

# Applying Children's Songs in the Mother Tongue in Early Childhood Education in Tanzania: Educational Implications

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## **Abstract**

*This qualitative study investigated how songs can reflect cultural values to enhance children's participation in learning in early childhood education (ECE) in Tanzania. The focus of this study was to examine the application of mother tongue songs for children and teachers in the learning process as a vital component of their holistic development. To accomplish this goal, the study employed purposive sampling to select 18 respondents, strategically targeting individuals who could provide rich and relevant insights. A case study design was adopted to enable an in-depth exploration of the research context. Data collection methods included classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis, which together offered a comprehensive view of the pedagogical practices under investigation. Anchored in Social Learning Theory, the study examined how songs can facilitate learning by enabling students to observe and imitate behaviours aligned with specific instructional goals. The data were meticulously coded and organised into coherent patterns, categories, and themes, allowing for a nuanced interpretation of the findings within the theoretical framework. The findings revealed that the use of songs in the mother tongue language is the most effective tool for children's increased participation in classroom interaction in early childhood education (ECE). Songs offer numerous opportunities for children to acquire language skills and express their ideas and feelings, enabling them to communicate effectively with others. The study recommends that professional development for preprimary teachers should focus on the provision of effective music skills, and this should be conducted regularly to prepare them with appropriate knowledge and skills. Exploring the use of children's songs will allow teachers to provide effective feedback, which will, in turn, boost children's learning and enhance performance in ECE.*

**Keywords:** Songs, mother tongue, learning, early childhood education

## **Introduction**

Songs are part of children's growth and development. Studies show that children enjoy songs and can participate in musical activities on many levels of education (Gruenhagen, 2012; Juaristi et al, 2024; Jennings & Delamont, 2025). Children learn songs through the process of enculturation and

socialisation. Enculturation is a process by which an individual acquires cultural understanding that occurs in both informal and formal settings. In contrast, socialisation is a deliberate process by which an individual learns and adapts acceptable societal norms, values, and roles (Juaristi et al., 2024).

Enculturation in early childhood is a crucial process that enables a child to construct their cultural identity and adopt a set of cultural traits that reflect the social reality of their society. Children start to learn songs in the culture in which they are born, although the process of enculturation and socialisation is undertaken at home and later at school. Parents use songs in their home language when rearing and working with children from the earliest age, not only to stimulate musical skills but also to create mutual communication between them and their children (Selmani, 2024).

Children's singing within their cultural songs has been found among children speaking different mother tongues. This is because some of the song words and phrases used by them have a greater influence of their mother tongue, with content integrated into their early education and environment. Songs have always been an indispensable part of learning and education. Therefore, Futonge is right when he says that song education in a mother is as old as music itself (Futonge, 2005). Learning cultural practices through songs has been recognised as a key indigenous method of training in traditional African communities, particularly in early childhood education.

Ruokonen et al (2021) assert that a song is a piece of music with words that is sung in a communal wellbeing integrated in a creative activity (Marsh, 2017) where children are gathered together to sing in a tuned language, which produces joy and strengthens their learning self-confidence. This suggests that songs possess a rich language package that reflects a culture's shared values, responsibility, and specific features of spoken language with other language skills. Thus, songs can form the basis for many lessons (Futonge, 2005), and through the process of socialisation, cultural knowledge and skills can be transmitted to children.

Singing is a social practice that children acquire through parents' interaction (Damsgaard et al, 2025). Early interaction with songs through the mother tongue has been positively affecting the quality of all areas of children's lives and learning (Esimone, 2012). This is because children's exposure to songs during the early years enhances the learning process upon which language learning is built. When children sing songs in their mother tongue, they also learn various issues such as language skills, traditional games and exploring the real world.

Some scholars show that once children go to school, they acquire knowledge through a new language that is built on what has already been learned (Shaw, 2016; Saka, 2025). However, the mother tongue is the first language accepted by most children. Therefore, the use of mother tongue songs in early childhood education should not be ignored, as they are the songs that preschool children are most familiar with and apply. Such songs are fun and can add to a child's vocabulary and abilities to communicate.

