

HEALTH VOCABULARY IN ENGLISH: INTRODUCING HOW TO APPLY HAND WASHING IN ENGLISH FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN TPA RADHATUL MAKMUR PRINGSEWU

KOSAKATA KESEHATAN DALAM BAHASA INGGRIS: PENGENALAN CARA MENERAPKAN CUCI TANGAN DALAM BAHASA INGGRIS UNTUK PENDIDIKAN ANAK USIA DINI DI TPA RADHATUL MAKMUR PRINGSEWU

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ABSTRACT

Early vocabulary acquisition is an important foundation for children's future literacy development and academic achievement. Simultaneously, introducing healthy lifestyle practices, such as handwashing, plays a crucial role in shaping preventive behaviors from an early age. This study examines the effectiveness of teaching health-themed English vocabulary through handwashing activities to early childhood children at Radhatul Makmur Kindergarten in Pringsewu, Indonesia. Using a narrative review approach and thematic synthesis methods, the study analyzed recent literature from leading academic databases, including Scopus, ERIC, and ScienceDirect. The results indicate that physical activity-based approaches, specifically Total Physical Response (TPR) and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), significantly strengthen vocabulary acquisition and retention and foster children's multisensory engagement. The integration of daily hygiene activities into language learning not only supports linguistic development but also contributes to character building and health awareness in children. These findings highlight the importance of contextual, experiential, interdisciplinary teaching strategies in early childhood education. The study recommends the development of a bilingual thematic curriculum that utilizes daily routines as a natural and meaningful means of language acquisition.

Keywords: Early Childhood, Language Acquisition, Integrated Learning, Handwashing, Health Vocabulary.

ABSTRAK

Penguasaan kosakata sejak dini merupakan landasan penting bagi perkembangan literasi dan prestasi akademik anak di masa mendatang. Secara bersamaan, pengenalan praktik hidup sehat, seperti mencuci tangan, memainkan peran krusial dalam membentuk perilaku preventif sejak usia dini. Penelitian ini mengkaji efektivitas pengajaran kosakata Bahasa Inggris bertema kesehatan melalui aktivitas mencuci tangan pada anak usia dini di TPA Radhatul Makmur Pringsewu, Indonesia. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan narrative review dan metode sintesis tematik, studi ini menganalisis literatur terkini dari database akademik terkemuka, termasuk Scopus, ERIC, dan ScienceDirect. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pendekatan berbasis aktivitas fisik, khususnya Total Physical Response (TPR) dan Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), secara signifikan memperkuat pemerolehan dan retensi kosakata serta menumbuhkan keterlibatan multisensori anak. Integrasi kegiatan kebersihan sehari-hari dalam pembelajaran bahasa tidak hanya mendukung perkembangan linguistik, tetapi juga berkontribusi terhadap pembentukan karakter dan kesadaran kesehatan anak. Temuan ini menyoroti pentingnya strategi pengajaran interdisipliner yang kontekstual dan berbasis pengalaman dalam pendidikan anak usia dini. Studi ini merekomendasikan pengembangan kurikulum tematik bilingual yang memanfaatkan rutinitas harian sebagai sarana akuisisi bahasa yang alami dan bermakna.

Kata Kunci: Anak Usia Dini, Akuisisi Bahasa, Pembelajaran Terintegrasi, Cuci Tangan, Kosakata Kesehatan.

1. INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary acquisition from an early age is a crucial foundation for children's language development, with long-term implications for their literacy and academic abilities. Five-year-olds typically have an expressive vocabulary of 2,100 to 2,200 words, and their receptive vocabulary can reach 20,000 to 24,000 words by age 6 (Vocabulary Development, n.d.). Longitudinal research shows that vocabulary acquisition from 16 to 24 months of age can explain up to 16% of the variation in vocabulary across elementary school, 18% in reading comprehension, and 11% in reading accuracy (Duff et al., 2015). Therefore, early linguistic intervention, including in a foreign language like English, is crucial to support optimal language development.

