

CREATING NURSERY RHYMES FOR TEACHING ENGLISH TO CHILDREN

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ABSTRAK

Saat ini semakin banyak anak SD menawarkan Bahasa Inggris sebagai alat komunikasi pembelajaran atau hanya sekedar bagian dari mata pelajaran. Aspek lingkungan yang terpenting dalam kelas anak-anak adalah guru. Guru diharapkan dapat menciptakan suasana kelas yang kondusif dan mempersiapkan berbagai macam materi yang berbeda bagi siswanya. *Nursery Rhymes* sebagai bagian dari sastra anak-anak dapat diterapkan di kelas karena dapat menstimulasi perkembangan bahasa dan anak meningkatkan pemahaman dan memperkaya perbendaharaan kosakata siswa. Tulisan ini bertujuan untuk berbagai ide dan pengalaman tentang cara menciptakan Nursery Rhymes berdasarkan tema yang diperlukan di kelas. Tulisan ini memuat tentang teori *Nursery Rhymes*, beberapa contoh *Nursery Rhymes* berdasarkan usia dan ritmiknya, serta langkah-langkah pembuatan *Nursery Rhymes*.

Background

Teaching English to young children has become important in recent years. In Indonesia, many primary schools especially the bilingual schools and also international-based schools have used English as their means of communication in teaching most subjects. Most children are getting smart and they are really eager to learn so they often try to communicate in English. However, it is also a worldwide phenomenon. It is a fact that many teachers, especially those who teach English, now find themselves teaching in primary schools even though they have not been trained for this level. And even for teachers who have been trained, a lot of them still tend to use 'out of date' methods and techniques in their teaching style. According to *de Potter* (2000) this kind of teachers has their own 'comfortable zone' which means a resistance in receiving changes. This kind of situation gives bad influence for children especially in their language development.

In general, children love playing, have a short attention and concentration span, like imitating, and enjoy repetition. Learning a new language will be very hard thing to do for them as they also still try to understand what adults say even in their mother tongue. So, when the teacher teaches them in a monotonous and boring way, and by giving them the rules of the language first, instead of introducing them the sounds of the words, they will be confused and most will refuse to learn because of the difficulties.

Based on that, the English teacher should first understand about the characteristics of children and after that try to find the best or the most suitable method and technique to be applied in class. It is quite clear that 'listening' is the skill that children acquire first in learning a foreign language, especially if they have not yet learned to read. When the children start to learn a foreign language, it is going in mainly through their ears and what they hear is their main source of the language (Scott and Ytreberg: 1994). One of the techniques in teaching listening is by using 'Listen and repeat' activities. 'Listen and repeat' exercises are great fun and give children the chance to get a feel for the language: the sounds, the stress and rhythm and the intonation. When it is done in combination with movements or with objects or pictures, this type of activity also helps to establish the link between words and meaning. One of the 'listen and repeat' activities is by using '**nursery rhymes**'. All children love rhymes and like to repeat them again and again. As children like playing with language in their mother tongue, nursery rhymes is a familiar part of their world, and it has an important part to play in their learning process.

What is 'Nursery Rhymes'?

Rhymes means a word with an ending that sounds familiar to the ending of another word. It is repetitive, has natural rhythm, and has an element of fun, of playing with the language. Rhymes are usually used in making poems or even songs. The

term 'nursery rhyme' had actually existed since the sixteenth century, but it became popular in the eighteenth century. In the early nineteenth century printed collections of rhymes began to spread to other countries. From this period, we can know the origins and authors of rhymes—for instance, "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star", which combined an eighteenth-century French tune with a poem by English writer, *Jane Taylor*, and "Mary had a Little Lamb", written by Sarah Josepha Hale of Boston in 1830.

Early folk song collector, *James Orchard Halliwell* who collected "The Nursery Rhymes of England (1842) and Popular Rhymes and Tales (1849)", divided rhymes into antiquities (historical), fireside stories, game-rhymes, alphabet-rhymes, riddles nature rhymes, places and families, proverbs, superstitions, customs, and nursery songs (lullabies).

People in Britain and many English speaking countries, use 'nursery rhymes', or it is called 'mother goose rhymes' in North America, as traditional songs for young children. Some nursery songs are also called 'lullabies', which intend to help children sleep. Lullabies can be found in every human culture.

