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### Utilizing Nursery Rhymes to Enhance Phonemic Awareness among Young Indonesian English Learners

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#### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Early childhood is a stage in which imagination and fantasy develop. That is why the education at this stage should be focused on developing children's imagination. **Objectives:** This study aims to find whether the use of nursery rhymes in the teaching of English can significantly enhance the mastery of phonemic awareness along with the noticing of initial sounds, pronouncing and spelling of words used in communication. **Method:** Two English teachers and 80 students of eight to nine years old in the third grade from two elementary schools in Depok-Sleman, Yogyakarta, Indonesia participated in this study. This study employed a quasi-experimental design with the Experimental and Control Groups. Pre-test and post-test were used as instruments to gather data for the study. **Results:** The findings indicate that the utilization of nursery rhymes significantly enhanced students' scores for overall mastery of phonemic awareness. Students from the experimental group also performed significantly better in noticing the initial sounds introduced through 24 alphabetically arranged words, pronouncing and spelling vocabulary correctly compared to their counterparts in the control group. **Conclusion:** This study affirms that the use of nursery rhymes can significantly enhance the students' knowledge in phonemic awareness. This study has innovative elements in the teaching of English and has useful pedagogical implications. Hopefully, the Ministry of Education in Indonesia and the Teacher Education Division will train teachers to use nursery rhymes to enhance young learners' phonemic awareness in English.

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#### INTRODUCTION

Early childhood is an age of imagination and fantasy. It is natural to develop the child's imagination using interesting material such as songs, folk tales and nursery rhymes in this stage. In early childhood, the education material should involve more activities like playing, clapping and singing. These activities are considered as the focal objectives of the phonemic method of teaching. This idea for making education interesting is to make acquisition of literacy less boring and more enjoyable at the early infancy stages, as it is a panacea for achieving the life's goals (Yusuf & Enesi, 2012). From the teachers' perspective, apart from the effectiveness of teaching language, the teaching activities, methods, techniques and ease of preparation are very important considerations in the teaching of language (Er, 2014).

As part of the world community, Indonesia faces challenges when it competes in the global market and tries to benefit from the economic opportunities

brought about by globalisation. The learning of English as a global medium of communication by the younger generation in Indonesia and the preservation of national cultural legacy need to be a twofold strategy of any learning intervention (Musthafa, 2010; Sikki, Rahman, Hamra, & Noni, 2013; Yuwono & Harbon, 2010). Ara (2009) mentioned that at the elementary school level, many second language learners responded very well when they were introduced to nursery rhymes. By repetitively reciting and listening to rhymes, children unconsciously learn how to incorporate sounds of language with words and sentences. After the end of a rhyme, it is noticed that children learned words of the rhyme at a faster pace. After children learn the rhyming words, teachers prompt the children to produce new words with the same rhyming scheme (Shwetha, 2013). The current study will investigate the impact of using nursery rhymes in enhancing phonemic awareness among young Indonesian English learners using a quasi-experimental research design. This study will further investigate whether

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the use of nursery rhymes in the teaching of English can enhance phonemic awareness among young second language learners in Indonesia to promote their abilities in noticing initial sounds, pronouncing the words and spelling each word used in communication.

**Problem statement:**

Over the past few years, like any other ASEAN country, Indonesia has been experiencing multiple educational reforms, including school curriculum and pedagogies in English teaching and learning. These reforms were due to the efforts to improve the output of teaching and learning in order to compete in the global context. Indonesia, through its Ministry of Education, had seriously responded to the growing needs to foster and strengthen English communication skills of the students (Kemendikbud: Indonesia Ministry of Education & Culture, 2013). English has become increasingly important as a foreign language taught in Indonesia. It is a compulsory subject to be taught for three years at junior and senior high schools since 1949. English also has been taught in Elementary Schools as an elective subject since 1994, as stated in the 1993 Curriculum (Arzal & Tanipu, 2014). To some extent, these educational efforts have shown some positive results.