On the other hand, early childhood health education plays a crucial role in shaping children's character and hygiene habits. One example of an effective practice in health education is handwashing with soap. Data shows that this habit can reduce the risk of death from diarrhea by up to 50% and the incidence of acute respiratory infections by up to 25% (Hand Washing, n.d.). Implementing health education in early childhood education institutions has also been shown to significantly improve hygiene practices by 0.32 standard deviations (SD) (Austrian et al., 2021).

Interestingly, a learning approach that integrates thematic topics such as health with foreign language learning is known as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). CLIL allows children to learn meaningful content while acquiring foreign language vocabulary in a contextual and natural way. This approach is highly effective for early childhood because it supports multisensory learning and is oriented towards direct experience (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010). Integrating thematic learning, such as handwashing practices, into English learning activities can strengthen vocabulary mastery while fostering healthy lifestyle habits in children from an early age.

In the local context, Radhatul Makmur Daycare, located in Pringsewu Regency, Lampung, is one early childhood education institution with the potential to implement this integrative learning approach. With diverse social backgrounds and a passion for improving the quality of education, this daycare is the perfect location to explore the effectiveness of teaching health-themed English vocabulary through handwashing activities as part of the learning routine.

Although English language learning for early childhood has become a topic of considerable attention in the educational literature, approaches that integrate thematic vocabulary—particularly related to health—into children's daily activities have rarely been explored in depth. Particularly in the context of early childhood education in Indonesia, there is limited research explicitly examining the effectiveness of using routine activities such as handwashing as a means of learning English vocabulary. The majority of existing studies emphasize traditional approaches to language teaching or focus on basic literacy without integrating contextualized thematic content. Yet, everyday activities such as handwashing not only serve as hygiene practices but can also be utilized as an authentic and meaningful medium for introducing new vocabulary in contexts relevant to children's lives. This gap highlights the need for research that focuses more on experiential language learning strategies that combine language aspects and real-life content to support children's natural and holistic language development.

This research question was formulated to investigate the effectiveness of the use of health-themed English vocabulary implemented through handwashing activities in improving language acquisition in early childhood at Radhatul Makmur Pringsewu Daycare. The main focus of the research is on the contextual language acquisition process, where children learn language not only through memorizing words, but also through direct experience in meaningful daily activities. A multisensory approach involving visual, auditory, and kinesthetic aspects in handwashing activities is believed to strengthen the understanding and mastery of

new vocabulary naturally and effectively. Thus, this study aims to explore how the integration of English learning with routine health activities can have a positive impact on children's language skills in early childhood education environments.

This study has several interrelated main objectives and aims to provide both theoretical and practical contributions to the field of early childhood education, particularly in the context of thematic-based foreign language teaching. First, this study seeks to review and synthesize existing literature on teaching English vocabulary to early childhood through thematic activities relevant to everyday life, with a particular focus on health practices such as handwashing. Next, this study aims to analyze the effectiveness and relevance of various pedagogical approaches, including Total Physical Response (TPR), Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), and the Experiential Learning approach in the context of language learning integrated with physical activity and health aspects. In addition, this study also focuses on identifying supporting and inhibiting factors that play a role in the implementation of integrative learning that combines language and health aspects in early childhood education institutions. Based on these findings, this study will develop evidence-based recommendations that can be used as guidelines by educators, policymakers, and curriculum developers in designing and implementing foreign language learning strategies that are contextual, interactive, and appropriate to children's developmental stages. Finally, this research is expected to provide theoretical contributions in the development of thematic bilingual learning models, by highlighting the potential of daily activities as a natural and meaningful language acquisition medium for early childhood.

2. METHODS

2.1 Type of Review

This research uses an approach/narrative review with the thematic synthesis method (thematic synthesis). This approach was chosen to provide a deep and holistic understanding of the various empirical and conceptual findings scattered in the literature related to the topic of teaching English vocabulary with health themes to early childhood through handwashing activities. Narrative review allows researchers to integrate various theoretical and practical perspectives without the overly rigid limitations of quantitative methodological designs. Through thematic synthesis, this study identifies key themes emerging from the literature and connects them to relevant conceptual frameworks in language teaching, early childhood education, and health education.