How 'Nursery Rhymes' Value in Teaching English

It has been argued that nursery rhymes set to music aid in a child's development. Research also supports the assertion that music and rhyme can increase a child's ability in spatial reasoning leads to a greater success in school in the subjects of mathematics and science. In language learning, especially English, nursery rhymes can help children develop their language skills especially in enriching their vocabulary, developing their auditory/listening skills, and practicing how to pronounce sounds in English. In line with this, Hucks *et al.* (1989) believes that singing and chanting rhymes nursery rhymes appears to contribute to children's emergent literacy development. They also add that :

The child learns new words everyday; he likes to try them out, to chant them in his play. Mother Goose rhymes help the young child satisfy this preoccupation with language pattern and stimulate further language development. (Hucks *et al.*: 1989: 185).

It is understood that rhymes contain words about many kinds of activities that children take up in their everyday life, like running, dancing, creating paper toys, colouring, drawing and many more. If rhymes that have similar wordings are taught to them then it shall assist them in being able to identify very quickly with that activity. The children can also make use of the dearest toys while enacting or singing the rhymes and poems, like by holding their bunny toy and using the bunny's hands to show them how to brush their teeth. Once they see their favourite stuffed toy brushing its teeth, they too shall find brushing their own teeth a fun activity to do. Also songs like "Little Miss Muffet, Humpty Dumpty, Jack and Jill, and Hickory Dickory Dock" are great examples of nursery rhyme activity that immensely benefits children by improving their all round activeness.

Children usually like singing or chanting rhymes and performing. They enjoy singing or chanting rhymes to their parents at home. This activity builds confidence and a feeling of achievement. It helps them feel at ease with English (Slattery & Willis: 2003). It means that the children have plenty of opportunities to communicate and feel successful when using English. The important thing is that they enjoy their effort at speaking in English and know they have achieved something worthwhile.

Nursery rhymes can also be used to teach children new concepts. Here are some examples suggested by Mander(2003):

1. The use of rhymes fits aptly when trying to reinforce other kindergarten and pre-school lessons. For instance, Hickory Dickory Dock could well be used where time is being mentioned or being used as description. Create a cardboard clock with string like hands to show the movement of clock's hands, also allow the children to move the strings while the song is being played or sung.
2. Another rhyme called Five Little Monkeys At The Zoo is a great way to teach the kids about a unit on numbers. Create (or ask the children to make) 5 paper monkeys, and when the rhyme is in progress the children can be asked to out the correct number of monkeys while each of the corresponding rhyme verse is read out. The rhyme One Two Three Four also works for this in a similar way.

3. The rhyme Monday's Child is apt while teaching kids about the different days of the week. There is another lovely weekday song called Sneezing that reads this way:
*If you sneeze on Monday, you sneeze for danger;
 Sneeze on a Tuesday, kiss a stranger;
 Sneeze on a Wednesday, sneeze for a letter;
 Sneeze on a Thursday, something better.
 Sneeze on a Friday, sneeze for sorrow;
 Sneeze on a Saturday, joy to-morrow.*
4. Also rhymes can be used to teach children about the changes in languages and customs that have occurred over a period in time. Admittedly many words found in rhymes are somewhat outmoded but their modern-day equivalents can be found. For instance, in the nursery rhyme Old Mother Hubbard, tell the kids that these days cupboard is prevalent. That's not all, rhymes also act as a means of telling kids some really interesting differences in the way we live presently and how people lead a rather simple life long ago. For instance, in the rhyme Rub-a-dub-dub, there are three Men in a Tub, one of those three is a candle-stick maker. So you can tell them that many years ago electricity wasn't available thus candles were a source for light. Jack and Jill fetches water; by reading this rhyme you can tell the kids that how water was sourced from wells and the carried all the way back home many hundred years ago.

How to Teach Children Using Nursery Rhymes

There are many different methods which can be used and applied when attempting to teach nursery rhymes to children. No child knows a song, poem or nursery rhyme by birth and each child has to be at some point introduced. Upon introducing a rhyme to the child for the first time you can read it but it would be better if you would sing it while showing some pictures to them. Encourage them to sing along with you.

Here are a few tips you might want to use in teaching.

Basic Guidelines :

1. If a rhyme mentions a body part, touch it, shake it, wiggle it, tickle it, ...
2. If there is an action mentioned, mimic it.
3. Sing whenever possible.