According to Education First (2013), the rank of Indonesia for English Proficiency Index has significantly improved from 34 out of 54 in 2011 (Very Low Proficiency Category) to 25 out of 54 countries in 2013 (Moderate Proficiency Category). In 2015, the position declined and Indonesia was ranked 28 out of 63 countries by English Proficiency Index (English First, 2015). Two major intra-Asian institutions, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), use English as their official language (English First, 2015). However, of these, only Singapore has high English language proficiency. Hong Kong, Japan, and South Korea have not improved over the past seven years despite large investments in English education. This performance gap raises questions about how English teaching differs from the teaching of other subjects. However, some studies have indicated that despite pedagogical changes, student results have not significantly improved and there is evidence of unsatisfactory results and the lack of development of students' English proficiency and communicative skills (Arzal & Tanipu, 2014; Education First, 2015; Prihatin, 2012; Seargeant & Erling, 2011).

Second language vocabulary acquisition research in Indonesia has come into its own in recent years. Nevertheless, classroom implementation has been slow to follow. In certain cases, students passed in their English exam, but they couldn't perform well in their communication task. Decisions to introduce English at the elementary school level are often

presented in terms of the future potential for the country to engage in international business with a population fluent in English (Moon & Enever, 2010). To overcome this problem, Coleman and Furnborough (2010) noted that educational policy in Indonesia should prioritise the small minority which is 0.35 million out of 240 million, stated by the Indonesian Minister of Education & Culture, (2014), to have a chance of gaining proficiency. The need for studies that deal with the effectiveness of new ESL instructional materials stressed by Musthafa (2010) should incorporate pedagogical innovation and socio-cultural content during the rise of the education system in Indonesia.

In the Indonesian context, several studies have been conducted by researchers such as Lamb (2009); Sikki *et al.* (2013) and Widyaningrum (2011). These studies found that nursery rhymes were useful in the teaching of English. Studies conducted outside Indonesia by Schiller (2010); Harper (2011) and Shwetha (2013) indicated that nursery rhymes can develop thinking skills and help to promote oral proficiency, interest, and motivation towards learning English. In Indonesia, however, there are very limited numbers of studies on nursery rhymes to enhance the learning of English, specifically on phonemic awareness. In a preliminary study, the researcher found none of the 30 elementary schools in Yogyakarta used nursery rhymes in their classroom teaching. Many teachers in Indonesia still use conventional methods. The students feel lazy to read the text and translate it continually. The class is passive, the learning process cannot be conducted effectively and the material cannot be delivered maximally.

The above arguments showed that teaching English to young learners appears as a national problem in Indonesia. The conventional teaching methodology is boring for the students. There are some studies that introduce the nursery rhymes as an effective material for teaching English, but there is no evidence found that nursery rhymes are extensively being used as an instructional material for teaching English phonemic awareness to young learners. Phonemic awareness is an essential part of language learning, it is a critical skill that affects a child's ability to learn to understand the structures of their native language (Carr, 2013). This current study tends to fill this gap by examining the effects of nursery rhymes in enhancing phonemic awareness, along with its impact on the students' ability in noticing initial sounds, pronouncing and spelling words used in communication. Pourhosein (2012) mentioned that learning a word and its pronunciation is to be considered as the most important aspect of second language acquisition during the second language learning process and can play a significant role in supporting the learners' overall communicative skills.

**Objective of the study:**

The study aims to ascertain whether there is a significant difference between the experimental and the control groups of the students' scores in phonemic awareness along with the scores in noticing initial sounds, pronouncing and spelling of words used in the communication. The researcher generated these objectives into four null hypotheses ( $H_0$ ) as stated below:

1. There is no significant difference between the students in the experimental group and the control group for their scores in phonemic awareness.
2. There is no significant difference between the students in the experimental group and the control group for their scores in noticing initial sounds.
3. There is no significant difference between the students in the experimental group and the control group for their scores in pronouncing words.
4. There is no significant difference between the students in the experimental group and the control group for their scores in spelling the words.

