TEACHING ENGLISH VOCABULARY USING NURSERY RHYMES TO PRESCHOOL CHILDREN TO SUPPORT VOCABULARY COMPREHENSION

NAZIHAH BINTI RAMLI

SULTAN IDRIS EDUCATION UNIVERSITY

2021

TEACHING ENGLISH VOCABULARY USING NURSERY RHYMES TO

PRESCHOOL CHILDREN TO SUPPORT VOCABULARY COMPREHENSION

NAZIHAH BINTI RAMLI

DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO QUALIFY FOR A MASTER'S DEGREE IN
EDUCATION
(EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION)
(RESEARCH AND COURSEWORK MODE)

FACULTY OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
SULTAN IDRIS EDUCATION UNIVERSITY

2021

UNIVERSITI
PENDIDIKAN
SULTAN IDRIS

INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

DECLARATION OF ORIGINAL WORK

This declaration is made on the __12th__ day of __January__ 20 __21__.

i.   Student's Declaration:

I, __Nazihah binti Ramli, M20161000527- Faculty of Human Development__ (PLEASE INDICATE STUDENT'S NAME, MATRIC NO. AND FACULTY) hereby declare that the work entitled __Teaching English Vocabulary Using Nursery Rhymes to Preschool Children to Support Vocabulary Comprehension__ is my original work. I have not copied from any other students' work or from any other sources except where due reference or acknowledgement is made explicitly in the text, nor has any part been written for me by another person.

Signature of the student

ii.   Supervisor's Declaration:

I __Assoc. Prof. Dr. Maslina Che Mustafa__ (SUPERVISOR'S NAME) hereby certifies that the work entitled __Teaching English Vocabulary Using Nursery Rhymes to Preschool Children to Support Vocabulary Comprehension__ (TITLE) was prepared by the above named student, and was submitted to the Institute of Graduate Studies as a * partial/full fulfillment for the conferment of __Master's Degree of Early Childhood Education__ (PLEASE INDICATE THE DEGREE), and the aforementioned work, to the best of my knowledge, is the said student's work.

__January 12th /2021__
Date

Signature of the Supervisor

UNIVERSITI
PENDIDIKAN
SULTAN IDRIS

INSTITUT PENGAJIAN SISWAZAH /
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

BORANG PENGESAHAN PENYERAHAN TESIS/DISERTASI/LAPORAN KERTAS PROJEK
DECLARATION OF THESIS/DISSERTATION/PROJECT PAPER FORM

Tajuk / *Title*: Teaching English Vocabulary Using Nursery Rhymes to Preschool Children to support Vocabulary Comprehension

No. Matrik /*Matric No.*: M20161000527

Saya / *I*: Maslhah binti Ramli

(Nama pelajar / *Student's Name*)

mengaku membenarkan Tesis/Disertasi/Laporan Kertas Projek (Kedoktoran/Sarjana)* ini disimpan di Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (Perpustakaan Tuanku Bainun) dengan syarat-syarat kegunaan seperti berikut:-
acknowledged that Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (Tuanku Bainun Library) reserves the right as follows:-

1. Tesis/Disertasi/Laporan Kertas Projek ini adalah hak milik UPSI.
   The thesis is the property of Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris

2. Perpustakaan Tuanku Bainun dibenarkan membuat salinan untuk tujuan rujukan dan penyelidikan.
   Tuanku Bainun Library has the right to make copies for the purpose of reference and research.

3. Perpustakaan dibenarkan membuat salinan Tesis/Disertasi ini sebagai bahan pertukaran antara Institusi Pengajian Tinggi.
   The Library has the right to make copies of the thesis for academic exchange.

4. Sila tandakan (√) bagi pilihan kategori di bawah / *Please tick (√) from the categories below:-*

☐ SULIT/*CONFIDENTIAL* Mengandungi maklumat yang berdarjah keselamatan atau kepentingan Malaysia seperti yang termaktub dalam Akta Rahsia Rasmi 1972. / *Contains confidential information under the Official Secret Act 1972*

☐ TERHAD/*RESTRICTED* Mengandungi maklumat terhad yang telah ditentukan oleh organisasi/badan di mana penyelidikan ini dijalankan. / *Contains restricted information as specified by the organization where research was done*

☑ TIDAK TERHAD / *OPEN ACCESS*

(Tandatangan Pelajar/ *Signature*)

