

Article

Intonation and Articulation: An Early Childhood Vocalization Method

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the role of the vocalization method in improving intonation and articulation skills in early childhood. Vocalization as form of singing training is one form of training that is considered effective for use at all ages. This research uses a qualitative method with a case study approach. The case study was conducted at Pre-School X with two vocal teachers. The result show that the vocalization method creates a very significant effect in improving intonation and articulation skills because this method gives freedom and feels fun for early childhood. On the other hand, this method also succeeds in improving children's focus when learning intonation and articulation because they do not have to divide their attention with foreign meanings and words. Therefore, the study successfully showed that the vocalization method is very effective in improving intonation and articulation skills in early childhood.

Keywords: Vocalizing; intonation; articulation; early childhood; music

1. Introduction

The golden age is a very crucial time for children to grow optimally and open up all kinds of opportunities in the future based on the abilities that have been nurtured from an early age [1]. If children are able to maximize their potential during their golden years, they will have extraordinary abilities later in life. This is due to the high development of children's brains during this period, which reaches 80% of adult capacity [2]. On the other hand, high brain plasticity also supports children's memory to be deeper and longer term. Thus, this is the best time to absorb various stimuli including sound, language, tone, rhythm and movement.

One activity that can naturally and enjoyably support this development is singing. Singing can not only help individuals to relax stress, but can actually be a means of expression and communication [3]. Through singing activities, children train their speech, pronunciation, and hearing skills. Singing also encourages children to recognize rhythms, sound patterns, and emotional dynamics implied in songs, which indirectly enriches their cognitive and emotional abilities [4]. Singing activities are often done in groups, so children also learn about social interaction, cooperation, and understanding their turn to speak.

This is very important in shaping children's character as communicative and empathic individuals. When these activities are done in a structured and sustainable manner, children can show significant development, not only in vocal skills, but also in the aspects of courage to perform in public, perseverance, and discipline [5]. Furthermore, children can grow up with various expectations in the future such as great achievements and self-development opportunities.

There are two important aspects in singing, namely intonation and articulation. Intonation is the accuracy of tone when singing, while articulation is the clarity in pronouncing lyrics and words [6]. Good intonation correlates with the child's conformity when singing songs to certain notations. This is very important not only for the beauty of the song but more than that, the accuracy of intonation can train musical hearing or *ear training* and foster the ability to recognize *pitch* patterns or *pitch recognition* [7]. A professional singer certainly needs to have sensitivity to *pitch*, interval, and good melody in order to support performance when performing. By having good intonation skills, children will be more confident to continue to be creative so that they can reach their optimal potential.

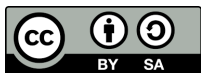
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On the other hand, articulation also plays a very important role in a singing career. Besides being useful for conveying messages with the right meaning, articulation can also train fine oral muscles because it involves coordination of lips, tongue, jaw, and breathing [8]. Articulation training makes children more aware of the sounds of language, the rhythm of sentences, and the rhythm of words. This supports phonological skills and early literacy so that children will have good communication skills in the future and be able to perform songs with good appreciation.

However, in practice, many young children still experience difficulties in controlling the pitch and pronunciation of lyrics clearly [9]. This is due to a lack of experience and evaluation, especially if they are not guided with methods that are appropriate for their developmental stage. Therefore, it is very important to be able to find the right method so that the development of early childhood which is in the golden period can be optimized in the hope that they will have a glorious future in the future.

The vocalization method is one approach that is often used in the world of music education, especially in basic vocal learning. This is because through vocalization, children will practice vocals in a structured manner such as tone matching, sound imitation, and syllable repetition, which can be embedded in song-based play activities [10]. This method helps children explore vocal range, improve breath control, and build coordination between the organs of hearing and speech in a fun and interactive way. Vocal training using the vocalization method allows children to practice without having to focus on meaning, so they can focus on tone [11]. In addition, its flexible nature makes this method not boring to use. Teachers can adjust the tone level based on the needs of the child so that learning using vocalization method does not burden children with certain demands, but they can enjoy the learning process according to their capacity.

On the other hand, this method is also very visible for teachers to measure the level of success of children in learning. Just as intonation development can be seen from the level of pitch precision, articulation development can also be seen directly through the clarity of vocal sounds. This makes it very easy for teachers to analyze the problems that occur to their students and then develop solutions that suit the needs of each individual [12]. Music learning will also be in accordance with their respective portions and not burden each other. Therefore, this method is considered very effective in improving the intonation and articulation skills of children who should still be in the developmental stage so that later children have strong vocal control.

