

EMPOWERING YOUNG LEARNERS IN ENGLISH EDUCATION: POTENTIAL AND LIMITATIONS OF SUNO AI

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ABSTRACT

Engaging and maintaining young learners' attention spans with songs has been a common technique in the teaching of English. However, looking for suitable and perfect songs on the internet has always been difficult and takes much time for those teachers who want to include music in their classes. Now, this challenge is made easier by SUNO, a generative AI that creates songs quickly and effectively. Nevertheless, like any other technology, SUNO is not flawless AI. There are some downsides associated with SUNO as well. For example, the quality of the songs depends on the prompt it receives. Moreover, its operation relies on an uninterrupted connection to the internet which might not be available at certain institutions such as rural areas.

Keywords: English Language Teaching, Educational Songs, Young Learners, SUNO AI

INTRODUCTION

Learning English has become more essential nowadays because it is a lingua franca spoken in many countries (Alghannam, 2024). Many people believe that it should be introduced as early as possible because as some research implies, young learners learn new languages faster and easier than adult learners (Wallin & Cheevakumjorn, 2020). Therefore, many schools, particularly in Indonesia, now teach English starting from early childhood education, such as kindergartens and elementary schools (Umar, 2022).

When it comes to teaching English to young learners, for some teachers, it can be more problematic and sometimes infuriating than teaching adults. The main cause behind this matter is the difference in attention span between kids and adults. The lengths of attention spans possessed by kids, especially who are still in their early years, always appear to be shorter than grownups. If they are not kept engaged constantly, children can easily lose interest or focus or become restless. Consequently, teachers need to be constantly innovative and dynamic in order to keep their students interested and focused (Avezova, 2022).

To maintain children's attention, teachers need to be able to create an engaging and fun classroom. Besides inserting games into the lessons, teachers can integrate songs to attract children's attention. Not only can songs grab students' focus, but several studies also suggest that young learners may acquire English faster and easier if songs and music are included in the lessons (Andari & Wiguna, 2022). Songs that use rhythm and repetition may help children pick up and recall new words more easily. In addition, integrating songs into lessons enables teachers to create a fun and interactive learning environment that fosters language acquisition and fluency.

However, sometimes some teachers find it difficult to choose which songs to use in the classroom because of some considerations. First, they need to be aware of the complexity of the lyrics. Teachers might want to choose songs with simpler words that are easy for young learners to understand. Second, the selected songs must relate to the lesson objectives. Third, the songs should be age-appropriate and culturally acceptable to students (Shimada, 2024). There are certainly some other aspects that teachers need to consider in selecting songs to use and it is no surprise that they can spend hours and hours finding good songs for teaching. Now, with the help of SUNO AI, all those challenges are nothing, and teaching English to young learners with songs should be easier and stress-free for teachers.

Overview

SUNO is a generative AI meant for producing songs with vocals and/or instruments, or instrumentals. The first thing that teachers should do before composing songs is go to www.SUNO.com and sign up using an email address. After successfully signing up, teachers get 50 credits daily which can be used to create 10 songs. If teachers wish to create more songs a day, they can buy the pro version for 10\$/per month or buy the premiere version which is 30\$/per month. The pro plan allows users to create up to 500 songs while with the premiere one, users may compose 2,000 songs.

