

THE ROLE OF COUNTING RHYMES IN TEACHING NEW LANGUAGES FOR CHILDREN

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Abstract: *Counting rhymes have been an integral part of children's play and language development for centuries. These simple, catchy tunes not only help young children learn to count but also develop their language skills, improve their memory retention, and develop their motor skills and coordination. In recent years, counting rhymes have been recognized as an effective tool for teaching new languages to young children.*

One of the benefits of using counting rhymes to teach new languages is that they expose children to new vocabulary, sentence structures, and grammatical patterns. For example, the popular nursery rhyme "One, Two, Buckle My Shoe" teaches children how to count up to 20 and introduces them to the concept of rhyming words. Similarly, the Spanish counting rhyme "Cinco Patitos" teaches children to count backward from five and introduces them to Spanish vocabulary related to ducks.

Counting rhymes also help children associate numbers with objects or actions in the new language. For example, "Ten Little Indians" teaches children to count up to ten and introduces them to the concept of subtraction as each Indian disappears from the group. Similarly, "Cinco Calabazas" (Five Pumpkins) teaches children to count up to five in Spanish while associating each number with a pumpkin.

Key words: *nursery rhymes, language development, social and motor skills, sing-song, gestures, actions, education programs, building vocabulary, improving pronunciation*

INTRODUCTION

Counting rhymes, also known as nursery rhymes, are a favourite part of childhood for many people. These easy, sing-song verses have been passed down through generations and are still famous today. But did you know that counting rhymes are more than just a fun way to pass the time? They can also be an effective tool for teaching children important skills like counting, language development, and memory retention.

Counting rhymes have been around for centuries, with some of the earliest examples dating back to the 16th century. These rhymes were often used as a way to teach children about the world around them, with topics ranging from history and politics to morality and religion. Over time, counting rhymes became more focused on simple concepts like counting, colours, and animals. These rhymes were often accompanied by hand gestures or actions, making them even more engaging for young children. Today, counting rhymes are still an important part of childhood. They are

often included in early childhood education programs and can be found in books, videos, and online resources.

Brief history of counting rhymes. Back in the middle of the twentieth century Rumanian ethnomusicologist Constantin Brailoiu (1984) and American linguist Robbins Burling (1966) independently uncovered evidence showing that children's rhymes around the world have strikingly similar metrical patterns and speculated that these may indeed be universal. Burling also notes that while beats tend to coincide with stressed syllables, this is not always the case. Many nursery rhymes have rests (designated by the letter R), as in example

Hickory, dickory, dock, R
The mouse ran up the clock, R
The clock struck one, the mouse ran down,
Hickory, dickory, dock.R

Furthermore, the number of syllables between successive beats may vary, with a maximum of three. In this example there are two weak syllables between beat 1, synchronized with /hI/, and beat 2, synchronized with /dI/. Burling claims that the odd-numbered beats have slightly greater stress than the even-numbered beats, although the difference is subtle and may vary. Furthermore, citing the work of Lehmann (1956), he shows that the four-beat line has great historical depth and appears to be linked to the earliest poetry in the Germanic languages, in which the line is made up of four predominant syllables, "[...]two in each half line, which are elevated by stress, quantity, and two or three of them by alliteration" (Lehmann 1956: 37)

Benefit from counting rhymes. Here are some of the benefits of counting rhymes for children:

1. **Language development:** Counting rhymes help children to develop their language skills by exposing them to new vocabulary, sentence structures, and grammatical patterns. They also help children to learn how to pronounce words correctly and use them in context.

2. **Memory retention:** Counting rhymes require children to memorize the lyrics and rhythm, which helps to improve their memory retention skills. This is an important skill that will help them in other areas of learning later on.

3. **Counting skills:** As the name suggests, counting rhymes help children to learn how to count. They teach children the order of numbers and how to associate numbers with objects or actions.

4. **Motor skills:** Many counting rhymes involve hand gestures or actions, which help to develop children's motor skills and coordination.

5. **Social skills:** Counting rhymes are often sung in groups or with a caregiver, which helps to develop social skills like turn-taking, sharing, and cooperation.

In general, counting rhymes are a fun and effective way to teach children important skills that will benefit them throughout their lives.

Teaching counting rhymes. Teaching of counting rhymes offer a number of benefits for young children and their teachers. Firstly, counting rhymes help children develop their language skills by exposing them to new words and phrases. Rhyming words are especially helpful for building vocabulary and improving pronunciation. Secondly, counting rhymes are often repetitive, which helps children remember the words and concepts they are learning. This can be especially helpful for children who struggle with memory retention. Research has shown that memorizing songs and rhymes can improve memory retention in both children and adults (Schellenberg & Weiss, 2013). This is because songs and rhymes have a predictable structure and rhythm that make them easier to remember. Thirdly, counting rhymes are great for teaching children how to count. By counting along with the rhyme, children learn basic math skills in a fun and engaging way. Fourthly, counting rhymes can be a great way for children to socialize with each other. Singing and counting together helps build a sense of community and can help children develop important social skills like sharing and taking turns.

There are countless counting rhymes out there, but here are a few popular examples: "One, Two, Buckle My Shoe", "Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed" and "This Old Man".

Counting rhymes can be a valuable tool for educators working with young children. They can be incorporated into early childhood education programs in various ways. For example, counting rhymes can be a great way to start off circle time. They help children focus and get ready for the day ahead. Counting rhymes can also be used to supplement math lessons, especially when teaching basic counting and addition/subtraction skills. Additionally, counting rhymes can be incorporated into story time as a fun way to break up longer stories and keep children engaged.

Discussion. Counting rhymes are important for children's language development as they expose them to new vocabulary, sentence structures, and grammatical patterns. They also help children to learn how to count and associate numbers with objects or actions. Counting rhymes require children to memorize the lyrics and rhythm, which improves their memory retention skills. Additionally, many counting rhymes involve hand gestures or actions, which develop children's motor skills and coordination. Counting rhymes are often sung in groups or with a caregiver, which helps to develop social skills like turn-taking, sharing, and cooperation. The Romanian collection of counting rhymes analysed in a study by Maria-Luiza Dumitrescu and Cristina-Ioana Nicolae (2019) shows that children preserve these rhymes in nearly verbatim fashion, relying on memory since they are not preserved in written form. The results of the study show that Romanian children make use of a genre that includes repetition, rhyme, alliteration, a default of four lines, inclusion of nonsense words for either the whole rhyme or a whole line, end-rhyme schemes in couplet form, and a coherent meaning.

Children recall counting-out rhymes well in both English and Romanian, and these rhymes have remained stable for some time..

Conclusion. In conclusion, counting rhymes are more than just a fun way to pass the time. They offer a wide range of benefits for young children, including language development, memory retention, and counting skills. By incorporating counting rhymes into early childhood education programs, educators can help children develop important skills in a fun and engaging way. So next time you're singing "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star," remember that you're not just entertaining your child – you're also helping them learn and grow. counting rhymes are an important part of children's play and language development. They teach children how to count, expose them to new vocabulary and sentence structures, improve their memory retention skills, develop their motor skills and coordination, and help them to develop social skills like turn-taking, sharing, and cooperation. Whether sung in English or German counting rhymes are a valuable tool for parents and caregivers to use with young children.

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