(Tandatangan Penyelia / *Signature of Supervisor*)
& (Nama & Cop Rasmi / *Name & Official Stamp*)

Tarikh: January 12th, 2021

PROF. MADYA DR. MAZINA BT CHE MUSTAFFA
PENGARAH
PUSAT PENYELIDIKAN PERKEMBANGAN
KANAK-KANAK NEGARA (NCDRC)
UNIVERSITI PENDIDIKAN SULTAN IDRIS

Catatan: Jika Tesis/Disertasi ini SULIT @ TERHAD, sila lampirkan surat daripada pihak berkuasa/organisasi berkenaan dengan menyatakan sekali sebab dan tempoh laporan ini perlu dikelaskan sebagai SULIT dan TERHAD.

Notes: If the thesis is CONFIDENTIAL or RESTRICTED, please attach with the letter from the related authority/organization mentioning the period of confidentiality and reasons for the said confidentiality or restriction.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

Praise be to Allah The Sovereign Lord, The One who creates a living human from semen that does not have a soul. He bestows life by returning souls to the lifeless bodies on the resurrection day and He makes the hearts alive by the gleam of knowledge. He, who shone a light during my darkest moments and saved me from myself. He, who created opportunities for me to not surrender in my battle with His holy blessings. He, who granted me the strength, perseverance, and wisdom in my journey to complete my study. Peace be upon His messenger, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and all his family and companions.

I would like to thank the authorities of Sultan Idris Education University for allowing me to study at the best education university in Malaysia. Also, this dissertation would not have materialised without the assistance and support from the following people. Deep in my heart, I am blessed to have Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mazlina Che Mustaffa as my supervisor. Her kind words and soft demeanour soothe me and reflect her redeeming qualities as an excellent instructor. I am amazed by her ability and intellectuality in providing insights into my dissertation topic. She helped me numerous times in completing my dissertation, which I appreciated the most. I am truly inspired by her and hope that I can follow her paths to be a respectable lecturer and friend.

This dissertation is dedicated to my loving parents, Ramli Embong and Wan Kamaliah Wan Muda, who gave me unconditional love and support during my journey. Thank you for always believing in your daughter and comforting her during her lowest points. My utmost regard to my eldest sister, Nadhirah and my brother in law, Muhammad Fitri, who looked after me whenever I worked on my dissertation at their home, and provided a vehicle for me to drive to the campuses. I cannot complete the dissertation without their contributions and compassions. Also, to my elder sister, Nadhiah, and my brother in law, Ahmad Misbah Munir and my younger brother, Muhammad Nadzmi for always being there when I need them the most. Thank you to my niece and nephews who always make me smile and laugh. I am delighted to practice my skills on them and pass my knowledge to them as they grow up.

Last, but not least, thank you to those who contributed indirectly towards the success of my study, may Allah bless you.

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine the effectiveness of nursery rhymes in supporting children's English vocabulary comprehension. The study also explored teachers' ways of the vocabulary comprehension enhancement. The challenges of using nursery rhymes as a tool to teach English vocabulary were also studied. A case study design was implemented and the study was conducted using a qualitative approach through the triangulation method consisting of interviews, recorded observations, and documents analysis. This study was conducted at two preschools located in the rural area of Marang and Kuala Terengganu. Participants were selected using purposive sampling involving two preschool teachers and eight children. Their ages were between five to six years old and they were selected by the teachers based on their English proficiencies. Thematic analysis based on the Interactive Model by Miles and Huberman (1994) was used to analyse the data deductively. The findings showed that the effectiveness of nursery rhymes was indicated when the knowledge gained by the children became their past experiences which relatable to their present knowledge. The others indications where they sang nursery rhymes with comprehension whether by themselves or with their peers. The children also obtained excellent results in assessments and comprehended both nursery rhymes and their vocabularies successfully. The result also showed that the teachers utilised teaching techniques such as games and craft projects. They also used repetition, scaffolding, motivation, and YouTube children's channels. Another finding showed challenges that have been faced by the teachers including influence of Malay language and Terengganu dialect, spelling differences in Malay and English, parents' lack of awareness, teacher incompetency in English, and children's diverse personalities. As a conclusion, the use of nursery rhymes is important to support children's vocabulary comprehension. The study implicates that pedagogical techniques and teaching materials are beneficial for vocabulary learning in children's early years.