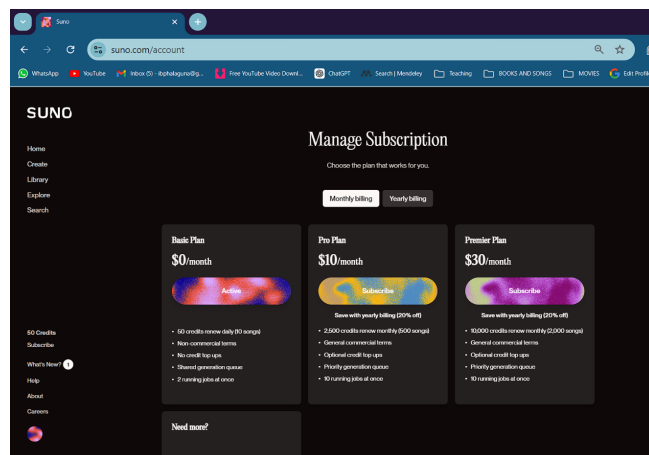


Figure 1. SUNO subscription

Making songs and using them with the help of SUNO is exceedingly easy and uncomplicated. Therefore, it could be appropriate for teachers who have different levels of skills. When teachers enter the description of the desired song (prompt) in the 'create' segment of this platform, they will have fulfilled their first requirement. The purpose behind writing a prompt is that it serves as a basis or blueprint for SUNO to create songs according to what teachers feel should be included in teaching. However, if teachers want to get exactly what they intended from SUNO, then they must be very detailed and specific about their prompts. Thus, SUNO can come up with those songs incorporating specific language points or learning outcomes when prompts are clear and much more explicit. For instance, teachers might want to include several things in their prompt such as the the genre of the song, the learners' age as well as their level of English, and the vocabulary or grammar points that teachers are focusing on. By composing clear and analytical prompts, teachers will make sure they are getting relevant songs from SUNO which will meet the learning objectives. The example of the prompt can be seen in the following picture.

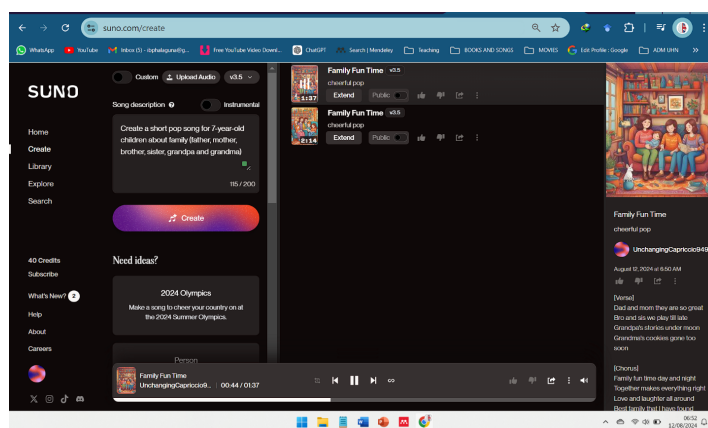


Figure 2. Creating Songs on SUNO by using a prompt

Another interesting thing that SUNO can do is it can help teachers create a song from the lyrics that they have written beforehand. To do this, teachers are supposed to switch the mode to “custom” and follow the instructions required such as inserting or writing the lyrics of the song, choosing the style of the music (pop, jazz, rock, reggae, etc), and writing the title of the song. Teachers need to click “create” afterward and SUNO will make two samples of songs based on the lyrics given. If the songs created are too short for teachers, SUNO can make them longer by editing them in the “extend from” column. However, it would be a good idea for teachers not to make the songs too long as it may lose students’ attention and interest in the songs.

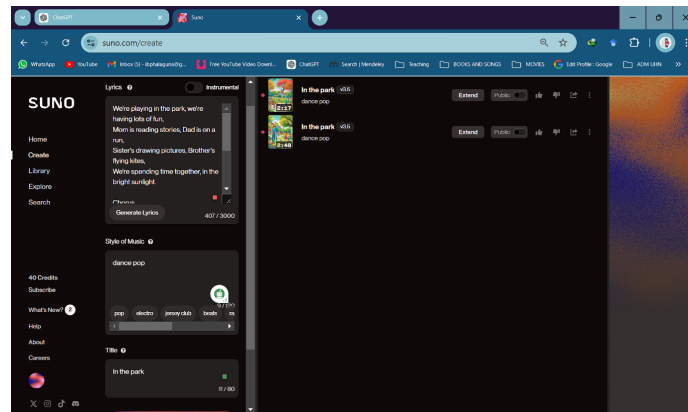


Figure 3. Creating a Song on SUNO by using lyrics

After downloading the songs, teachers are in a position to use them immediately in their teaching, learning, and or classroom practices. There are quite a few activities that teachers can do with the songs downloaded. Here are some ideas for it (Marie, 2024):