Songs are products of cultural practices (Kramer, 2012), and as a cultural communication together with language (Kalinde & Vermeulen, 2016). In education, traditional songs are often introduced to children in order to help them develop certain knowledge from their original culture. For example, through singing songs, children may learn cultural content and language. According to Shaw (2016), songs provide knowledge that serves as a bridge between their life experiences within and outside the classroom. Therefore, learning through songs in a language that children are not familiar with has been debated amongst scholars as contributing to the obstacle of learning among children (Diop, 2000). Although some scholars accept that learning does not always involve a familiar language, it is through a familiar language that most of the considered ideas are shown and expressed (Bodrova & Leong, 2007).

When an unfamiliar language is used in the instructional process, children struggle to assimilate the meaning of new words with what they already know (Diop, 2000). This situation appears to have a negative impact on successful children, hindering the implementation of changes in their early childhood education. Most importantly, the analysis reveals that using languages other than one's mother tongue may have a negative impact on globalisation, potentially eroding cultural values. However, it is unclear whether children have been involved in using songs in learning across different cultures.

Benson (2005) argues against the notion that using mother tongue songs in education facilitates effective interaction between teachers and children. According to her, this approach does not necessarily eliminate the need for teachers to translate pedagogical content, nor does it guarantee that children will easily associate the meanings of the themes with the content they are learning. Songs serve as a tool that helps children learn easily. More specifically, songs are believed to be able to motivate students during the learning process. This is because songs are affective, cognitive and linguistic resources. When children sing songs, they indirectly or directly learn something. Children enjoy singing songs in their mother tongues. Using these

songs can create a meaningful shift from the routine of using the first language to instructional language. In classroom interactions, songs are highly effective motivators for both teachers and children and can play a significant role in the development of learning. However, songs may be applied quite ineffectively, and their potential for language learning might not be realised.

There is abundant evidence which proposes that songs are a product of cultural practices that influence children's overall learning in childhood (Kramer, 2012; Shaw, 2016; Selmani, 2024). However, little has been done about the application of songs in the mother tongue and how these songs influence children's learning in early childhood education in Tanzania. Therefore, this study investigates the potential of children's songs in their mother tongue as a pedagogical tool in early childhood education.

### ***Theoretical framework***

The study regarded social learning theory as significant for explaining how songs can be useful in the teaching and learning process. Bandura (1986) proposes in his theory of social learning that there are several types of learning, rather than just one single way; imitation is one of them. Bandura also explains that songs may be a privileged coordinator of cognitive processes, especially among children, as singing creates interaction and communication with others who provide a modelling construction. In this way, knowledge, skills and behaviours develop through modelling. Bandura's theory provides teachers with guidance on how to use songs in teaching and learning. The theory shows that children are naturally motivated to learn songs from one another. This is achieved through observation learning, a process that involves watching others, imitating their performed songs, and later modelling the observed songs. Songs can be used to facilitate knowledge among children in classroom interaction and around the world where children live. The theory, through content analysis, further helps to show how children's songs in the mother tongue can reflect culture and increase learners' overall participation through observing, imitating, and modelling in the process of learning. The songs were further categorised, for example, interpreted and explained to give answers on how children's songs in the mother tongue are used in the classroom.

Songs are an essential factor because they carry language themes in imparting the curriculum content (Shin, 2017). It is through songs that children communicate with their teachers, a process that facilitates meaningful interaction. While it is true that songs vary in terms of cultural diversity, the only factor that should be considered when selecting these

songs is whether they are developmentally appropriate to children and relevant to their learning development.

### **Methodology**

This study used a qualitative approach to examine teachers' perceptions of their use of songs in enhancing children's development in all early childhood education topics. This approach was beneficial due to its ability to allow the researcher to understand and interpret children's songs in their mother tongue, and because it involves data typically collected in participants' natural settings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The study was conducted in Mara region at two schools, namely, Mazami Primary School and Butiama Primary School. The district was chosen for this study because it is a primarily rural society consisting of numerous ethnic groups (Massamba, 1986). Until recently, early childhood socialisation was primarily managed through community-based song structures, which have a long history of engaging multilingual children. The study involved a total of 18 participants. Two purposively sampled preschools were selected, with one being drawn from an urban setting (Butiama) and another from a rural setting in the Butiama district. Purposive sampling was used to select 8 preschool teachers who participated in the study, with 4 teachers per school. Again, 8 children, with 4 teachers per school and 2 parents, were involved in the study. Teachers and children were the key research participants in enabling communication and were thus considered to be able to inform about the application of children's songs in their mother tongue. Participants were purposively chosen due to the role they usually play in enabling children to use songs in their mother tongues for learning.