MENGAJAR KOSA KATA BAHASA INGGERIS MENGGUNAKAN LAGU KANAK-KANAK UNTUK KANAK-KANAK PRASEKOLAH UNTUK MENYOKONG PEMAHAMAN KOSA KATA

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menentukan keberkesanan lagu kanak-kanak dalam menyokong pemahaman kosa kata bahasa Inggeris kanak-kanak. Kajian ini juga meneroka cara-cara para guru berkenaan peningkatan pemahaman kosa kata. Cabaran-cabaran menggunakan lagu kanak-kanak sebagai alat untuk mengajar kosa kata bahasa Inggeris juga turut dikaji. Reka bentuk kajian kes telah dijalankan dan kajian telah dilakukan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif melalui kaedah triangulasi terdiri daripada temu bual, rakaman pemerhatian, dan analisis dokumen. Kajian ini dilakukan di dua buah prasekolah yang terletak di kawasan luar bandar Marang dan Kuala Terengganu. Peserta-peserta dipilih menggunakan persampelan bertujuan yang melibatkan dua orang guru prasekolah dan lapan orang kanak-kanak. Umur mereka adalah di antara lima hingga enam tahun dan mereka telah dipilih oleh para guru berdasarkan kecekapan bahasa Inggeris mereka. Analisis tematik berdasarkan Model Interaktif oleh Miles dan Huberman (1994) digunakan untuk menganalisis data secara deduktif. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa keberkesanan lagu kanak-kanak ditunjukkan apabila pengetahuan yang diperolehi oleh kanak-kanak menjadi pengalaman masa lalu yang dapat dikaitkan dengan pengetahuan mereka pada masa kini. Petunjuk yang lain adalah mereka menyanyikan lagu kanak-kanak dengan pemahaman sama ada menyanyi bersendirian atau bersama rakan-rakan sebaya. Mereka juga memperolehi keputusan yang cemerlang dalam penilaian-penilaian dan memahami kedua-dua lagu kanak-kanak dan kosa kata lagu-lagu tersebut dengan jayanya. Hasil kajian juga menunjukkan bahawa para guru menggunakan teknik pengajaran seperti permainan dan projek kraf. Mereka juga menggunakan pengulangan, perancah, motivasi, dan saluran lagu kanak-kanak *YouTube*. Hasil kajian lain menunjukkan cabaran yang dihadapi oleh para guru termasuk pengaruh bahasa Melayu dan dialek Terengganu, perbezaan ejaan dalam bahasa Melayu dan bahasa Inggeris, kekurangan kesedaran ibu bapa, ketidakcekapan guru dalam bahasa Inggeris, dan personaliti kanak-kanak yang berbeza. Sebagai kesimpulan, penggunaan lagu kanak-kanak penting untuk menyokong pemahaman kosa kata kanak-kanak. Implikasi kajian menunjukkan bahawa teknik-teknik pengajaran dan bahan-bahan bantu mengajar adalah bermanfaat untuk pembelajaran kosa kata dalam tahun-tahun awal kanak-kanak.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS

CHAPTER 5 SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ELL	English Language Learners
EPRD	Education Policy Planning and Research Division
HOTS	Higher-Order Thinking Skill
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
LAD	*Language Acquisition Device*
NAEYC	National Association for the Education of Young Children
NRP	National Reading Panel
NSPC	National Standard Preschool Curriculum
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
TESL	Teaching English as a Second Language
TPR	Total Physical Response
UG	*Universal Grammar*
WWW	World Wide Web

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Introduction

This chapter discusses the introduction of the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 (Preschool to Post-Secondary Education) and the National Standard Preschool Curriculum (NSPC) (2017). Following that, is the discussion on the importance of vocabulary and nursery rhymes in early childhood Malaysian education for English language learners, which serves as this dissertation's research background. The problem statements then, examine the issues faced by children and teachers in the context of English vocabulary teaching and learning in early childhood education. Based on the problem statements, the research uniqueness, purposes, objectives, and questions were then generated and analysed. The operational definition of terms used in this study is also explained. The theoretical and conceptual framework, on the other

hand, contextualises relevant theories and variables of this study. Last but not least, this chapter also outlines the significance of the study, its scope and limitations, and the conclusion that is drawn.