2.2 Sources of Literature

A systematic literature search was conducted through various leading academic databases to ensure comprehensive and credible coverage. Primary sources included Google Scholar, ERIC (Education Resources Information Center), Scopus, and ScienceDirect. These four databases were selected because they provide access to reputable international journals and a wide range of scholarly publications in the fields of education, linguistics, and early childhood studies.

Inclusion criteria in literature selection includes:

- A study that discusses English language learning for early childhood, particularly related to thematic vocabulary.
- Research exploring health education in the context of early childhood.
- Studies that examine learning approaches such as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), Total Physical Response (TPR), and experiential learning.
- Publication that reviews routine-based learning in language education.

Exclusion criteria includes:

- Studies conducted at primary, secondary, or higher education levels that are not relevant to the context of early childhood.
- Research that does not focus on foreign language learning or that does not involve health thematic vocabulary as a major component.
- Popular non-scientific articles, opinions, or publications that have not gone through a peer-review process.

2.3 Review Procedure

The review process begins with the identification and selection of literature based on the title, abstract, and topic relevance to the research question. Articles that pass the initial selection process are then analyzed in depth to identify key themes, methodological approaches, and findings relevant to the study's focus. Subsequently, a content analysis of the selected articles was conducted using relevant theoretical frameworks, such as second language acquisition theory, experiential learning theory, and thematic and multisensory learning principles. Researchers grouped the literature findings into several thematic categories, such as the effectiveness of CLIL and TPR approaches, the integration of health content in language learning, and vocabulary teaching strategies based on daily activities. The entire process was carried out iteratively and reflectively to ensure that the resulting synthesis not only describes existing findings, but also provides new insights into effective and relevant teaching practices in the context of early childhood education in Indonesia.

3. RESULTS**3.1 Themes from the Literature****3.1.1. Routine-Based Language Learning Activities**

Routine-based language learning activities, such as handwashing, mealtime, or clean-up time, are recognized for their potential to provide meaningful contexts for language acquisition. These daily, predictable, and repetitive routines facilitate opportunities for incidental vocabulary acquisition as they immerse learners in rich linguistic input while reducing cognitive overload. The significance of embedding language in these familiar contexts is underscored by various studies in the field of second language acquisition.

Research highlights that the context and setting of learning significantly impact vocabulary acquisition. For example, the study by Hashim and Yunus emphasizes the correlation between school routines and second language learning, suggesting that consistent environments promote better comprehension and retention among learners (Hashim & Yunus, 2018). Similarly, Lee's work on game-enhanced learning environments suggests that attention, a component heightened in routine activities, is crucial for effective vocabulary acquisition and retention (Lee, 2022).

Moreover, the findings from studies on incidental vocabulary acquisition emphasize the role of context and engagement with language. Research by Elgort discusses the differences between deliberate and incidental learning, noting that vocabulary acquisition can occur without the explicit intention to memorize words, which aligns with the principles of natural language acquisition that routine-based activities employ (Elgort, 2010). The educational implications of such findings suggest that integrating language activities into routine practices is essential for optimizing vocabulary learning outcomes, reinforcing that daily actions serve not only functional purposes but also educational benefits.

Additionally, studies emphasize the importance of active engagement through these routine-based activities to enhance vocabulary acquisition. The qualitative insights provided by Rahul and Ponniah reveal that frequent exposure to language in varied contexts significantly influences vocabulary learning (Rahul & Ponniah, 2020). This aligns with findings by Laufer and Rozovski-Roitblat, which suggest that the nature of tasks, including daily routines or activities,

significantly affects the acquisition of vocabulary, supporting a comprehensive approach to utilizing routine contexts for enhanced language learning (Laufer & Rozovski-Roitblat, 2011). In summary, embedding language instruction within everyday routines can significantly enhance vocabulary acquisition processes. It offers learners a rich linguistic environment that captures their attention while minimizing cognitive load—ultimately leading to improved comprehension and retention during critical early learning stages.