**Review of Literature:****Phonemic Awareness: Concepts and Studies:**

Yopp (1992) defined that "Phonemic Awareness is: 1) the ability to hear and manipulate the sounds in spoken words and the understanding that spoken words and syllables are made up of sequences of speech sounds. 2) Essential to learning to read in an alphabetic writing system, because letters representsounds or phonemes. Without phonemic awareness, phonics makes little sense. 3)

Fundamental to mapping speech to print. If a child cannot hear that 'man' and 'moon' begin with the same sound or cannot blend the sounds /rrrrrruuuuunnnnn/ into the word 'run', he or she may have great difficulty connecting sounds with their written symbols or blending sounds to make a word. 4) Essential to learning to read in an alphabetic writing system. 5) A strong predictor of children who experience early reading success". Yopp (2009) further explained that a phoneme is a speech sound. It is the smallest unit of the words spoken in language and contains no inherent meaning in it but phonemic awareness is the art of hearing and manipulating the sound in the spoken words. It is also the ability to understand that the spoken words and syllables consist of a sequence of speech sounds. Phonemic awareness further involves hearing language at the phoneme level while phonics, use of the code (sound-symbol) relationships to recognize words (Yopp, 2009).

Related to phonological awareness, Yopp (1992) in the different linguistic units mentioned that phonemic awareness are continuous sound, onset-rhyme and segmentation. Continuous sound is a sound that can be prolonged (stretched out) without distortion (e.g., r, s, a, m). Onset-rhyme is clarified into onset and rhyme. Onset is part of the word before the vowel; not all words have onsets while rhyme is the part of the word including the vowel and what follows it. Segmentation discusses the separation of words into phonemes such as, the word "sun" has 3 phonemes: /s/ /u/ /n/. The following table shows different linguistic units from largest (sentence) to smallest (phoneme).

Different Linguistic Units

Sentence	Word	Syllable	Onset-rhymes	Phoneme
The sun shone brightly	Sun	sun, sun-shine, sunny	s-un, s-unshine, s-unny	s-u-n
	shut			sh-u-t

Source: Yopp (1992)

Children lacking phonemic awareness skills cannot group words with similar and dissimilar sounds (mat, mug, sun), blend and split syllables (foot), blend sounds into words (m-a-n), segment a word as a sequence of sounds (e.g., fish is made up of three phonemes, /f/ , /i/ , /sh/), detect and manipulate sounds within words (change "r" in "run" to "s" to make "sun") (Kame'enui, Simmons, Baker, Chard, Dickson, Gunn & Lin, 1997). Phonemic awareness study says "The best early predictor of reading difficulty in kindergarten or first grade is the inability to segment words and syllables into constituent sound units (phonemic awareness)" Lyon (1995).

Although we cannot attribute causality on the basis of our current data, it is possible that the association we have observed between phonemic

awareness and letter knowledge might reflect a role for phonemic awareness in enabling children to understand the logic underlying the mapping of orthography onto phonology, which in turn could facilitate the acquisition of grapheme-phoneme (or letter-sound) associations (Cupples, Ching, Crowe, Day & Seeto, 2014). In short, phonemic awareness is understanding that speech is made up of abstract units, including syllables, onset and rime units, and individual phonemes. This understanding underlies children's developing ability to perform so undermanipulations, such as blending of sounds into words and segmenting words into sounds (Ambrose, Fey & Eisenberg, 2012).

### ***The use of Nursery Rhymes to enhance Phonemic Awareness:***

Phonemic awareness has been the topic of much research in the past two decades. Based on the results of many studies, phonemic awareness has become an important ingredient in the process of learning to read. Phillips, Clancy-Menchetti and Lonigan, (2008) documented that well planned sets of instructions to preschool children can develop the phonemic awareness among them including the capability to identify environmental sounds, segment words into syllables, match words that rhyme and start identifying the initial sounds in the words. Previous studies by Carr (2013), Ambrose, Fey and Eisenberg (2012) and Pourhosein (2012) documented that teaching phonemic awareness significantly improves reading skills more than instruction that does not emphasize phonemic awareness.