Data were collected through interviews and observation, using both written information and oral voice recordings, as well as field notes extracted from teachers and children. Literature suggests that interviews offer an opportunity to uncover previously unknown information, such as local customs and informants' perspectives on the topic under investigation (Kim & Riley, 2014). This study employed interviews and observations as primary data collection methods. Children's interactions were recorded using audio devices, and the resulting data were analysed using thematic analysis. This facilitated the process of classifying and analysing themes extracted from the collected data. Interviews with pre-primary teachers and children were conducted to collect their opinions about the application of mother tongue songs to children's acquisition of knowledge. Informal and formal observations were conducted to capture the performed songs. Interviews and

observation were conducted at the classes to ensure the participants' freedom and to share their experiences without fear of being heard by others.

### **Findings and Discussion**

In this section, the findings from the field on how children's songs in the mother tongue can be applied in early childhood education in Tanzania are presented, analysed, and discussed. However, it was observed that there were many occasions when learning could take place through songs. These include enhancing the children's play, thereby making songs a powerful learning tool in their developmental lives. Children's songs in their mother tongue provide an integral part of learning opportunities. Shin (2017) notes that songs aid body movement in much of their singing. Jiříčková et al (2025) further observe that songs and movement in African settings are interrelated. Hasanah (2024) adds that learning songs through movement is very important as it enables children between 2 and 5 years to exercise the necessary motor control required for dancing. Consequently, children get exploratory and self-directed movement experiences as they grow up. This informed the present study, particularly regarding the songs that utilise appropriate mother tongue songs for children at different developmental stages. This situation provides a basis for the use of songs as a means of learning in early childhood education. Similarly, this study focused on how songs are helpful for pre-primary education. In that context, this section presents the findings of the study based on the sub-themes.

### **Songs as Pedagogical Tools**

Based on oral interviews, the researcher gathered the following information: the participants expressed their concerns that songs in early childhood classrooms could be used to improve children's communication skills, as this motivates them to be expressive and helps them understand lessons during the teaching and learning process. Furthermore, through songs, children discover how the songs express some facts in society and how they arouse greater human values, bringing refreshment and beauty to the lives of the children. Concerning this, one of the teachers said:

Songs have influence and meaning that go beyond words. They have the ability to share knowledge with children and provide the best learning experiences in their early childhood. For example, singing a lullaby while shaking a baby stimulates early language development and supports body movement in space (Interview with the teacher)

The quotation above reveals that songs are highly motivational and can have a relaxing effect on the children and participants. Thus, enjoying success-oriented song activities makes children feel better about themselves in the

learning process. The researcher aimed to investigate whether singing songs in the mother tongue could provide opportunities for parents at home and teachers at school to significantly contribute to helping children feel good about themselves and their learning processes. Regarding this, some participants indicated that:

#### Student 1

I am not good at singing English songs. But I know how to sing Kiswahili songs, and I can teach my friends how to sing them easily and learn a new song in front of others in a class, or with my friend in public (Interview with the student 1)

#### Teacher 2

I have no music background, and that is why I mostly share CDs with my fellow teacher. All we do is to understand the meaning of a given song and translate it for children's learning for our class through performing actions. I have been teaching children for more than 20 years. So I understand what children want to enjoy through songs. Possibly, we need in-service training seminars to be able to use music in our teaching and learning processes! (Interview with student 2)

The quotations above indicate that, although preschool teachers regularly use songs in their daily practice, this study found that many lacked formal music training. This was evident in their limited proficiency in essential musical skills. As an alternative, these teachers were observed to use story songs, children's songs in their mother tongue, because they had limited skills in music. Moreover, they were using recorded songs to support them in presenting selected themes to children in the lessons. Such a pedagogical process revealed their teaching experience.

The results also add evidence to Jiang (2024)'s findings, which revealed that teachers' instruction is affected not only by music skills brought through professional training courses and music skills brought through experience in the child's pre-school setting, but also by the connections between these two settings. It means that teachers' experience during teaching practice promotes children's learning and building self-efficacy. Social Learning theory suggests that vicarious experience of observing a teacher like a model can also have a strong influence on building self-efficacy. Hasanah (2024) suggests that locomotor skills, such as singing, jumping, throwing and catching objects, can lay the groundwork for effective teaching.

