking phrases heard during songs.
- d. Weeks 7–8: Teachers reported that most children could recall and use more than 30 English words taught through the songs, including nouns (e.g., *cat*, *apple*), adjectives (e.g., *big*, *small*), and simple expressions (e.g., *thank you*, *good morning*).

Teachers’ reflections reinforced these observations:

“What surprised me most was hearing them use English words during snack time or when playing outside. They weren’t just repeating; they were using them meaningfully.”

This finding demonstrates how song-based learning facilitated vocabulary transfer from structured lessons to spontaneous speech, a critical step in language acquisition.

Theme 3: Cultural Integration Enhancing Motivation

The third theme concerns how cultural and religious integration increased children’s motivation and parental support for English learning. Unlike secular songs, the Islamic songs used in this study carried spiritual messages (e.g., gratitude to Allah, kindness, prayer routines) that resonated with children’s home values and daily practices.

Evidence of Cultural Connection Teachers consistently observed that children related more strongly to songs that reflected their Islamic identity. During interviews, both teachers noted that children “sang with greater passion” when the lyrics mentioned Allah, prayer, or moral lessons. Document analysis also revealed that teachers intentionally selected lyrics containing simple English vocabulary tied to religious themes, such as pray, good, help, and thank you Allah.

Parents, according to teacher feedback, expressed satisfaction with this approach because it aligned English learning with Islamic education. One teacher noted:

“Parents told me they love hearing their children sing these songs at home. They feel reassured that English learning here strengthens, not weakens, their faith.”

Motivational Impact on Students

*Cultural integration was also evident in how songs influenced behavioral engagement. During song sessions, children were more attentive, excited, and eager to participate. Unlike typical English drills, these songs carried emotional meaning connected to their religious beliefs, making learning not only enjoyable but also **spiritually fulfilling**.*

Summary of Findings

The results clearly indicate that Islamic song-based instruction fostered:

1. An emotionally safe and joyful learning climate, encouraging participation from all children, including initially hesitant learners.
2. Spontaneous vocabulary usage, where children transferred learned words from songs to natural contexts, showing genuine acquisition rather than rote memorization.
3. Enhanced motivation through cultural and religious alignment, ensuring that English learning complemented, rather than conflicted with, their identity.

Collectively, these findings highlight the dual role of Islamic songs: they function not only as linguistic input but also as cultural mediators, making English learning a meaningful and integrated experience in Islamic preschool settings.





Lowering the Affective Filter and Enhancing Comprehensibility

The results revealed that Islamic songs lowered children's anxiety and created a positive emotional climate where learners felt safe to experiment with English. Children who were initially reluctant to speak became more confident as the sessions progressed, demonstrating greater participation and enthusiasm during singing activities. This observation directly supports Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982), which posits those emotional states—such as anxiety, fear, or low motivation—can act as a barrier to language acquisition. When the affective filter is lowered, learners are more receptive to linguistic input.

The joyful nature of songs, coupled with their religious and cultural familiarity, significantly contributed to lowering this affective filter. Similar findings were reported by Sevik (2014), who noted that songs create a relaxed and enjoyable environment that promotes active learning. However, this study extends Sevik's work by demonstrating that faith-based songs are even more effective because they integrate cultural identity, thereby enhancing both emotional and cognitive receptivity.

Furthermore, the repetitive and melodic structure of Islamic songs made English input more comprehensible for young learners. The children not only memorized lyrics but also internalized vocabulary through contextualized use in songs, aligning with Krashen's Input Hypothesis, which emphasizes the importance of comprehensible input ($i+1$) for language learning.

Sociocultural Mediation through Culturally Relevant Materials

The findings also confirm Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978), which highlights the role of cultural tools and social interactions in learning. In this study, Islamic songs acted as cultural mediators, connecting children's existing knowledge of Islamic practices with new English vocabulary. Singing about familiar routines, such as prayer or expressing gratitude to Allah, allowed children to anchor new words to meaningful cultural experiences.

This aligns with Cameron (2021), who emphasized that language learning in early childhood is most effective when it occurs in a meaningful, socially rich context. By embedding English words in songs that resonate with children's religious values, the songs bridged cultural and linguistic domains, making language acquisition both natural and meaningful.