Furthermore, it has been noticed that phonological awareness is a critical skill that affects the ability of children to learn and understand the structure of a language. The statistical evidence showed that in order to achieve the reading fluency and efficiency at spelling sooner, the child must be well aware about the phonetics before entering into a school system. Among the methods of teaching children easiest way is to teach them using nursery rhymes of playing word games (Carr, 2013). Teachers can support phonological awareness through listening activities, songs, nursery rhymes, and games in which children are asked to listen to and manipulate sounds they hear. It is important to provide children with activities in which they have multiple opportunities to engage in word play that helps develop various components of phonological awareness (Yopp, 2009).

The UK curriculum for 5 to 6 year-old children focus on phonemes rather than syllables. The significance of phonological awareness skills has been recognized in recent years in UK by the use of the "letter and sounds" program for children starting school (Rose, Feldman & Jankowski, 2009). This policy has resulted in the explicit teaching of phoneme awareness and letter knowledge to support the development of literacy. Phonemic awareness skill is considered the best predictor of literacy (Dickinson, McCabe & Essex, 2006). Children often attempt to segment the target words into individual phonemes rather than syllables, a finding reported by Holm, Farrier and Dodd (2008).

### ***Theoretical Framework:***

The second language learning process may be very long, complex and complicated (Yoon & Kim, 2012). Second language acquisition is a huge enterprise and many researchers have addressed the subject. However, for the purposes of this particular study, the researcher chooses to focus on two particular theories. These theories are Krashen's

theory of second language acquisition and Asher's total physical response theory.

### ***Krashen's Theory of Second Language Acquisition:***

This theory consists of five main hypotheses: (1) the acquisition learning hypothesis, (2) the natural order hypothesis, (3) the input hypothesis, (4) the affective filter hypothesis and (5) the monitor hypothesis. In this current study, only four hypotheses were used. The monitor hypothesis was not included because it is more widely applied in teaching interventions for adults. Authentic songs used as instructional tools for the introduction of vocabularies are musical stories which may provide "meaningful interaction" in the target language and allow natural communication to occur. When learners sing, their focus may turn on communication and not on forms. This, according to Krashen (1984), facilitates acquisition. In addition, in line to the affective filter hypothesis by Krashen, songs and music will possibly motivate the extroverts and enable them to calm down and concentrate more (Schutz, 2007).

### ***The Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis:***

The acquisition-learning hypothesis states that second language performance has two independent systems (Krashen, 1982). The first is the acquired system or acquisition (nature), which is the product of the subconscious, like children acquiring their first language (Krashen, 1982). The second is the learned system or learning (nurture), which is a conscious process derived from formal instruction.

### ***The Natural Order Hypothesis:***

The natural order hypothesis; based on the findings of the research (Dulay & Burt, 1974; Fathman, 1975; Makino, 1980) which suggested that predictable natural order is preceded by the acquisition of grammatical structures. According to Krashen (1987), when the target is acquisition of language, grammatical sequencing is rejected and the language program syllabus should not be based on the order in the studies.

### ***The Input Hypothesis:***

The input hypothesis is an attempt by Krashen to explain how second language is acquired by the learners. According to this hypothesis, input must be comprehensible for language learners to retain the information (Krashen, 1985). "The input hypothesis builds on the natural order hypothesis and answers the question of "how we move from one stage of acquisition to another. In other words, it is concerned with how we move from  $i$ , where  $i$  is the acquirer's current level of competence, to  $i+1$ , where  $i+1$  is the stage immediately following  $i$  along the natural order. The answer to how we can understand language that contains structures we have not yet acquired is 'through context, our knowledge of the

world, our extra-linguistic information" (Krashen 1982: 21). Dividing language up into smaller comprehensible parts (chunking), can assist language learning. Only characterized by "i+1", the oral or written input can play a facilitating part in the learner's language development (Wu, 2010).