1.2   Research Background

The introduction of the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 (Preschool to Post-Secondary Education) was meant to evaluate the performance of current Malaysia's education system, offer a vision of the education system and suggest 11 strategic and operational shifts that would be required to achieve that vision. The National Standard Preschool Curriculum (NSPC) which was implemented in 2010, has since been revised to meet the new policy requirements under the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 (Preschool to Post-Secondary Education), and evolving teaching and learning needs. So, this review was conducted to ensure that the quality of the curriculum implemented in preschool is in line with international standards.

1.2.1   Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 (Preschool to Post-Secondary Education)

Based on Malaysia's Ministry of Education (2013), early childhood care and education (ECCE) programmes – which are divided into preschools, for children aged four to six, and day care centres for younger ones– plays a vital role in a child's holistic

development. Therefore, the Ministry of Education stated that preschool enrolment for five and six-year-old children is made compulsory to provide all children with an equal head start for early childhood education.

Furthermore, it is believed that every student will be proficient in Malay, the national language, and English, the second language and the international language of communication, through three ECCE programmes (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013). Eventually, every student will have the opportunity to learn an additional language and will continue to have the opportunity to learn Chinese and Tamil languages at vernacular schools. Currently, some national schools also offer the opportunity to learn a third language, such as Chinese, Tamil, Arabic, Iban, and Kadazan Dusun. Over some time, all students will be encouraged to learn at least three languages, allowing them to collaborate and communicate effectively with Malaysians and Malaysia's neighbours in today's rapidly globalising world.

1.2.2 National Standard Preschool Curriculum (NSPC) (2017)

The National Standard Preschool Curriculum (NSPC, 2017) aims to develop the potential of children aged four to six years old for comprehensive and integrated development in their physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and social learning, within an environment that is safe and nourishing. The policy also includes fun educational activities that are creative and meaningful. The programme is created to enhance the skills, confidence, and positive self-concept of children so that they are ready to face the challenges and take learning forward.

NSPC (2017) was developed on six main strands. They are Communication; Spirituality; Attitudes and Values; Humanities; Self Appearance; Physical Development and Aesthetics; and Science and Technology. The six strands are the main domains that supports each other and are integrated with critical thinking and creativity. This learning experience will enable children to listen and respond using appropriate verbal and non-verbal responses, mannerly communicate using simple sentences, read and understand simple sentences, and write words and phrases. The section of nursery rhymes in NSPC (2017) is shown in Figure 1.1.

CONTENT STANDARD		LEARNING STANDARD	
		4+	5+
BI 1.2 Listen to and respond appropriately		Pupils are able to:	Pupils are able to:
		BI 1.2.1 Listen to and recite nursery rhymes	BI 1.2.6 Listen to and recite poems and rhymes
		BI 1.2.2 Listen to and sing songs	BI 1.2.7 Listen to and respond to stories
		BI 1.2.3 Listen to and repeat greetings	
		BI 1.2.4 Listen to and follow simple instructions	
		BI 1.2.5 Listen to and enjoy simple stories	

Figure 1.1.   NSPC English Lesson Strand. Adapted from National Standard Preschool Curriculum (NSPC), Revision 2017

1.2.3   Vocabulary Importance for English Language Learners

The National Reading Panel (NRP, 2000) identified vocabulary as one of the five major components of reading. NRP (2000) stated that vocabulary plays an important role both in learning to read and in comprehending text. Based on NRP (2000), vocabulary is generically defined as the knowledge of words and word meanings. Successful

indicator in learning a second language depends on how much an individual understands vocabulary in that particular language.

Mudawi (2015) stated that vocabulary is an area that is understood as difficult and confusing to learn. Therefore, special attention must be given in presenting, practicing, and producing new vocabulary items in the context of second language acquisition. Mudawi (2015) also claimed that researchers begin to pay attention to vocabulary because it is just as important as the acquisition of grammar, and it is important in all languages. Preschool children must start with basic vocabularies because they can be used later on in semantic, syntax and pragmatic – to name a few. When teachers shift the focus of the teaching method from spoken or reading texts to nursery rhymes, they will enhance the second language vocabulary of children and give them the opportunity to practice (Salcedo, 2010).

In addition, language skills are essential to a child's ability to communicate and develop. These skills enable children to engage with other people and learn from their surroundings and in the classroom. Language skills are about children learning the rules for putting words together in a way that will express their thoughts and feelings and understanding the meaning of both the written and spoken word (Child Development Institute, n.d.).

