

# Improving Eighth Grade Students' English Vocabulary Mastery Through Song Based Multisensory Instruction at SMPN 2 Dusun Selatan

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| Article Info                                                                                                                 | Abstract                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
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| Received: 2026-01-09<br>Revised: 2026-05-11<br>Accepted: 2026-07-19                                                          | <i>This classroom action research examined whether song-based multisensory instruction could improve the English vocabulary mastery and classroom participation of eighth-grade students at SMPN 2 Dusun Selatan. The study was initiated because preliminary observations showed low vocabulary achievement, limited motivation, anxiety, and passive participation under predominantly teacher-centered instruction. The intervention used Maywood's "Mother, How Are You Today?" together with visual aids and interactive games. The Kemmis and McTaggart action research cycle was implemented across three cycles, each comprising planning, action, observation, and reflection, with 32 students. Data were collected through vocabulary tests, classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews. Quantitative data were summarized using mean scores and the percentage of students meeting the Minimum Mastery Criterion of 75, while qualitative data were analyzed through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The reported mastery percentage increased from 16% in the pre-action test to 40% in Cycle I, 65% in Cycle II, and 85% in Cycle III. The class mean increased from 58 before the intervention to 85 at the end of Cycle III. Classroom observations also indicated greater participation, confidence, and willingness to practice pronunciation and sentence construction. These findings indicate that, in this class, combining a familiar song with visual and kinesthetic support was associated with improved vocabulary achievement and a more active learning environment. Because the study involved one class and descriptive analysis, the findings should be interpreted within the local classroom context.</i> |
| <b>Keywords:</b><br>Classroom action research;<br>English vocabulary; eighth-grade students; multisensory instruction; songs |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
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## 1. Introduction

Vocabulary knowledge is central to language comprehension and communication because learners need sufficient lexical resources to understand texts and express meaning. Harmer (2001) emphasizes the importance of vocabulary in language teaching, while Nation (2021) explains vocabulary

knowledge in terms of form, meaning, and use. For learners of English as a foreign language, limited vocabulary can restrict both receptive understanding and productive performance. Therefore, vocabulary instruction should not only introduce word meanings but also provide opportunities for learners to recognize, pronounce, remember, and use new words in meaningful contexts.

Preliminary classroom observations at SMPN 2 Dusun Selatan indicated a gap between curricular expectations and the vocabulary performance of eighth-grade students. The Minimum Mastery Criterion (Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal, KKM) was 75, yet the pre-action class mean was 58 and only 16% of the students met the criterion. The classroom was also characterized by low motivation, anxiety, and limited participation. Instruction relied mainly on explanation and textbook exercises, and many students appeared reluctant to respond orally or use newly learned vocabulary. These conditions indicated the need for an instructional intervention that could improve achievement while creating a more supportive classroom atmosphere.

Songs offer several pedagogical features that may support vocabulary learning. Their rhythm, melody, and repetition can make language input memorable and encourage repeated exposure. Murphey (1992) describes the tendency of songs to remain mentally available after listening, which may reinforce lexical recall. Songs may also reduce tension and contribute to a low-anxiety learning environment. From the perspective of Krashen's (1982) affective filter hypothesis, input is more accessible when learners experience lower anxiety and stronger motivation. Previous work has also reported that English songs can support vocabulary learning (Kusumaningsih, n.d.).

However, a song alone may not address the needs of all learners or provide sufficient support for moving from recognition to use. In this study, the selected song, "Mother, How Are You Today?" by Maywood, was combined with visual aids and interactive games. The lyrics were considered relevant to the students' level and contained repeated, high-frequency language. Visual materials were used to connect words with meanings, while movement, games, pronunciation practice, and sentence construction provided additional opportunities for active engagement. This combination was informed by Gardner's (1983) view that learners may benefit from varied forms of representation and participation.

The contribution of the study lies in its cyclical examination of a song-based multisensory intervention in one eighth-grade EFL classroom. Rather than treating music as an isolated activity, the intervention integrated auditory, visual, and kinesthetic support and was refined across three classroom action research cycles. The study therefore focused not only on changes in vocabulary scores but also on changes in participation, confidence, and classroom interaction.

The study addressed two questions: (1) To what extent did song-based multisensory instruction improve the students' English vocabulary mastery across the three action research cycles? and (2) How did the students respond to the use

of songs, visual aids, and interactive games during vocabulary learning? The quantitative success criterion was that at least 85% of the students would meet the KKM of 75. Qualitative improvement was indicated by increased participation, enthusiasm, confidence, and willingness to use the target vocabulary.

## 2. Method

The study employed classroom action research using the cyclical model associated with Kemmis and McTaggart (2014). Each cycle involved planning, action, observation, and reflection. The research was conducted at SMPN 2 Dusun Selatan over two months, from July to August 2025. The participants were 32 eighth-grade students whose vocabulary performance was below the expected classroom standard at the beginning of the study. The class was selected because the preliminary classroom diagnosis identified low vocabulary mastery, limited motivation, and passive participation.

The research consisted of three cycles, with two meetings in each cycle. Cycle I emphasized listening to the selected song and identifying vocabulary from the lyrics. Reflection on the first cycle indicated the need for stronger meaning support. Cycle II therefore added visual scaffolding, including flashcards, to connect lexical forms with meanings. Cycle III strengthened productive practice through pronunciation drills, sentence construction, Total Physical Response activities, and interactive games. The actions were adjusted after each cycle on the basis of classroom observation and reflection.