#### **The Affective Filter Hypothesis:**

The affective filter hypothesis states that second language acquisition is facilitated by many affective variables (Krashen, 1982). These variables are: motivation, self-confidence and anxiety. High motivation, self-confidence and low anxiety facilitates acquisition, whereas low motivation, self-esteem and high anxiety raise the affective filter and create a mental block that prevents language acquisition.

#### **Asher's Total Physical Response:**

Asher (1964) developed English teaching approaches and methods termed as Total Physical Response (TPR). It has been used for almost thirty years. This method encourages the students to listen and answer their teachers' commands to learning English. In other words, TPR is a method of teaching by using speech and actions; to teach through motor activity. Asher believes that first and second language learning is a parallel process and that is why his Total Physical Response is a "natural method". He says that second language teaching should be a reflection of first language learning and it is crucial. Children are happy when they can play, move and sing; even better if these activities are combined. TPR is designed and based on how the mother tongue is learned by the children. There are various approaches for teaching and learning a second language but among them TPR is the most natural way to stimulate children and enable them to acquire language. Instructors ask students to do activities through commands in a new language and students respond accordingly through physical gestures (Al Harrasi, 2014).

#### **Methodology:**

This is a quasi-experimental study using the quantitative approach. The sample of this current study consisted of 80 students about 8 to 9 years old who belonged to the Third Grade from two

elementary schools in Depok-Sleman Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The samples from the two schools were similar in their academic achievement, combination of gender and the grade of the school. The subjects from school A (40 students) made up the Experimental Group while the subjects from school B (40 students) represented the Control Group. The Experimental Group was taught English phonemic awareness using nursery rhymes which applied students' centred learning whilst the Control Group was taught the same materials using conventional method. The researcher had made this arrangement, so that, the learning instructions given to one group did not influence the other one.

The duration of this study was ten weeks. During the first week, both the Experimental and the Control Groups were given the pre-test consisting of three phonemic awareness types of tests. Phonemic awareness type A test (noticing initial sounds) comprising of 24 items of English phonemes; type B test (pronouncing of words) comprising of 24 items (English words) to be pronounced correctly and type C test (spelling of words) comprising of 24 items (English words) to be spelled with its appropriate alphabetical sounds in English. These items were taken from the eight nursery rhymes. Following this pre-test, within eight weeks (week 2<sup>nd</sup> - week 9<sup>th</sup>), the students in the Experimental Group were taught using nursery rhymes while the students in the Control Group were taught using conventional methods for 70 minutes per week. During the tenth week, both groups were given the post-test to gauge their achievement in enhancing the phonemic awareness. The contents of the pre-test and the post-test were the same.

Prior to the actual study, a pilot test was carried out on forty Third Grade students of elementary school in Yogyakarta. The purpose was to ascertain the validity of the instruments used in this study. The findings indicated that the content, clarity and the time allocated for the pre-test and the post-test were suitable. The validity for the pre-test and the post-test were done through two senior English teachers.

#### **Findings And Discussion:**

1. Ho1: There is no significant difference between students in the experimental group and control group in their scores for phonemic awareness

**Table 1a:** Comparing of mean for phonemic awareness overall scores in the pre-test

Group	N	Mean	SD	Mean Difference	t-value	df	P value
Experimental	40	11.90	1.98	0.500	-.099	78	.218
Control	40	11.85	2.49				

Level of significance is at  $p < 0.05$

Table 1a shows the mean of overall scores for the phonemic awareness in the pre-test. The mean scores for the Experimental Group is 11.90 while the Control Group has a mean score of 11.85. Finding from the independence samples t-test revealed that

there is no significant difference between scores of the Experimental Group and the Control Group for the phonemic awareness in the pre-test ( $t = .099$ ,  $df = 78$ ,  $p = .218$ )

**Table 1b:** Comparing of mean for phonemic awareness overall scores in the post-test

Group	N	Mean	SD	Mean Difference	t-value	df	P value
Experimental	40	55.55	4.75	28.95	34.39	78	.001
Control	40	26.60	2.45				