In dealing with early childhood, a special approach is needed so that they are not bored when learning to sing and develop themselves. The learning process should be fun, structured and effective to ensure that children are in a comfortable learning environment to follow [13]. This method can be integrated into singing activities as a form of audio-oral stimulation that blends with children's fine motor and language development [14]. Unfortunately, despite the increasing use of vocalization methods in music education, there is limited academic focus on vocalization methods specifically aimed at improving intonation and articulation in early childhood singing. Yet understanding how vocalization techniques affect intonation and articulation in early childhood is crucial, not only for music educators but also for early childhood teachers and caregivers who want to incorporate music-based strategies in language development.

Research related to the application of vocalization to early childhood is currently minimal even though it is important for their newly formed cognitive and motor development. Through this research, it is hoped that an effective vocalization method can be found and in accordance with the characteristics of early childhood development, especially in honing intonation and articulation skills when singing. Therefore, this research seeks to explore how vocalization can be optimized to improve intonation and articulation in singing activities, especially for early childhood, which is currently not widely developed. As such, this research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of structured vocal exercises in supporting children's holistic communication and musical growth during their most formative years. In addition, this research may also support formal and non-formal school teachers' understanding of intonation and articulation development for young children.

2. Proposed Method

This research uses a qualitative type with a field research approach. This method was chosen because the data is expected to be not only confirmative, but explorative. This was done with the consideration that research related to the vocalization method to improve

intonation and articulation skills has not been done much. For this reason, research is needed that is practically and theoretically reliable to understand the needs of the research subjects. Therefore, this research will be conducted with a case study so that understanding related to the needs of students can be more in-depth [15]. This research will be conducted at Pre-School X class K1, which consists of 10 learners. This school was chosen with the consideration that Pre-School X is a formal school that has progressively provided adequate musical learning to students. Thus, it can be assumed that the learners in the school have a superior capacity compared to other schools that have not provided music learning.

In addition to involving students as the main informants of the research, the author also relies on teachers who are involved in learning. This was done to ensure that the data obtained was not only valid and reliable, but also varied enough with richer perspectives. Due to the need for exploratory field data, this research requires data collection techniques with in-depth interviews with research subjects for primary data. On the other hand, secondary data will be obtained through a review of previous scientific research available from various credible sources. For data presentation, this research will utilize the [16] data analysis technique which consists of three steps: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Finally, confirmation of data validity is done by triangulating sources and methods, which in this research is done through a review of scientific literature and assessment through field observation methods.

3. Results and Discussion

The mastery of intonation and articulation is an important foundation in the development of early childhood oral language skills. These two aspects not only contribute to the clarity of verbal communication, but are also early indicators of children's readiness to acquire language literacy, including reading and writing in the future [17]. A structured vocalization process can be an effective approach in stimulating these two elements simultaneously. Intonation provides nuances of meaning and emotion in speech, while articulation ensures clarity and accuracy of information delivery. When these two aspects are integrated in a consciously designed and contextualized vocalization method, the results can be very significant in supporting children's communication development.

One of the strategies used to improve singing ability is vocal training referred to as vocalization [18]. This is not only applied to adults who are doing vocal coaching as professionals, but to all age categories with various specific objectives. In early childhood, training is done by paying attention to weak aspects so that this method is more likely to make them achieve the basic foundations in singing, namely the accuracy of intonation and articulation. This is important because these two factors will fundamentally affect a child's singing ability from an early age until the future. Observations show that children begin to be sensitive to tonal variations from the age of 2-3 years [19]. They are able to distinguish between question, command, or invitation sentences just from the pattern of the rise and fall of the voice.

This phenomenon opens up opportunities for teachers and parents to use intonation as a lively learning tool. For example, by using facial expressions, gestures, and rhythmic emphasis when telling stories, children learn not only about sentence structure, but also about the social and emotional context of what is being said [20]. Therefore, vocal training with the vocalization method can be an effective means of improving their singing quality in the future. This is in line with the expression of one of the informants in this study.

"The vocalizing method is usually used so that children are not fixated on the song first because it is more difficult to fall. So if they are vocalizing, they just practice tone and articulation, don't go too far first. They just need the basics of singing because they are not going to perform yet." (AN, 2025)

AN's statement shows that in practice, the vocalization method is used in training basic singing skills. This method can make it easier for students to achieve the basic values needed by a singer such as the ability to adjust intonation and articulate words well. This can support a more thorough singing ability because without the fulfillment of these two aspects, a singer cannot be categorized as a good singer. Understanding intonation will affect vocal beauty so if this is missed, the singer will lose the main essence of the singing activity [21]. Furthermore, when articulation in singing sounds poor, it can create the impression that the singer is less professional and has not been able to convey the meaning of the song to the audience. As such, the credibility of the singer will be questioned which ultimately impacts on a stunted future career.