#### ***Songs Demonstrate Mastery of Early Language Skills***

This theme examined the extent to which songs supported the development of early language skills. The findings indicated that the song words were

rooted in specific languages, thereby fostering both linguistic development and the transmission of cultural values. Thus, melodies, harmonies and rhythms do help children to learn phrases, recognise rhyming patterns, and understand context. This study observed further that children sang melodies about body parts, for example:

<b><i>Urwembo</i></b>	<b><i>Title of the Song (English Translation)</i></b>
Gwata umwutwe gwazo	Touch your head
Taza hase	Stamp down
Luta zengebho	Pull your clothes
Tema amabhoko	Clap your hands
Kita otagamba	Shut up your mouth

The song above suggests that songs influence children's language as well as physical and motor development skills. A similar observation was made by Fisher (2001), who argued that both cultural and musical practices influence a child's learning. Songs as part of music help children to remember and understand language vocabulary more effectively. Additionally, singing songs can help children develop pronunciation with natural intonation skills. In this way, children's songs through their mother tongue make learning very fun, therefore, building their language abilities.

As observed, the syllabus for preschool education requires teachers to teach children specific competencies in listening, conversing, reading, writing, and communicating in various contexts. This observation particularly supports the arguments of Shin (2017) that songs have been shown to improve language skills and are considered a vital part of teaching and learning in early childhood education. By teaching children through songs, teachers can use participatory communication, thus imparting new knowledge to children.

### ***Songs on Listening Skills***

During interviews and observations with primary school teachers from Butiama and Mazami, it was found that children enjoyed reciting songs because the content helped them grasp the meanings of new words or phrases in context. It was reported that songs had content relevant to the teachers' intended curriculum. For example, the following song, "Nana amanji", that the study observed children singing, was translated and then discussed for its role in children's learning:

<b><i>Nana amanji</i></b>	<b><i>Give me water (English Translation)</i></b>
Nana amanji, niteke ubhusara	Give water, I want to cook porridge
Obhusara bhwani, bhunogere kisi	My porridge is prepared well



Nana amanji, nombake amagina  
Amagina gani, gombakile inyumba

Give me water, I want to prepare  
bricks  
My bricks have built a house

The song above implies that teachers use songs whose content talks about sanitation, about food and the importance of accommodation. This song's content suggests the positive perceptions held by teachers of children not only in delivering curriculum content, but also in supporting them in language learning. Thus, pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening to a song are effective classroom activities in vocabulary building in language development.

During observation, various aspects of listening comprehension through songs were identified as aiding in developing accurate content based on the teacher's selection of coherent lesson plans. However, choosing suitable songs depended on the learning objectives as well as the relevance and flexibility of the selected texts. This indicates that careful listening exercises, from the simplest to the most complex songs, anticipate key skills when designing a lesson focused on listening ability. It was also observed that songs effectively engaged children because they are a natural and enjoyable part of their everyday lives. Children listen to songs or sing along with teachers or other children. There were songs with themes emphasising the importance of social context, singing with family and family friends through pretend play. For example, the following song, "Ninatembea", reveals this theme.

***Nasimeza (Nimetembea)***

Nasimeza mpaka mmahoru  
Nakolalaga ha sagala ×2  
Nale na nke wane na bhana bhane  
Tokolalaga bila kolya ×2  
Mzazi wangu kama hunipendi  
Sipendi uniseme ×2  
Nale na nke wane na bhana bhane  
Tokolalaga bila kolya ×2

***I have walked (English Translation)***

I have walked up to the bushes  
I slept without eating ×2  
I am with my wife and children  
We slept without eating ×2  
My parent, if you don't like me  
I don't like you to talk against me ×2  
I am with my wife and children  
We slept without eating ×2

The above song "Nasimeza" was observed to have been commonly used by some teachers at Mazami and Butiama. This song was observed to allow children to listen to some selected pedagogical content related to their lesson. For example, children were observed to listen to and repeat certain words from the song lyrics after the singer or teacher repeated them multiple times until they learned something. Esimone (2012) considers that songs

complement listening instruction because language, especially that of children, has words, rhythm and melody.