Level of significance is at  $p < 0.05$

Table 1b explains the mean of overall scores for phonemic awareness in the post-test. The mean scores for the Experimental Group is 55.55, while the Control Group only has a mean score of 26.60. Findings from the independence samples t-test indicate that there is a significant difference between the mean scores of the Experimental Group and the Control Group for phonemic awareness in the post-test ( $t = 34.390$ ,  $df = 78$ ,  $p = .001$ ). Therefore, the findings reject the null hypothesis-1 and research objective 1 has been answered. These findings show that the usage of nursery rhymes in enhancing phonemic awareness significantly increased the students in the Experimental Group scores compared to those in Control Group who were taught using conventional method.

This findings correlate to Krashen (1982) input hypothesis. It states that for learning to take place, learners must receive interesting linguistic content which is at their level of competence or slightly above "comprehensible input ( $i+1$ ). In this study,

nursery rhymes could be seen as the comprehensible input as through rhyming that involved words and sound. Many chunks of useful language can be included into the learner's linguistic list at almost any age or proficiency level (Richard-Amato, 2003). This study also corresponds with Krashen's affective filter hypothesis, as learning pronunciation through an authentic song may prove to be less threatening and more meaningful and interesting. Children improved competence to listen before the development of speaking ability. Children enrich complex utterances at their early stages that are hard to imitate and produce. According to Asher (1964) a mental blueprint is made by the learner at this stage of listening which later helps him to produce spoken language.

2. Ho2: There is no significant difference between students in the experimental group and control group in their scores for noticing initial sounds.

**Table 2a:** Comparing of mean for noticing initial sounds overall scores in the pre-test

Group	N	Mean	SD	Mean Difference	t-value	df	P value
Experimental	40	4.10	1.37	-350	1.18	78	-.895
Control	40	3.75	1.32				

Level of significance is at  $p < 0.05$

Table 2a shows the mean of overall scores for noticing initial sounds in the pre-test. The mean scores for the Experimental Group is 4.10 while the Control Group has a mean score of 3.75. Findings from the independence samples t-test revealed that

there is no significant difference between scores of the Experimental and Control Groups for the noticing initial sounds in the pre-test ( $t = 1.181$ ,  $df = 78$ ,  $p = -.895$ ).

**Table 2b:** Comparing of mean for noticing initial sounds overall scores the post-test

Group	N	Mean	SD	Mean Difference	t-value	df	P value
Experimental	40	18.85	2.81	10.70	22.85	78	-.000
Control	40	8.15	.949				

Level of significance is at  $p < 0.05$

Table 2b shows the mean of overall scores for noticing initial sounds in the post-test. The mean scores for the Experimental Group is higher (18.85) than the Control Group (8.15). Findings from the independence samples t-test revealed that there is a strong significant difference between scores of the Experimental and Control Groups for noticing initial sounds in the post-test ( $t = 22.846$ ,  $df = 78$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Therefore, the findings thus reject null hypothesis-2 and research objective 2 has been answered. The finding shows and implies that the usage of nursery rhymes in enhancing phonemic awareness significantly enhanced the noticing initial sounds

scores of Experimental Group compared to the Control Group who were taught using conventional methods.

This findings correlate with the underlying concept of phonemic awareness as defined by Yopp (1992). All these processes were employed when the nursery rhymes were introduced. Consequently, students who were taught using nursery rhymes were familiar to sounds they learned from the nursery rhymes. For example, when students learned "Old McDonald Had A Farm", the teacher started the class by imitating the sound of a lamb "baa-baa-baa" then she changed with the

different sound of a cow “moo, moo, moo” and the sound of a duck “quak-quak- quak”. Hearing these sounds, students paid attention and focused on the teacher. This time, the teacher began telling the story of the nursery rhymes then started rhyming. The students were willingly following their teacher singing the nursery rhymes. In this positive mode to learn, the teacher introduced every single word with its initial sound such as: lamb /eI/; cow /k/; duck /d/; etc. The teacher pronounced “baa-baa-baa” while the students mentioned “a lamb”; the teacher spoke “moo-moo-moo” and the students responded “a

cow”; the teacher shouted “quak-quak-quak” and all the students stood up doing action like “a duck”. These were done repeatedly until finally all words and the initial sound was learned. In this case, listening is the key to a phonemic awareness especially for noticing initial sounds and this is the part of instructions that could not be skipped.