3.1.2. Effectiveness of TPR (Total Physical Response) and CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning)

Total Physical Response (TPR) and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) are pedagogical approaches that significantly enhance language acquisition through active engagement and meaningful content integration. TPR has been highlighted for its efficacy in early childhood education by utilizing physical actions to create associations between language and movement, which can lead to improved retention of language skills in young learners (Wang, 2023). This kinesthetic learning approach is particularly effective as it involves students in physical activities, thus making learning more engaging, interactive, and enjoyable (Memon et al., 2023). Such an environment fosters language acquisition while supporting cognitive development by encouraging children to relate language to their physical actions (Puerto & Lacabex, 2017; .

On the other hand, CLIL represents a dual-focused method that integrates content learning with language instruction, effectively blending curricular subjects with language use (Yani et al., 2023; . This approach is notable for its ability to teach key subject material, such as health education or science, through the medium of a foreign language, thereby enhancing both language skills and subject comprehension simultaneously (Jiang et al., 2022; . Research indicates that when students are exposed to meaningful and context-rich content, they develop higher proficiency in both the subject matter and the target language. Specifically, studies have shown that learners in CLIL environments often demonstrate better oral production skills and a more profound grasp of content knowledge than their peers in non-CLIL settings (Puerto & Lacabex, 2017; (Dzulkurnain et al., 2024). CLIL's design inherently utilizes real-life scenarios and practical applications, which align well with the findings surrounding TPR, suggesting that both methodologies forge deeper connections between learners' linguistic and cognitive abilities (Wang, 2023).

Moreover, CLIL has been recognized for its ability to foster transversal skills among students, as it promotes collaborative learning, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence (Jiang et al., 2022; . The integration of language with subject content creates opportunities for learners to apply their language skills in contextually relevant situations, reinforcing both their linguistic capabilities and their subject knowledge (Dzulkurnain et al., 2024). The interplay between content and language in CLIL aligns with TPR in that both methods prioritize engaging learners through active participation and real-world application (Yani et al., 2023; Arnó-Macià & Barés, 2015). As such, both TPR and CLIL can be viewed as complementary techniques that enhance holistic educational experiences, particularly in multicultural and multilingual settings (Yani et al., 2023; Tokareva, 2018).

Given the benefits of these methodologies, educators are increasingly recognizing the importance of integrating physical movement in language instruction alongside teaching subject content in a foreign language (Jiang et al., 2022; Hussein, 2020). Thus, it becomes evident that both TPR and CLIL can be instrumental in supporting effective language learning by creating rich, interactive, and contextually meaningful educational experiences for learners across all ages.

3.1.3. Thematic Health Vocabulary in English Language Instruction

Teaching health-related vocabulary within early childhood education offers significant advantages by integrating linguistic development with familiar real-world contexts. Thematic units, such as "My Body" or "Healthy Habits," enhance vocabulary acquisition positively, as children can connect these new terms with their daily experiences and routines. Research indicates that when vocabulary is embedded in thematic contexts, it fosters not only linguistic competence but also a foundational understanding of health practices, promoting awareness at a young age (Tedick & Cammarata, 2012; .

In early childhood cognitive development, learning vocabulary related to health promotes sustained engagement and retention. Thematic approaches align with the cognitive reserve hypothesis, which posits that educational engagement contributes to cognitive skills throughout one's life (Tucker-Drob et al., 2009). By introducing thematic health vocabulary early on, educators nurture a child's linguistic and cognitive growth, ensuring that vocabulary knowledge is integrated and utilized effectively in different contexts (Hussein et al., 2022). This integration supports children's cognitive development processes, suggesting a significant correlation between early vocabulary acquisition and later cognitive abilities.