With an approach based on music, singing, simple poetry and voice games, children are encouraged to experiment with their own voices. Activities such as repeating rhyming words, singing songs with a certain rhythm, or following speech models from teachers or parents have been found to be effective in increasing phonological awareness as well as fine motor coordination of the speech apparatus [22]. On the other hand, the vocalization method also allows early childhood to avoid stress due to the pressure of understanding songs that are less familiar to children. This was also conveyed by informant DA during the interview.

"Sometimes in early childhood, if they are given to learn directly to the song, they divide their focus between the tone and the lyrics. Finally, both are not optimal, so we use vocalizing so that they focus on learning one by one first." (DA, 2025)

The limitations of early childhood in receiving and processing information make them more vulnerable to problems in singing. At a young age, they are still learning to mature their cognitive abilities so information must be processed according to their capacity. A simpler method of vocalization that is not concerned with the meaning of the words in it allows early childhood to understand the main purpose of singing training. They are only focused on learning how to adjust intonation without having to try to understand the meaning behind a word again. This is very important, as understanding the meaning is very complex and will take a lot more attention and effort for children to understand. Thus, the vocalization method allows them to focus on the fundamentals that suit their capacity such as intonation and articulation.

In addition, the fun factor and threat-free atmosphere are important elements in the success of this method. Children absorb information more easily when they are happy and not burdened with performance targets [23]. Therefore, the design of vocalization activities based on play, exploration and spontaneous response tends to be more effective than repetitive and monotonous drill methods. Informant AN considered that the vocalization method can be very effective because it puts less pressure on the child.

"Yes, actually with vocalizing, the children are able to do it more quickly. They are also not *pressured* with strange song targets. Vocalizing allows children to express themselves more freely when practicing intonation. Because they are not bound by rules like in songs. Instead, they can enjoy their singing practice more." (AN, 2025)

The vocalization method gives children more freedom to explore their abilities when learning intonation and articulation. When they learn a song, there are various demands that bind them so that they are not free to explore abilities that have not yet emerged due to limited rules. However, when children are freed from these rules, it is possible for them to have the space and opportunity to explore new potentials. On the other hand, training using vocalization methods that tend to be free allows children to enjoy the process of learning intonation and articulation. When people learn something without pressure, it allows them to absorb the learning process to its fullest potential [1]. Therefore, the vocalization method can be a more effective solution in overcoming the difficulties of early childhood practicing proper intonation and articulation. On the other hand, the *carry-over* effect of this method is very interesting. This is in accordance with the data submitted by informant DA during the interview.

"In my opinion, vocalizing not only improves intonation and articulation skills, but there is an additional result, which is an increase in self-confidence. Children who have good articulation and intonation skills as children, will feel confident and more enthusiastic about learning." (DA, 2025)

When children practice vocalization through fun activities such as singing or playing sound games, they not only learn how to pronounce words correctly, but also build confidence to use language actively [24]. This creates a positive loop in that the more a child speaks and expresses, the more feedback they get from the environment, which in turn strengthens their overall language skills. In addition, the vocalization method is part of multisensory stimulation. Rhythm, sound color and accompanying physical movements work together to create a holistic experience that supports language acquisition. This is in line with the principle of *embodied cognition*, which is the theory that the processing of language and its meaning does not only occur in the brain, but also involves the body and concrete experiences. Thus, vocalization is not just a sound exercise, but also an interrelated cognitive and motor exercise.

4. Conclusions

The vocalization method can improve intonation and articulation skills in early childhood. This is related to the flexible nature of this method where children can explore their abilities holistically without having to think about bound rules that make the singing process feel stressful. As a side note, interdisciplinary collaboration can also be a productive strategy. Working with a speech therapist, child psychologist or music therapist can help design a more comprehensive vocalization program that is tailored to the needs of individual children and groups. It also opens up space for the development of more valid and reliable evaluation instruments to measure the impact of this method. With all its potential, intonation and articulation-based vocalization methods deserve more attention in the world of early childhood education. Not only as a means of language development, but also as a foundation for children's abstract thinking, self-expression, and social skills. With the right approach, vocalization can be an entry point for children to explore the world through their own voices, while building a strong linguistic identity early on.

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