3. Ho3: There is no significant difference between students in the experimental group and control group in their scores for pronouncing of words.

**Table 3a:** Comparing of meanfor pronouncing of words overall scores in the pre-test

Group	N	Mean	SD	Mean Difference	t-value	df	P value
Experimental	40	3.85	1.27	-.225	-.774	78	.935
Control	40	4.08	1.33				

Level of significance is at  $p < 0.05$

Table 3a shows the mean for overall scores in pronouncing of words in the pre-test. The mean scores for the Experimental Group is 3.85 while the Control Group is 4.08 Findings from the

independence samples t-test revealed that there is no significant difference between scores of the Experimental and Control Groups for pronouncing words in the pre-test ( $t = -.774$ ,  $df = 78$ ,  $p = .985$ ).

**Table 3b:** Comparing of meanfor pronouncing of words overall scores the post-test

Group	N	Mean	SD	Mean Difference	t-value	df	P value
Experimental	40	18.00	2.21	7.725	15.57	78	.687
Control	40	10.28	2.23				

Level of significance is at  $p < 0.05$

Table 3b shows the mean for overall scores in pronouncing of words in the post-test. The mean scores for the Experimental Group is 18.00. It is higher than the Control Group which has a mean score of 10.28. Findings from the independence sample t-test revealed that there is a significant difference between scores of the Experimental and Control Groups for pronouncing words in the post-test ( $t = 15.571$ ,  $df = 78$ ,  $p = .687$ ) Therefore the findings thus reject null hypothesis-3 and research objective 3 has been answered. The usage of nursery rhymes significantly enhanced the pronouncing of the Experimental Group better and easier compared to the Control Group who were taught using the Conventional Method.

This findings also correlate with the underlying theoretical assumption of Krashen’s (1982) acquisition-learning hypothesis. The theory emphasizes that second language performance has two independent systems (Krashen, 1982). The first is the acquired system or acquisition, which is the product of the subconscious, like children acquiring their first language. In this case, learning nursery rhymes could be seen as a subconscious process which is needed by mostly children to be familiarized with new information or pronunciation

of words. The second is that they learned the system through the learning process, which is a conscious process derived from formal instruction. Introducing nursery rhymes in this study were initiated with a conscious process derived from formal instruction, when the teacher drew the students’ attention by telling a story embedded in the nursery rhymes. Once the interest had been aroused, students were gradually willing to practice pronouncing words through rhymes and singing the song. There was a gradual shift in which the conscious process became a subconscious one. Krashen (1982) stated that the acquisition, which in a subconscious process, is more significant than learning. In the course of this study, nursery rhymes may be able to provide the learner with the opportunity to concentrate on the sounds rather than the forms of their utterances themselves. The repetition of words in each lyric, the memorable rhymes and the communicable action provides an environment that reduces learning difficulties and nurtures learning. As a result, pronouncing of words is less difficult for young learners.

4. Ho4: There is no significant difference between students in the experimental group and control group in their scores for spelling of words.

**Table 4a:** Comparing of meanfor spelling words overall scores in the pre-test

Group	N	Mean	SD	Mean Difference	t-value	df	P value
Experimental	40	3.95	.986	-.075	-.304	78	.059
Control	40	4.03	1.21				

Level of significance is at  $p < 0.05$

Table 4a shows the mean of overall scores for phonemic awareness in spelling of words in the pre-test. The mean scores for the Experimental Group is 3.95 while the Control Group is 4.03. Finding from the independence samples t-test revealed that there is

no significant difference between scores of the Experimental Group and Control Group for the spelling of words in the pre-test ( $t = -.304$ ,  $df = 78$ ,  $p = .059$ ).