This popular song “*Nasimeza*” in the mother tongue suggests that songs help to improve the listening skills of children because they are delivered with listening skills in the form of intonation and rhythm. When translated into English, the song can evoke strong emotional responses. According to Bandura (1986), in his theory of social learning, songs act as a reinforcement component that can lead to the children’s retention of what has been learned and increase lesson concentration. Some teachers believe that songs in the form of call and response have a profound impact on children’s brains, as singing children’s songs in their mother tongue effectively works in their memory and serves as a pedagogical tool to reinforce classroom interaction.

### *Songs on Speaking Skills*

Data collected through observation revealed that children were frequently required to learn how to create intonation sounds that needed continuous practice. Teachers in Mazami and Butiama pre-primary schools were observed using group drills. However, this type of movement was rarely interesting for the children, as another teacher-respondent confidently stated that they had used one of their captured songs adapted from a children’s tune. The song “Nana amanji” that teachers were using in their teaching was adapted from popular songs in the mother tongue. The song could be used effectively to teach Swahili rhythm and stress. The English adaptation of this popular children’s song helps build children’s confidence in singing. Its familiar rhythm encourages participation and supports accurate pronunciation by reinforcing natural stress patterns in English. For example, the following narration directs the use of the mother tongue:

Student 3

I am not very confident in singing songs to get the ability to pronounce words and understand the meaning of a sentence, as I have not heard that before in this class. I had never had much exposure to many songs sung before this class activity. (Interview with student 3)

The quotation above suggests that some teachers emphasised the use of mother tongues in their teaching. Teachers claimed that applying continuous practice in singing the song’s words repeatedly would bring pleasure to the children compared to the usual boring drills they used to do previously. According to social learning theory, children can learn in multiple ways. Similar findings indicate that consistent practice in singing, just like any other skill, is fundamental in enhancing speaking skills (Bandura & Hall, 2018). Therefore, modelling a song repeatedly could be applied by teachers

to increase learners' attention, thus creating competence in speaking skills with others.

### *Songs on Writing Skills*

This study found that the expressive elements of songs encouraged activities that actively engaged children in singing and vocabulary development. Children not only participated enthusiastically in singing but also used rich narratives to express ideas related to their curriculum topics through writing. A typical comment was noted: *“I sing and narrate songs of our different words which we learn here and write them”*. Based on these observations, certain songs were found to help children learn and accurately identify parts of the body, both verbally and in writing. An example of such a song is titled “Umutwe Mboloze”

#### *Umutwe Mboloze*

Ubhusyo mboloze, wilole umwene  
Ameso ngaloze wilole, umwene  
zinzele nzele wilole, umwene  
Amantwe ngaloze wilole, umwene  
Ameno ngaloze, wilole umwene

#### *I have seen your head (English Translation)*

I have seen your face, see yourself  
I have seen your eyes, see yourself  
I have seen your hair, see yourself  
I have seen your head, see yourself  
I have seen your teeth, see yourself

This selected children’s song in the mother tongue was sought to provide the opportunity for vocabulary practice for both the mother language and the language of instruction. These songs were constructed from the song’s theme, which can provide contextual learning on vocabulary. The song, “Umutwe mboloze”, for example, could be used to review children’s hygiene if health is the subject’s topic. This implies that “I have seen your head” or “Umutwe mboloze” might be a useful song for reminding children to care for their face, eyes, ears, and teeth. Thus, their acquisition of writing skills developed. This finding is consistent with a previous study supporting that songs have an impact on students' writing skills (Haris & Siswana, 2024). Children’s songs improve the development of language skills such as writing, as children learn how to listen to words, pronounce letters, and their articulation comes more easily. These findings imply that songs not only engage children in learning but also enhance students' writing skills. Thus, before a child writes a text, they can develop reading and singing skills.

### *Songs on Reading Skills*

This study revealed that song-based learning activities had a significant impact on the development of children's language and reading skills. Teachers reported reading song lyrics to better align their instruction with the

children's learning needs and subject content. They also referred to the children's syllabus to identify key topics and determine the appropriate content to teach. Using songs as a reading tool was seen as an effective way to introduce and reinforce topic content, making it more accessible and easier for children to understand. In this regard, one teacher revealed:

I also use songs, which I sometimes compose, depending on the topic of my lesson. Some songs that we sing teach children counting, doing certain reading activities and their sounds (Interview with a teacher).