Data were collected through vocabulary tests, classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews. A pre-action test established the students' initial vocabulary performance, and post-action tests were administered across the cycles to monitor improvement. Observation sheets documented participation, motivation, confidence, and classroom behavior. Interview guides were used to obtain information about students' responses and learning difficulties. The instruments comprised observation sheets, an interview guide, and vocabulary tests.

Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively by calculating the class mean and the percentage of students who met the KKM of 75. Qualitative data were analyzed using the interactive process of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing described by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2020). Evidence from tests, observations, and interviews was considered together to evaluate changes in vocabulary achievement and classroom participation. The intervention was considered successful when at least 85% of the students met the KKM and the qualitative evidence showed stronger engagement, confidence, and participation.

## 3. Results

The quantitative results show a consistent increase in the reported percentage of students meeting the KKM across the pre-action stage and the three

action research cycles. The pre-action class mean was 58, while the final mean in Cycle III was 85. Exact class means for Cycles I and II were not reported in the source manuscript.

At the pre-action stage, only five students met the KKM, representing 16% of the class. The reported mastery level increased to 40% in Cycle I and 65% in Cycle II before reaching 85% in Cycle III. The source manuscript reports that 27 students met the KKM in Cycle III. This figure and its corresponding percentage require final numerical verification because 27 of 32 students equals approximately 84.4%.

Classroom observations also indicated changes in participation and confidence. During the early stage, students were described as passive, anxious, and reluctant to use English vocabulary orally. In Cycle I, the use of the song encouraged more students to listen, sing, and respond. Observed behaviors included smiling, following the rhythm, and voluntarily joining the singing activity.

After visual support was added in Cycle II, students had more assistance in connecting word forms with meanings. The addition of flashcards and meaning-focused activities coincided with an increase in the reported mastery level from 40% to 65%. In Cycle III, pronunciation drills, sentence construction, movement, and games provided more opportunities for productive vocabulary use. By the final cycle, students were reported to participate more actively and confidently in classroom activities.

Overall, the evidence indicates improvement in both the cognitive domain, represented by test performance, and the affective domain, represented by participation, motivation, and confidence. Because the study used descriptive classroom action research, these results demonstrate progress within the participating class rather than statistical significance or generalizable causal effects.

#### **4. Discussion**

The improvement observed across the three cycles suggests that the intervention became more effective as auditory input was combined with visual and kinesthetic support. The initial use of the song created repeated exposure to vocabulary in an enjoyable format. This interpretation is consistent with Murphey's (1992) explanation of the mnemonic value of melody and repetition. The increased willingness to sing and respond also aligns with Krashen's (1982) affective filter hypothesis, because a less threatening classroom atmosphere may make learners more receptive to language input.

The increase from Cycle I to Cycle II coincided with the introduction of visual scaffolding. Flashcards gave students a more direct connection between lexical forms and meanings and reduced reliance on auditory processing alone. The subsequent addition of movement, games, pronunciation practice, and sentence construction in Cycle III broadened the modes of engagement. These findings are consistent with Gardner's (1983) argument for varied forms of learning support,

although the present study does not test multiple intelligences as a causal theory. Rather, the classroom evidence indicates that varied representations and activities helped accommodate different ways of participating.

The progression from listening and recognition to pronunciation and sentence construction also corresponds with Nation's (2021) account of vocabulary knowledge as involving form, meaning, and use. Students were first exposed to the lexical items through the song, then supported in understanding them through visual aids, and finally encouraged to use them through oral practice and sentence construction. This staged development may explain why the final cycle showed the strongest achievement and participation.

The study contributes practical evidence that song-based vocabulary instruction can be strengthened when it is embedded in a structured multisensory sequence rather than used as entertainment alone. For classroom practice, the findings suggest that teachers should select songs that are appropriate to learners' proficiency, connect lyrics to explicit vocabulary objectives, and provide visual and productive follow-up activities. Reflection after each cycle was also important because it allowed the instructional strategy to be adjusted in response to observed difficulties.

The findings should nevertheless be interpreted cautiously. The study involved one class of 32 students, used no comparison group, and relied on descriptive statistics. The exact cycle means, detailed interview evidence, instrument validation procedures, reliability evidence, and complete cycle-by-cycle participant counts were not reported in the source manuscript. These limitations do not negate the classroom improvement, but they restrict the strength and transferability of the conclusions.

## 5. Conclusion

Song based multisensory instruction was associated with improved English vocabulary mastery and more active classroom participation among the 32 eighth-grade students at SMPN 2 Dusun Selatan. The reported percentage of students meeting the KKM increased from 16% before the intervention to 40% in Cycle I, 65% in Cycle II, and 85% in Cycle III, while the class mean increased from 58 to 85. Qualitative observations indicated that students became more willing to participate in singing, pronunciation practice, games, and sentence construction. The results suggest that the instructional value of a song was strengthened when it was combined with visual scaffolding and kinesthetic or interactive activities. Because the evidence was obtained from one classroom action research setting and analyzed descriptively, the conclusion is limited to the participating class and should not be interpreted as proof of effectiveness in all contexts.

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