The first five years of a child's life are the most important in terms of language development, although they continue to develop through the rest of childhood and into adolescence. During the first five years, new nerve cells grow and connect in the brain to enable the child to use language for self-expression (Robertson, 2019). It is, therefore

important that the child is stimulated during this time to ensure their progress is not slowed and their communication skills are not affected.

Vocabulary comprehension is identified nationally as an essential component of all available language programmes that teach young children literacy skills on how to read. Researchers confirmed the importance of vocabulary development and the critical need for comprehension (Mudawi, 2015; Marra, 2014; Hovsepian, 2012; Joyce, 2011; Hall, 2010; Iman, 2009; Nelson, 2008). Children who come to school with limited vocabularies have difficulties in learning new words since the size of one's vocabulary determines language comprehension. Klarowska (2011) argued that speech and vocabulary development began very early before a child says their first word. Early adult-infant interactions in the form of facial expressions, vocalisations and physical contact trigger a domino effect of speech, vocabulary acquisition and progression. Children vary in their development of speech and language. However, they follow a natural progression for mastering the skills of language and vocabulary. Figure 1.2 demonstrates ranges of language and vocabulary development with age approximations.

4-5 years	- Has a receptive vocabulary of 10,000 words or more
	- Understands more special concepts
	- Understands short stories and can answer simple questions about them
	- Follows 3-step commands
	- Speech is intelligible to most strangers
	- Counts to ten by rote
	- Uses more descriptive words
	- States function of common objects
	- Produces 4-6 word sentences
	- Relates experiences at school, etc.
5-6 years	- Follows instructions in a group setting
	- Has a receptive vocabulary of 13,000 words or more
	- Uses past and future tense appropriately
	- Uses conjunctions
	- Produces 5-7 word sentences
	- Uses more details in sentences
	- Retells a story
	- Counts to 30 by rote
	- Names days of the week
	- Asks "how" questions

Figure 1.2. Speech and Vocabulary Development Milestones. Adapted from B. Klarowska, 2011

1.2.4 Nursery Rhymes in Early Childhood Malaysian Education

In the Malaysian education system, preschools follow the NSPC (2017), which requires children to form basic skills in preparation for preschool. According to the Ministry of Education (2017), the basic skills for preschool education include socialisation and personality development in which communication, social skills and the three Rs (reading, writing, and arithmetic) are taught. It is an excellent time or the "prime time"

for preschool children to develop physical, social, cognitive, and communication domains as well as language development.

According to the Laws of Malaysia (2012), the Education Act 1996 stated that preschool education is a programme for children from four to six years old. Under the NSPC, music is integrated as creative and aesthetic component (Chan & Kwan, 2010). Two of the four objectives of the components allow children to appreciate nature's beauty through creative performance and express motion creatively. To achieve all objectives, three main contents and groupings were identified: (a) music enjoyment-listening, sound exploration, and instrument activities, (b) singing-listening and song and (c) creative movement. They explained that although each objective has sub-items detailing the activities, the grouping of the activities still lacks clarity because a number of items do not reflect exact activities. They also found that government preschools did not emphasise music activities. The majority of the respondents only devoted 10-20 minutes daily to music activities. Only 12.5% of teachers practiced music and movement daily. On a brighter side, regarding personal and social development, most respondents agreed that music is useful in enhancing human skills such as creativity (100.0%), language (98.0%), and social skills (96.6%).

The main objectives of teaching reading following the NSPC are to recognise letters of the alphabet, read simple and familiar words, and read simple sentences independently (Norlida, Munirah, Anna Christina, & Amir Yazid, 2004). It is the responsibility of teachers to create an environment that encourages children to communicate because nursery rhymes are intrinsic motivator that facilitates children to communicate freely and establish connections in their surroundings. This study looks

at nursery rhymes in facilitating children to learn English vocabulary and enhance their vocabulary comprehension. This approach offers children new experiences and opportunities to explore nursery rhymes in a more creative and interactive manner as well as increasing their vocabulary comprehension.

Augustine (2013) indicated that the preschool years are considered the "prime time" for children to develop themselves physically, socially, cognitively and linguistically. Nursery rhymes can transform a classroom into a positive learning environment where children can comprehend vocabulary easily and expand it. In addition, integrating songs into children's daily activities promotes literacy development, particularly with young English language learners (Norlida et al., 2004). Therefore, it is important for Malaysian preschool teachers to emphasise nursery rhymes because it is proven to improve the vocabulary comprehension of children.