Based on the collected data, this was the song:

***Najua Kuhesabu Namba***

Najua kuhesabu namba moja, mbili.  
Tatu, nne, tano, sita, saba, nane,  
tisa, kumi. Vidole vya miguu yangu  
jumla yake kumi, huku tano na  
huku tano jumla yake kumi.

***I know how to count numbers  
(English Translation)***

I know how to count numbers one,  
two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight,  
nine, ten. Total fingers on my leg are  
ten, this side five and this side five,  
total is ten.

On the use of songs to teach children, another pre-primary teacher commented:

I use written songs and order children to read all the time! We can use songs when introducing a particular topic, and we can use songs for counting numbers. Again, when showing body parts like legs, hands, and toes. We can also use songs to read the vowels in language, for instance, a, e, i, o, u. (Interview with a teacher)

Based on these findings, the songs served as activities that involved children in reading, singing, and exploring language principles. In this context, another teacher highlighted this point with her comment, making it very clear:

Parents want children to learn and sing Kiswahili and English songs. If they want, they can sing songs in their mother tongue. But sometimes, children get uncontrollable, so we limit the singing activities (Interview with a teacher)

The narration above from the teacher suggests that through singing and composing songs, children can fragment sounds, create blended words and form different sentences. Adapting songs as a teaching tool for reading skills, the teacher can select a particular vocabulary feature and incorporate it into the song. These results support Damsgaard et al.'s (2025) findings, which assert that songs contain a comprehensive language package, including

speaking, listening, writing, culture, grammar, and a host of other language skills, all packed into just a few verses.

### ***Build self-confidence and self-efficacy***

Data from interviews and observation on students' reflective singing revealed the presence of building self-confidence and self-efficacy. Consistent with Bandura's argument that modelling is the most influential source of confidence and self-efficacy, the results showed that singing in front of others strongly boosted confidence, and repeatedly singing the songs was the most significant source of self-efficacy among many children.

One teacher from Butiama pre-primary commented: "*I also, from time to time, use popular songs sung by children, depending on my subject topic. Some songs that I use to teach them vowels, shapes, birds and their sounds, such as*":

#### ***Swahili song***

/a/ ina mkia mfupi  
Mabata wanaogelea  
Najua kuhesabu namba

#### ***English Translation***

/a/ has a little tail  
Ducks are swimming in water  
I know how to count numbers

The interview quotation above highlights that children often develop greater confidence when singing familiar local songs, particularly when these are integrated into the learning process. These songs resonate with children's perceived learning abilities due to their relatable themes. Musical activities such as singing, dancing, and drumming further encourage children to express themselves and use their voices with confidence. Where teachers might not always succeed, songs bridge the gap, serving as an excellent way to communicate with children with different abilities. Singing helps children of all needs to develop, communicate, and build confidence.

It was also reported that songs contained content relevant to the teachers' intended curriculum. For example, teachers used songs whose content discussed livelihood activities. For instance, the song content below reflects an increase in self-confidence and the ability to perform something. Perceived confidence thus serves as another effective source of self-efficacy.

#### ***Tukawinde***

Twende tukawinde leo (tukawinde  
vipepeo ×2) aina (vipepeo ×2)

#### ***To hunt (English Translation)***

Let's go to hunt flies today (to hunt  
butterfly ×2), which type (butterfly  
×2)

This study revealed that all children had great confidence when singing songs. Phrases such as “Let’s go” and “to hunt” were cited by the participants as reducing their anxiety in front of others. During the interview, student 4 provided one comment that was documented in the building self-confidence: *When the teacher selected me to conduct a song in the class, then when I participated as a soloist in our traditional song, I got interested in singing independently.* (Interview with Student 4). The quote above evidently shows that songs in the mother tongue were perceived as the most vital influencing factor for children’s participation in the early childhood education classroom. The data also indicated that all teachers were using songs in their curriculum orientation. In this regard, one teacher clarified that:

During my teacher training course in Early Childhood Education, music was among the subjects, and the practical curriculum was emphasised. (Interview with the teacher)

The quote above implies that songs promote social commitment, improve mood, and help to build self-efficacy and self-esteem. From the findings, besides their roles, teachers thought that students experienced less fear and anxiety, and that children’s motivation increased. This is because they had song records supporting them. Other studies indicate that music integration is related to teachers perceived musical ability and self-efficacy in teaching music (Bandura,1997; Jiang, 2024). This suggests that educators who demonstrate a strong sense of self-efficacy would use songs effectively and introduce new educational practices as well.