Additionally, the social nature of singing—where children learned alongside peers, responded to teachers' gestures, and participated in group performances—provided a collaborative environment that promoted scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978). Teachers acted as facilitators, guiding children from passive listening to active participation, ultimately leading to independent use of new vocabulary.

Comparison with Technology-Based Language Learning Approaches

The study's findings stand in contrast to research on technology-based language learning, such as gamified virtual reality (VR). While studies by Cerezo et al. (2024) and Tsang et al. (2025) have shown that VR can enhance vocabulary learning through immersive environments, these technologies often lack cultural relevance and accessibility in Islamic preschool settings. High costs, technical requirements, and culturally neutral content limit VR's applicability, particularly in contexts where religious values strongly shape curriculum design.

Islamic songs, on the other hand, are cost-effective, easy to implement, and culturally resonant. They require minimal resources, yet they provide both affective engagement and





cultural integration, benefits that technology-based approaches often fail to deliver. This finding underscores the importance of adopting context-sensitive pedagogies rather than relying solely on imported, technologically driven solutions.

Spontaneous Vocabulary Use: Evidence of Deep Learning

Another significant finding was children's spontaneous use of English words outside formal instruction. This behavior indicates deep learning rather than rote memorization, as children transfer vocabulary from songs into real-life communication. This spontaneous production is consistent with Ellis's (2022) perspective that meaningful input leads to noticing and eventually to output, a critical step in second language development.

The observed process where students first repeated words in songs, then applied them in new contexts also reflects Swain's Output Hypothesis (1995), which argues that language production (not just comprehension) plays a crucial role in acquisition. In this case, songs provided an initial scaffold for vocabulary input, which later encouraged learners to produce and use new words actively.

Cultural Identity as a Motivational Factor

Perhaps the most distinctive contribution of this study lies in its finding that cultural and religious alignment significantly enhances motivation. Teachers reported that children and their parents welcomed the use of Islamic songs, as they viewed English learning as compatible with, rather than threatening to, their cultural identity. This finding addresses a concern raised by Nunan (2021), who noted that in some contexts, foreign language instruction is perceived as culturally intrusive.

By integrating Islamic values into English songs, this study demonstrated that language learning can strengthen, not erode, cultural identity. This has critical implications for curriculum design in Islamic preschools, where balancing global language skills with local values is a priority. Similar insights were observed by Rahmah et al. (2022), who found that faith-based songs in Arabic classes enhanced not only linguistic proficiency but also moral development.

Implications for Teaching Practice

The findings of this study carry important pedagogical implications:

1. For Teachers: Islamic English songs can be adopted as an effective teaching strategy to make vocabulary learning engaging and meaningful. Teachers should select songs with simple, repetitive lyrics and integrate gestures and movements to enhance comprehension.
2. For Curriculum Designers: Faith-integrated musical materials should be incorporated into early English curricula to ensure cultural relevance and sustained learner motivation.
3. For Policymakers: Supporting the development and dissemination of culturally aligned English teaching materials can strengthen both language learning outcomes and cultural identity in Islamic education systems.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Although the study provides rich insights, it has some limitations. The research was conducted in two Islamic preschools within an urban area, which may not fully represent rural or international Islamic contexts. Additionally, the eight-week duration, while sufficient to observe trends, may not capture long-term vocabulary retention.

Future research could:





- a. Conduct longitudinal studies to examine retention of vocabulary learned through songs over several months or years.
- b. Explore parental involvement in reinforcing vocabulary at home through faith-based songs.
- c. Compare Islamic song-based learning with secular song approaches or other culturally specific methods to determine relative effectiveness.
- d. Investigate how Islamic songs influence other aspects of language learning, such as pronunciation, grammar acquisition, and speaking confidence.

Synthesis with Theoretical Frameworks

Overall, this study's findings align strongly with Krashen's, Vygotsky's, and music cognition theories, while also extending their application to faith-based language learning contexts. By lowering affective filters, mediating learning through cultural tools, and engaging emotional as well as cognitive processes, Islamic songs emerge as a powerful educational instrument in early English education.

Unlike technology-driven methods, this approach is sustainable, accessible, and deeply contextualized, making it particularly suitable for Islamic preschools aiming to provide both linguistic competence and moral development.