Children of early school age often know many of the rhymes by heart, and are comforted by the familiarity, but aren't aware of some of the additional levels of information in the rhymes. It is good to particularly focus on counting rhymes and alphabet rhymes, and use them as an avenue to begin the learning process for these basic skills.

Other ways to use rhymes to enhance learning is with the Q&A method. Naturally, if the child asks you questions about why, what, who, how or why (children this age are often still not too aware of "when", the parent can use these questions as a leaping-off point for enhanced discussions. If the child doesn't seem to ask questions themselves, you can encourage exploration and start the process of teaching critical thinking and reading by starting to ask questions of the child.

The steps of teaching Nursery Rhymes are suggested below:

- Teacher chants the whole nursery rhymes
- Teacher asks the students to listen and repeat the lyric line by line
- Teacher asks the students to listen and repeat the lyric after two lines
- Teacher asks the student to chant the nursery rhymes together with him/her
- Teacher asks the students to chant the nursery rhymes together without him/her
- Teacher asks the students to chant the nursery rhymes in front of the class in groups of five to ten

How to Choose Nursery Rhymes

The first thing that a teacher should do in using nursery rhymes as a teaching material is choosing the suitable nursery rhymes with the topic given. We found lots of nursery rhymes with different level of difficulties. Therefore, the teacher is suggested to think of the age of the learners, vocabulary and the sentence pattern. Slattery and Willis (2003) says that "A song or rhyme should suit your pupils' age group and their interest, match their level of English, have a catchy, easy to remember melody". The different kinds of rhythm should also be considered to

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arouse their interest. Here are some examples of Nursery Rhymes:

1. 6 - 8 years old children
 - a. Standard rhythm
I see the moon
The moon sees me
God bless the moon
And God bless me
 - b. Rap rhythm
Postman, postman come here please,
Send the letter quick quick, quick
Postman, postman shall I write
Yes my dear, and so shall I
 - c. Tongue twister
Betty Botta bought some butter
But the butter was a bit bitter
So Betty Botta bought the better butter
2. 9 – 11 years old children
 - a. Standard rhythm
One misty, moisty morning
When cloudy was the weather,
I chanced to meet an old man
Clothed all in leather.
He began to compliment
And I began to grin-
“How do you do” and “How do you do”
And “How do you do” again!
 - b. Rap rhythm
Policeman, policeman don't catch me
Catch the boy behind the three
He stole sugar, I stole tea
Policeman, policeman don't catch me
 - c. Tongue twister
Peter Piper picked a pack of pickle
pepper
A pack of pickle pepper Peter Piper
picked
If Peter Piper picked a pack of pickle
pepper
Where is the pack of pickle pepper Peter
Piper picked

Nursery rhymes can be in the form of chants or songs. Chants have four taps and almost have the same rhythm with rap. Both of them have no note. However, chants and songs are not always in the form of rhymes. Here is the example of the nursery rhymes in the form of chants or songs.

1. 6 - 8 years old children
Humpty Dumpty

- Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall
All the king's horses and all the king's men
Couldn't put Humpty together again
2. 9 - 11 years old children
Excuse me, where's the park?
Go straight and turn right
Excuse me, where's the bank?
Turn left at the light
Excuse me, where's the mall?
Turn right at the gate
Excuse me, where's the pool?
Go straight for one block
Excuse me, where's the train?
Turn right at the clock
Excuse me, where's the mall?
Turn right and go straight
Excuse me, where's the park?
It's there! Don't be late

How to Create Nursery Rhymes

In preparing material for teaching, sometimes teachers hardly found out nursery rhymes related to the topic. Creating nursery rhymes is one of the ways to overcome their needs. Teachers may use the same rhythm but change the lyrics of the original nursery rhymes to other lyrics based on the topic. However, they can create their own nursery rhymes by using the following steps:

- Teacher chooses the topic
- The teacher brainstorms by making a spider web and writes down vocabularies related to the topic.
- The teacher explores the rhythm of the nursery rhymes. It is advisable to record all the rhythm in cassette recorder or MP3 or mobile phone.
- Teacher creates the lyrics depended on the amount of taps. Make sure that the taps match with the syllables.
- Teacher tries to mix the lyric and the rhythm
- Teacher chants the nursery rhymes and rechecks and the lyric and the rhythm

To create the nursery rhymes, a teacher can start from making the lyric first, if he or she thinks that she or she is good at linguistic intelligence. Meanwhile, he or she may start from creating the rhythm first if he or she is good at musical intelligence.

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