### ***Songs Encourage Teamwork***

This subsection presents the way songs encourage teamwork through communication and cooperation with other children. Based on the study’s findings, it was observed that when children sing together, they naturally start to work together, learn and achieve a shared content. Songs are among the classroom activities that influence teamwork learning through the use of melodic lines and phrasing, typically practised through rounds of singing. Song ensembles often involve small groups of friends who sing together and occasionally play instruments. On this, one of the child respondents commented:

#### **Student 2**

I am not very comfortable singing alone in front of others in class. However, I can sing songs in front of others with my friends, and I feel better about doing it. Some friends used to intimidate us when singing alone, but sometimes, when singing songs in my mother tongue confidently to show my ability, I did not care whether I was a good singer or not. (Interview with Student 2)

Furthermore, one teacher chose to offer a self-reflection on her practice, and she commented that:

When I want to find out what the children already know, I form groups to see whether they are listening. Moreover, I use a range of repertoire to allow children to sing solo or play the instruments of their interest to identify their abilities. (Interview with a teacher)

These reflections indicate that songs naturally serve as a form of self-expression for children. However, the key challenge is to make songs meaningful and integrate them effectively into lesson development. Everyone needs to connect with songs at some point, aligning with their sense of belonging. Through singing participation, we can foster children's self-efficacy and self-expression. Engaging in group work, singing performances, and active participation helps children overcome fear, build confidence and reduce anxiety. Without doubt, singing in teamwork exposes children to the incomparable (Esimone, 2007; Jiang, 2024). Jiang (2024) supports that songs have an impact on students' psychological development, with a mediating role of building self-efficacy and self-esteem. Teamwork musical activities, such as singing, reciting poetry, and drumming in circles, improve both verbal and non-verbal communication skills. According to Esimone (2007), music in early childhood education develops expression skills, enhances listening abilities, and increases confidence, leading to stronger teamwork and learning.

### ***Implications for Policy Makers***

The findings of this study confirmed the important role of applying children's songs in mother tongues for early childhood education in Tanzania. Therefore, curriculum developers need to assess the effectiveness of using multicultural music in preschools by conducting a national-level study. This can be achieved by conducting regular reviews of the curriculum to assess the effectiveness of music and movement instruction for both pre-primary teachers and those in training. During the study, it was observed that differences between the pre-primary schools visited could be attributed to the schools' administrators. This suggests that head teachers should take deliberate initiatives to support the resources used by pre-primary teachers in music. This can be achieved by purchasing audio cassettes and CD players to support pre-primary teachers' work.

The study found that teachers effectively conveyed many preschool topics in early childhood education through the use of songs, movement, and language-based activities. When pre-primary teachers incorporate musical

and movement activities into their lesson planning, they present valuable opportunities to enhance children's learning. These activities encourage children to express themselves, engage in conversations through songs, and learn from a variety of sources. From the children's perspective, the use of songs in their mother tongue played a vital role in language learning and vocabulary development. This enabled them to communicate pedagogical content more effectively, enjoy the emotional and cognitive benefits of music, internalise ethical values, and apply knowledge in meaningful ways. The effectiveness of these songs in early childhood education is closely linked to their content, the richness of vocabulary they offer, parental support, and the intentional use of music by teachers within the learning process.

### **Conclusion**

This study has demonstrated that children's songs are powerful pedagogical tools with significant educational implications, particularly in early childhood learning contexts. This is because children feel motivated when learning with this resource material. Additionally, children's use of songs in the classroom motivates them to attend lessons and pay attention. Songs are socially constructed through observation and imitation, and are reinforced in classroom learning. They are also deeply rooted in cultural practices, reflecting shared values, social responsibilities, love, traditions, customs, and the unique characteristics of spoken language.

Children's songs serve as a useful and helpful pedagogical tool in teaching and learning, as they enable children to grasp language, knowledge, and culture easily. Using the mother tongue songs can help children in the pre-primary schools improve their curriculum content. One of the greatest applications of songs in the classroom is that they are pleasurable and entertaining. Generally, using children's songs in their mother tongue as part of classroom activities may serve as an effective method for transferring knowledge across different areas of pedagogical content. It is one of the strategies that pre-primary teachers can employ to enhance their teaching, offering more opportunities to integrate music meaningfully into their instructional practices.

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