**Table 4b:** Comparing of meanfor spelling words overall scores in the post-test

Group	N	Mean	SD	Mean Difference	t-value	df	P value
Experimental	40	18.70	3.59	10.53	17.66	78	.000
Control	40	8.18	1.15				

Level of significance is at  $p < 0.05$

Table 4b shows the mean of overall scores for the spelling of words in the post-test. The Experimental Group obtains higher scores (18.70) than the Control Group (8.18). This shows that the findings revealed significantly different scores between the Experimental Group and Control Group in the post-test ( $t = 17.659$ ,  $df = 78$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Therefore the finding rejected the null hypothesis-4 and research objective 4 has been answered. These findings showed that the usage of nursery rhymes in enhancing phonemic awareness significantly enhanced the Experimental Group's in the spelling scores compared to the Control Group who were taught using conventional methods.

This finding is affirmed by Yopp. Yopp (1992; 2009) clarified an important distinction that phonemic awareness is not phonics but is auditory and does not involve words in print. Phonemic awareness is important because it teaches students to attend to sounds. It primes the connection of sound to print, gives students a way to approach spelling new words and it helps students understand the alphabetic principle. Letters in words are systematically represented by sounds. Teaching phonemic awareness is difficult as there are 26 letters in the English language. Though the number of phonemes vary across sources, there are approximately 40 phoneme sounds which are represented by 250 different spellings (e.g., /f/ as in ph, f, gh, ff). Phonemes are co-articulated, thus logical "sound units" are not readily apparent and must be taught. There are no "white spaces" between letters, syllables, or words.

### Conclusion:

This study has strong implications on the teaching and learning of English phonemic awareness in foreign language classrooms. The findings show that the use of nursery rhymes is an effective alternative method that can be used by

teachers to enhance the phonemic awareness among young Indonesian English learners. This method is able to improve students' achievement in the Experimental Group in phonemic awareness of all the three aspects i.e.: in noticing initial sounds, pronouncing and spelling of words correctly compared to the students in the Control Group who were taught using conventional methods. However, in the nursery rhymes method, the teacher is the main person who shoulders the responsibility of planning and implementing cooperative activities during the phonemic awareness learning. As such, teachers need training and exposure on how to carry out the activities based on this method before implementing the nursery rhymes. Besides, the nursery rhymes method also improve students' social skill significantly compared to those in the conventional method.

Students who were exposed to the nursery rhymes method possess several positive traits and values: tolerance, willingness to listen, support and help group members, responsibility and self-confidence. Moreover, the cooperation that develops among students during group singing strengthens their collaboration and improves their communicational skills. This skill is also important and supports their learning memorization because comprehending through repetition is very meaningful input for learning phonemic awareness. The finding of the study also serves as a guide to the Ministry of Education, in particular the teachers' training institution, to make the nursery rhymes method an important input for the pedagogical innovation of English language teaching at elementary schools. Modules (eight nursery rhymes) which are provided by the researcher can be used as models by English teachers in their English classes. This will also enrich understanding of theorists, academicians and policymakers by describing the comparative effect of



nursery rhymes with the conventional teaching method.

The effects of using nursery rhymes method in enhancing phonemic awareness were analysed in the teaching of English among Third Grade students in the elementary level. More research should be conducted to investigate the effects of using this method in a higher grade level. This study only involved 80 students and two teachers as participants. As such, it is essential to do further research using larger samples and different age groups to determine the effects of utilizing the nursery rhymes method in teaching phonemic awareness among young English learners in Indonesia. The analysis was only based on the quantitative data. As such, it is hoped that future research can also use qualitative data to investigate the effects of using nursery rhymes in enhancing phonemic awareness. Therefore, it is the researcher's hope that this study will encourage future researchers to further explore the use of nursery rhymes in the teaching of English to young Indonesian learners, as the current study has shown the potential implication in the teaching method.

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