Furthermore, the instructional design of these thematic units can greatly influence language acquisition in young learners. By utilizing innovative pedagogical strategies and incorporating technology, educators can enhance language instruction effectiveness (Alian & Alhaj, 2023). Studies indicate that engaging instructional designs, which include vocabulary related to health themes, aid in vocabulary retention and cultivate critical thinking and problem-solving skills in students, thereby making language a bridge to broader learning outcomes (Öztürk & Günay, 2023).

Moreover, as children explore vocabulary through the lens of health routines and practices, they develop a holistic understanding of the importance of these terms beyond the classroom, cultivating lifelong healthy habits. This pedagogical approach aligns with the recognition of content-based instruction, which maintains that context-rich environments are crucial for language learning, thereby drawing parallels between vocabulary education and practical, real-life applications (Tedick & Cammarata, 2012; , Rutt & Mumba, 2022). In conclusion, the thematic approach to teaching health-related vocabulary in early education correlates with both cognitive development and practical health awareness among young learners. Integrating such vocabulary instruction effectively fosters not only language competence but also essential life skills, providing a foundation for both academic and personal growth.

3.1.4. Importance of Contextual and Multisensory Learning Environments

A multisensory learning environment is crucial for preschool-aged children as it aligns with their natural learning preferences and developmental stages. The integration of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic stimuli not only facilitates engagement but also enhances comprehension and retention of new concepts, particularly in areas such as foreign language acquisition and hygiene practices. Multisensory learning taps into different modalities, allowing for a richer educational experience that can accommodate varied learning styles.

One particularly relevant aspect of multisensory learning is the role of contextual diversity in vocabulary acquisition. Research indicates that varied contextual exposures can significantly impact children's ability to associate words with their meanings, particularly in the early stages of language learning. Hills et al. provide evidence for the importance of contextual diversity in language learning, indicating that varied contexts influence the cognitive processes involved in vocabulary acquisition (Hills et al., 2010). Furthermore, while Zang et al. discuss broader implications of context in learning, their findings do not specifically focus on vocabulary acquisition, necessitating a removal of their citation within this context (Zang et al., 2015).

Evidence from mobile-assisted language learning further supports the assertions regarding the effectiveness of contextualized learning environments. Chien et al. illustrate how mobile technologies can create interactive and engaging learning scenarios that extend contextual understanding beyond traditional classroom boundaries, making learning more relevant and immediate (Chien et al., 2022). This aligns with the work of Tan and So, who explore how physical affordances can enhance mobile learning experiences, ultimately fostering active participation and deeper understanding among learners (Tan & So, 2015).

Additionally, contextual and multisensory approaches have profound implications for teaching abstract concepts, such as hygiene practices. Dewi and Soemarwoto assert that incorporating context into learning makes experiences more relevant to students' lives, thereby fostering better understanding and retention of critical skills (Dewi & Soemarwoto, 2023). This suggests that a multisensory approach that incorporates context can effectively ground abstract concepts in real-world experiences, making them more relatable and easier to grasp for young learners. In summation, the integration of multisensory learning methods that leverage contextual diversity is essential for optimizing educational outcomes in preschool-aged children. This approach not only enhances linguistic acquisition but also aids in the understanding of abstract concepts, solidifying young learners' knowledge in a manner that is both engaging and effective.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Interpretation of Findings

Learning approaches that incorporate physical movement, such as Total Physical Response (TPR), have been shown to be effective in helping young children understand and remember new vocabulary. Research shows that physical activity, including the TPR method, increases student engagement and vocabulary recall. According to Gumiandari, TPR is beneficial in helping children learn to listen and master English vocabulary through activities involving movement (Gumiandari, 2021). Furthermore, research by Laurent et al. shows that physical engagement can significantly improve memory capacity in children, with movement activity positively related to vocabulary acquisition (Laurent et al., 2023). Physical actions in the context of TPR strengthen the connection between words and concrete actions, thus supporting long-term memory (Xie, 2021).