CONCLUSION

This qualitative case study investigated how Islamic song-based instruction influences English vocabulary acquisition among preschool children in Islamic educational settings. The findings revealed that integrating Islamic songs into English lessons significantly enhances vocabulary learning while also fostering positive emotional engagement and reinforcing cultural identity. Through an eight-week intervention involving 60 children and two teachers across two Islamic preschools, this study provided rich insights into the ways in which culturally embedded musical practices can serve as powerful pedagogical tools for early language learning.

Contributions to Knowledge

The study makes several notable contributions to the field of early childhood language education:

1. Empirical Contribution – The research provides qualitative evidence that faith-integrated songs effectively promote English vocabulary growth in preschool-aged children, an area that has been underexplored in previous literature.
2. Theoretical Contribution – Findings extend Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory by showing how culturally meaningful songs simultaneously lower anxiety, enhance motivation, and mediate language learning through social and cultural tools.
3. Practical Contribution – The study demonstrates that Islamic songs offer a low-cost, sustainable, and contextually appropriate alternative to technology-heavy language learning methods. This has strong implications for schools in resource-limited or culturally conservative settings.

Pedagogical Implications





The results underscore the importance of incorporating culturally resonant practices into early childhood English curricula. Teachers in Islamic preschools can leverage Islamic songs to:

- a. Create emotionally supportive classrooms that reduce anxiety and encourage active participation.
- b. Promote spontaneous language use, moving beyond rote memorization to authentic communication.
- c. Align English instruction with children's cultural and religious values, thereby strengthening parental support and learner motivation.

Curriculum designers should consider developing structured song-based modules that integrate English vocabulary with Islamic themes, ensuring cultural compatibility and maximizing engagement.

Broader Educational Significance

Beyond the immediate context of Islamic preschools, this study has broader implications for early childhood education in culturally diverse settings. The success of faith-integrated songs in this research highlights the potential of context-sensitive pedagogies that draw upon learners' cultural backgrounds to enhance language acquisition. In multicultural societies, where English is often learned as a foreign language, such approaches can bridge the gap between global language learning and local identity preservation.

Moreover, the findings challenge the notion that effective language learning requires expensive technology or Westernized methods. Instead, they demonstrate that simple, culturally embedded tools like songs rooted in learners' faith—can yield significant educational outcomes.

Limitations

While the study offers valuable insights, it is important to acknowledge its limitations.

- a. The research was limited to two urban Islamic preschools in Indonesia, which may affect the generalizability of the findings to other cultural or geographical contexts.
- b. The study focused on a short-term intervention (eight weeks), leaving questions about long-term vocabulary retention unanswered.
- c. The analysis primarily addressed vocabulary acquisition, without extensively exploring other aspects of language development such as pronunciation, grammar, and sentence construction.

Recognizing these limitations provides a foundation for future inquiries.

Directions for Future Research

The study opens several avenues for further investigation:

1. Longitudinal Studies – Future research should track learners over extended periods to examine how vocabulary acquired through songs is retained and applied in later stages of education.
2. Comparative Studies – Research comparing Islamic song-based learning with secular songs or other culturally specific approaches could clarify the unique contributions of faith-based materials.
3. Parent and Community Roles – Investigating how parental reinforcement at home influences vocabulary retention and how communities perceive the integration of English





into faith-based practices would enrich the understanding of language learning in cultural contexts.

4. Other Linguistic Outcomes – Future studies could explore how Islamic songs affect broader linguistic domains, including speaking fluency, listening comprehension, and even intercultural communication skills.

Final Reflections

Ultimately, this study demonstrates that Islamic song-based instruction is more than a simple classroom activity—it is a holistic pedagogical approach that integrates linguistic, emotional, and cultural dimensions of learning. By lowering affective barriers, fostering spontaneous language use, and aligning instruction with children's religious identity, Islamic songs create a rich environment where English vocabulary acquisition thrives naturally.

In a globalized world where English proficiency is increasingly necessary, educators in Islamic contexts must seek methods that do not compromise cultural and spiritual values. This research provides evidence that faith-integrated musical instruction offers a promising pathway, allowing children to embrace English not as an external imposition but as an integrated part of their lived experiences.

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