1.3 Problem Statements

The literature used in teaching English to young learners has identified a number of pressing challenges (Copland, Garton, & Burns, 2014). One of the challenges is that English is often introduced as a compulsory subject at primary school without due consideration of who will teach it. In some countries, a severe shortage of trained primary school teachers of English is reported (Hu, 2007). Teachers may, therefore, find themselves teaching English either without adequate training in teaching young learners in general or in teaching English to young learners in particular. The situation is especially acute in poor or rural areas.

Another challenge for the Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers' concerns is the level of English they require to teach English for preschool children. A low proficiency level of teachers, or their lack of confidence in their ability, has been consistently identified in the literature (Ahn, 2011). Many teachers believe that teaching English demands particular classroom procedures such as teaching in the target language, which causes anxiety and leads to teachers questioning their competence, particularly their speaking and listening skills (Kuchah, 2009).

Furthermore, Ntumi (2016) highlighted that preschool teachers do not have a full grasp of the early childhood curriculum; thus, they face problems when dealing with the content of the curriculum. For example, teachers cannot understand the reason why children have to sing nursery rhymes. The reason is children can better acquire vocabulary and other literacy skills through songs. The study further gives evidence that preschool teachers did not receive enough early childhood education training with respect to the early childhood curriculum. Teachers are prone to use their native language when teaching and pay less attention to English teaching. Moreover, teachers with inadequate teaching and learning materials are some of the key factors that influence early curriculum implementation. In some developing countries, teaching materials could not be sufficiently provided due to budget sustenance of preschool. Therefore, the ability of teachers to spread the vocabulary empowerment is rather limited.

On top of that, children do not have a good understanding of certain vocabularies in nursery rhymes (Mudawi, 2015). A lack of understanding vocabulary leads to memorisation of incomprehensible nursery rhymes (Mudawi, 2015), thus making the situation problematic for children who are non-native English speakers. In addition, they cannot tell the meaning of a new word from songs. If they have poor predicting skills, they will experience blank gaps when they read and miss much information. Furthermore, most of them cannot tell the adults what they have read or describe nursery rhymes because of the lack of vocabulary; thus, they will struggle to communicate what they are thinking of. This can be in the form of the lack of words to describe what they want to say. If the adults are not alert of their vocabulary development, they will utter the same words repeatedly. A lack of descriptive words, adjectives, and adverbs means they will regularly use the few words they know. If they do not learn the meaning of new words and use them, they will struggle to interact with others and to understand the subject matter in all areas of learning.

One issue that always arises with vocabulary teaching is the dilemma of the presentation between form (orthography and pronunciation) and meaning. As discussed by Thornbury (2002), the greater the gap between the presentation of the word form and its meaning, the less likely it is for the learner to make a mental connection between the two. For example, while teaching a word like 'dream,' the teacher may ideally present the spelling, pronunciation and meaning of the word together, instead of not over some time so that a strong form-meaning association is made in the mind of the student. For most of the children, they will not master all three of them simultaneously thus, it becomes an incomprehensible vocabulary (Das, 2020).

1.4 Research Uniqueness

This study has three factors that contributed to its uniqueness. The first factor is, nursery rhymes are used as a tool to teach and learn English. Children are more eager to listen to songs than doing numerous practices such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

The second factor is that the research was conducted in the rural areas of Marang and Kuala Terengganu. Most of the residents in rural areas are known to be incompetent in English. Based on that factor, preschool teachers and their students will be analysed in this study.

The third factor is that the study will incorporate the perspective of both parties to ensure the richness of data. They will be analysed in observation sessions for both parties and interview sessions for the teachers. For the children, additional tests will be conducted for the document analysis session. Thus, challenges and acceptance of the English language will be discovered.

1.5 Research Purposes

This study has three purposes. The first purpose is to discover the effectiveness of nursery rhymes in supporting children's English vocabulary comprehension. Next, the study aims to examine the teachers' methods of enhancing the vocabulary

comprehension of children. The study intents to understand the challenges teachers face in teaching nursery rhymes vocabularies to preschool children.