Beyond language acquisition, learning integrated with health values also contributes to the development of children's character. Teaching methods that integrate health values, such as handwashing, with language instruction not only facilitate the development of bilingual or multilingual language skills but also integrate the values of clean and healthy living into the learning process (Nur et al., 2022). This aligns with WHO guidelines on physical activity for children under five, which emphasize the importance of a balance between physical activity, sedentary behavior, and sleep for optimal health (Willumsen & Bull, 2020). Utilizing healthy physical activities in teaching can create a more engaging and educational learning environment for children, while instilling healthy habits from an early age (Holtermann et al., 2021).

From an educational perspective, it is crucial to train early childhood educators to be more effective in implementing physical activity in their learning processes. Research shows that appropriate education for educators can support their understanding of the importance of physical activity in the context of early childhood education (Nur et al., 2022). With a better understanding, educators can design curricula that not only promote academic achievement but also consider holistic character development (Dominguez & Garzón, 2024). This suggests that a learning approach that integrates health and physical activity not only improves language comprehension but also helps foster the formation of core values essential for child development (Zhang, 2024).

4.2 Implications for Early Childhood Education

These findings provide several important implications for the development of early childhood education. First, PAUD curricula need to be designed with a holistic approach in mind. Contextual language learning, which allows children to learn a foreign language through meaningful, hands-on experiences. This type of curriculum should integrate children's daily routines with language learning to create a natural and enjoyable learning experience. Second, it is crucial to provide specialized training to early childhood education (PAUD) teachers so they can integrate thematic vocabulary—especially related to health—into children's daily routines. This training should include active learning methods such as TPR, CLIL, and experiential learning, as well as the development of relevant teaching media. Third, the development of interactive teaching media such as English songs about hand washing, instructional videos, or visual posters in the classroom environment, can be an effective strategy in strengthening children's understanding and use of vocabulary. This media can also help create a multisensory learning environment that is conducive for early childhood children.

4.3 Limitations of Previous Studies

This review also identified several limitations that warrant attention. Most previous studies were short-term, thus failing to evaluate the long-term impact of using daily routines for early childhood foreign language learning. The lack of longitudinal studies makes it difficult to assess whether learning outcomes are sustained over time. Furthermore, the limited number of studies focusing on the local Indonesian context or on early childhood education institutions like TPA Radhatul Makmur Pringsewu indicates a research gap in understanding the specifics of the implementation of these practices in the field. Therefore, further studies in local contexts are urgently needed to produce more applicable recommendations tailored to the needs of Indonesian education.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary of Findings

This review highlights that the integration of English health-related vocabulary into routine hand washing activities can significantly enhance language acquisition in early childhood education settings. The thematic synthesis revealed that contextual and physically engaging routines, such as hand washing, provide a meaningful learning experience for young learners. These activities support vocabulary retention, foster multisensory engagement, and offer opportunities to combine language development with health education. The combination of Total Physical Response (TPR), Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), and experiential learning approaches was found to be particularly effective in promoting bilingual skills while reinforcing hygiene practices.

5.2 Research and Practical Implications

The findings underline the need for more empirical research focused on the Indonesian early childhood education context to validate and expand on the existing knowledge. Future studies should explore long-term impacts and assess learning outcomes across diverse educational settings. From a practical standpoint, early childhood curricula should incorporate integrated learning modules that blend language instruction with health education. Teacher training programs must also emphasize the importance of thematic vocabulary instruction and provide practical strategies for embedding English language learning within daily routines. Furthermore, the development of interactive teaching materials, such as English-language songs, posters, and educational videos, can enrich the learning environment and enhance student engagement.

5.3 Final Remarks

The integration of health routines and English language instruction in early childhood education represents a promising pedagogical innovation. By aligning vocabulary acquisition with character-building activities like hand washing, educators can foster both cognitive and social-emotional development in young learners. This holistic approach not only supports language proficiency but also instills lifelong hygiene habits and positive values, laying the foundation for well-rounded and globally competent individuals.

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