

AN INVESTIGATION OF HOW TEACHERS LEAD
PRESCHOOLERS INTO LANGUAGE ACQUISITION BY
MODELING SKILLS THROUGH SONGS IN SELECTED SCHOOLS
IN NAIROBI COUNTY, KENYA

BY

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how teachers use songs to enhance English Language skills in pronunciation, listening, word formation and pre-reading in the early childhood years. The researcher's intent is to provide further documented findings on how musical arts may enhance language learning and performance in young children, particularly when used by teachers as a medium for modeling proper language skills. On the premise that improvement is the goal of leadership, this study looks at the instructional leadership role exercised by teachers in steering preschool learners into English Language proficiency. The background highlights studies from different parts of the world that articulate music's association with language skills and the positive impact it has on developing literacy in early childhood. Findings from these studies show that by using songs, teachers radically transform the challenging learning atmosphere into a creative and entertaining experience. Songs free learners to receive and practise proper skills in the new language. The theoretical framework borrows from Albert Bandura's social learning theory; language skills are among the disciplines children tend to observe and imitate from those around them who act as model types of behavior. Modeling enables teachers to lead by example when they utilise consistently competent language skills that preschoolers can observe and emulate. To answer the research questions posed, the study was conducted as a descriptive survey whose scope bordered within the Westlands area of the wider Nairobi County. Using the cluster random sampling method, six ECDE centres were picked from where data would be gathered. The data was obtained by carrying out interviews and observations. Through interviewing 11 teachers, the researcher gathered 38 songs and established that 14 of these are commonly used to teach preschoolers English, since they were repeatedly listed by different teachers in more than one ECDE centres. Teachers listed songs on a wide range of subjects from science, geography, numeracy, social relationships, religion, transport among others. To establish how the utility of these songs is valuable for modeling and imparting language skills, teachers described how the songs provide a language input device that young children can keenly listen to so as to pick new vocabulary and repeatedly practice to perfect pronunciation. Teachers checked all songs listed as being applicable for developing skills in pronunciation and listening. Conversely, when considering the development of skills in word formation and pre-reading, the teachers attested to using only particular songs listed for the same, depending especially on the preschooler's age or level of cognitive and motor development. A number of resources were observed as accompanying singing and music but voice and body gestures featured the most. Musical instruments and electronic resources were typically used when singing was applied for enjoyment. The internet came up as an inventive way of looking for new songs to use as a language teaching tool, in spite of the availability of books with nursery songs and rhymes. These findings demonstrate that teachers do acquire songs they find dependable to teach English language skills but require greater creativity since they limit resources applied within the classroom for fear of distracting rather than complementing the learning process.

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