1.6   Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to explore vocabulary comprehension in the context of preschool children. In order to achieve the main objective, the following goals must be met:

i.   To determine the effectiveness of nursery rhymes in supporting children's English vocabulary comprehension

ii.   To explore how the teachers can enhance vocabulary comprehension of children through nursery rhymes

iii. To explore the challenges of using nursery rhymes as a tool to teach English vocabulary among preschool teachers

1.7   Research Questions

Research questions were formed in order to allow the researcher to achieve the objectives of the research. The research questions are as follows:

i.   How effective are nursery rhymes in supporting children's English vocabulary comprehension?

ii. How do the teachers enhance the vocabulary comprehension of children through nursery rhymes?

iii. What are the challenges of using nursery rhymes as a tool to teach English vocabulary among preschool teachers?

1.8   Operational Definition

The following are the operational definitions that were used in this study.:

English Vocabulary: Vocabulary is generally defined as the knowledge of words and word meanings, as well as one of the five major components of reading (NRP, 2000). Vocabulary comprehension of children from five to six years old is measured within this study.

Nursery Rhymes: Nursery rhymes are short and simple rhyming verses, songs, or stories which are usually designed, told or sung for little children (Danielson, 2000). Nursery rhymes are used in this study as one of the approaches to support children's vocabulary comprehension.

Simple Movements Rhymes: Simple movement rhymes can be reinforced using simple movements, actions, or dances suitable for young children (Paterson, n.d.). According to this study, "Hokey Pokey" is chosen to represent a simple movement rhyme.

Counting Rhymes: Counting rhymes help to teach numbers either by counting upwards or downwards (Paterson, 2009). In this study, "One, Two, Three, Four, Five" is chosen to represent a counting rhyme.

Preschool Children: Children aged four to six are in Malaysian preschools (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013). In this study, the children were selected from private preschools located in the rural areas of Marang and Kuala Terengganu, ranging from five to six years old.

Second Language Acquisition (SLA): Second language acquisition (SLA) is acquired if children are exposed to multiple languages during childhood. The situation involving the acquisition of two or more languages are placed under the term of bilingualism (Brooks & Kempe, 2012). In this study, SLA is explored within vocabulary comprehension using nursery rhymes as a tool. The study attempts to decide whether nursery rhymes can support children's SLA.

Challenges: Obstacles faced by the English teachers in teaching vocabulary through nursery rhymes. This study found several occasions where the teachers have inadequate training (Hu, 2007), low proficiency levels, lack of confidence (Ahn, 2011) and do not fully understand the early childhood curriculum (Ntumi, 2016). The challenges of the

teachers are studied in the context of approaches, teaching materials and children's motivation in English language learning.

Pedagogical Approaches: The methods of teaching applied by the teachers are to support children's learning of vocabularies. Playing Bingo, drawing pictures, practicing body movements, as well as singing and repeating nursery rhymes are examples of approaches. Vocabulary comprehension can be built by writing words, discussing the meaning of the words, demonstrating kinaesthetic activity, and talking with peers and sharing ideas together (Kessler, 2010).
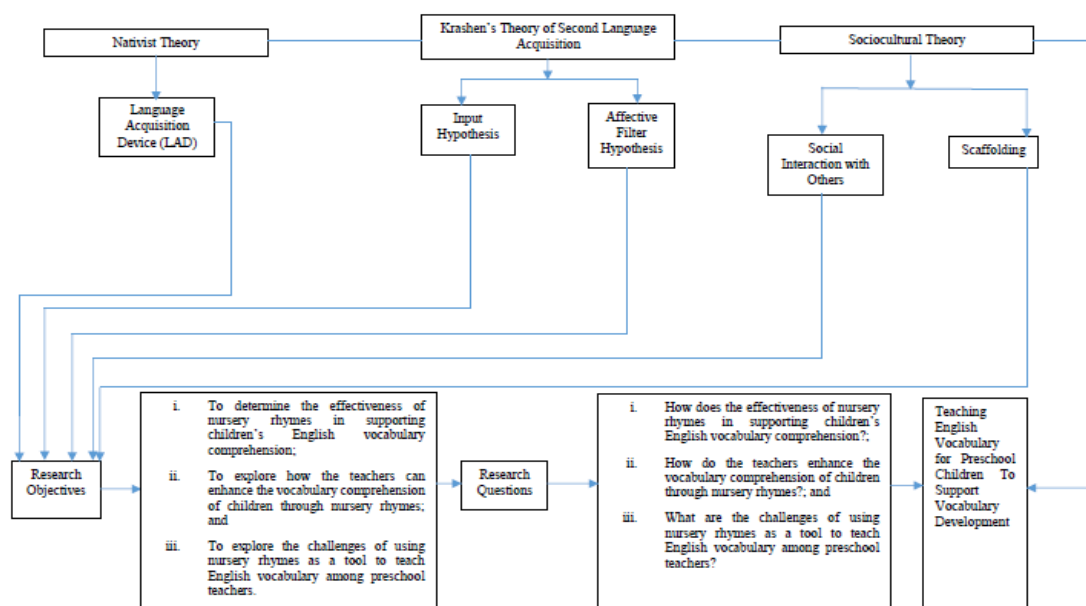
1.9 Theoretical Framework and Conceptual Framework

Figure 1.3.   Theoretical Framework and Conceptual Framework

1.10 Significance of Study

In this section, the significance of the study, such as the significance to Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers, to parents and to young English language learners (ELL) are explained.

1.10.1 Significance to Early Childhood Education (ECE) Teachers

The study essentially focuses on the importance of teaching and learning nursery rhymes to teachers and children, respectively. The teachers can benefit from teaching children nursery rhymes because they will never get bored of fun melody. Meanwhile, teachers will recognise various teaching materials that are suitable for children such as projector, flashcards, comic strips and so on because repetitive tasks such as spelling or reading may bore them (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2010). Therefore, nursery rhymes are beneficial to enhance children's learning skills such as listening and singing. Furthermore, the teachers can promote nursery rhymes activities in order to let children grasp the input at an early stage of education. Assessments can also be done from time to time to monitor the progress of each child in determining their competency in English.

1.10.2 Significance to Parents

As for parents, it is important to be involved with their children and sing nursery rhymes together to spend quality time at home. This method indirectly boosts children's creativity to learn more rhymes and to expand their knowledge. When parents get involved, they contribute to their children's emotional development and behaviour, well-being, social skills and even school attendance (Jafarov, 2015). Parents that are teaching their children at home are contributing to their children's development emotionally. Therefore, it shapes them to be more competent students at preschool. Parents can help their children learn nursery rhymes by consolidating them at home and supporting their efforts to perform well in English education.

1.10.3 Significance to Young English Language Learners (ELL)

The casual nature of learning through singing can help promote a productive atmosphere in the class, lowering the affective filter and, in turn, increasing the potential for language acquisition. It is important to break the barrier of the affective filter because once the barrier is lowered, children can learn a second language with enthusiasm and dedication. Furthermore, nursery rhymes can nurture children's souls. According to Ghanbari and Hashemian (2014), songs have the power and influence on physical and mental conditions hence prompt a positive attitude towards a second language learning. Moreover, nursery rhymes have a significant impact on children's cognitive development. Musical tones such as nursery rhymes are embedded into the brain and stimulate language development. Based on this fact, children can learn a new

language easily through nursery rhymes. A good solution to make English classes lively and motivating is by adding songs and music to learning sessions (Ghanbari & Hashemian, 2014). Good pedagogical approaches and teaching materials effectively aid children in learning vocabulary rapidly and efficiently.

1.11   Scope and Limitation

This research method is conducted based on a qualitative approach, case study design, and the triangulation method. They would evaluate vocabulary comprehension using nursery rhymes efficiently. Besides, this study used a small sample of teachers and children. Thus, the result would only be applicable to a small population. As a matter of fact, this study only focused on vocabulary comprehension and not the entirety of linguistic components. Besides, this research used only nursery rhymes as a tool for children to comprehend vocabulary. This study is conducted at two preschools located in the rural areas of Marang and Kuala Terengganu. Hence, there were limitations in terms of the research method sample. The sample used in this study consists of two preschool teachers and eight children. Thus, the results do not reflect an accurate representation of preschool children throughout Malaysia. This study would have a greater significance if children from all over Terengganu were selected.

1.12 Conclusion

The Ministry of Education Malaysia emphasises language communication skills to prepare students to move on to the next phase of language learning. It is important for children to master basic skills such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking. One of the practices to develop vocabulary comprehension is to include music and movements in learning instructions. Nursery rhymes are part of the music and can be considered as nursery songs too. Both parents and teachers can stimulate children's vocabulary comprehension and nurture their learning cooperatively.