- 1) **Sing Along:** “Sing along” activity requires all children to sing the same song, which offers them an opportunity to familiarize themselves with proper pronunciation patterns, beats and intonations in a comfortable setting. Besides, children’s confidence levels increase when they sing together and improve their command of language. Moreover, most songs are characterized by repetition thus enhancing vocabulary acquisition and grammar remembering elements thereby making it easier for learners to retain information.
- 2) **Cloze or Gap Fill:** This method enhances learners’ capacity to hear better and strengthens their words. The teacher gives students part of song lyrics leaving some words blank. Next, the complete piece is played to them so that they could guess the unspecified ones from surrounding sentences. Eventually, this exercise develops not only their listening comprehension but also emphasizes stress intonation, melody or sentence speed.
- 3) **Active listening:** “Active listening” is considered to be one of the most powerful methods in which students can enhance their abilities to comprehend hearing and reading languages. In this activity, young learners are asked to listen to a song and they need to respond to questions or identify some language features like grammar patterns, significant words, or vocabulary from the texts. The primary objective of this active listening is to make young learners pay attention to the details of the language practice as it fosters their thinking skills in both comprehending and interpreting spoken English.
- 4) **Read Along:** “Read Along” helps students improve their pronunciation, word recognition and fluency. In this kind of activity, learners vocalize the texts while listening to the music at the same time. The idea behind this technique is that it helps students to strengthen their correct pronunciation by integrating them into listening exercises based on connecting sound with word forms along with fast words recognition. In addition to that, following the

tempo and singing along are aspects of this exercise which facilitate smooth reading skills in terms of frequency responsiveness.

- 5) **Lyric Challenge:** The "Lyric Challenge" is another activity that teachers can do with the song. In this activity, parts of the selected song's verse are presented to young learners. After a while, they are required to completely forget about it and they only may contribute some words either orally or written down. The advantage of this method lies not only in that it promotes sound memory but also allows young learners to study morphology by repeating such phrases and structures over again while at the same time imbuing them with positive emotions.

Pedagogical Benefits

The advancement of AI nowadays, especially SUNO, brings some positive impacts to the teaching and learning process. First, SUNO is a real-time-saver for teachers who like to insert songs into their lessons. Traditionally, it would take a lot of time for teachers to choose which songs to use in the classroom. They used to spend hours looking for appropriate songs for their students on the internet and sometimes they ended up making up their songs by changing the lyrics of some popular songs. It was complicated, frustrating, and time-consuming. However, teachers can now sit back and spend their time on what truly matters because, with the help of SUNO, they can create ready-to-use songs just in no time by only typing prompts.

Second, SUNO allows teachers to tailor the lyrics so that they meet the objectives of the lesson. Unlike general educational songs on the Web, which may not satisfy specific learning objectives or the peculiarities of a certain class, SUNO puts the teachers in control of their content. Teachers can input specific terms, certain grammatical patterns, or particular topics that they want the students to get across and the song will only contain these aspects. In summary, a good song to use in the classroom should not just be fun, and engaging but also educational and meet the objectives of the lesson at the same time. (Shimada, 2024)

The third benefit that teachers could get from SUNO is they can adjust the music, rhythm, and tempo to the students' music preferences. All students have their own kind of music they love to listen to. It will not be a good idea to bring a song that teachers and students do not like into the classroom. (Adnyani & Dewi, 2020). By knowing the vast majority of the students' type of music and creating a song that meets students' tastes on SUNO, it would be much easier for teachers to make the students engaged as well as motivated in learning.

Another advantage is that SUNO can promote students' 4C skills that will help them succeed in this era. Those 4C skills include creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication.

1. **Creativity:** The feature of SUNO which allows users to create their songs just by inserting the lyrics can definitely foster students' creativity. By exploring and experimenting with various types of musical styles and melodies, not only can young learners feel engaged in the learning process, but they will also develop their innovative ways of thinking.
2. **Critical Thinking:** Asking young learners to create their songs by using SUNO can also promote their critical thinking skills. When teachers give students chances to do it themselves, such as allowing them to choose the elements of the song, the tone, and the genre, they will certainly improve their decision-making skills which will lead to critical thinking skills.
3. **Collaboration:** Young learners love working together with their friends. Creating songs in groups by using SUNO can be a fun and collaborative activity that teachers can get students to do in the classroom. They can share their ideas in creating the song

and divide tasks (one student can focus on the lyric while the other students can think of the genre or the melody of the song)

4. **Communication:** After asking young learners to create a song together in a team by using SUNO, teachers need to tell them to present it or sing it in front of the class. Through the process of creating and presenting the songs, children will automatically develop their communication skills.

In summary, young learners would get many benefits if teachers integrated SUNO into the English teaching and learning process. Not only it would make the classroom fun and engaging, but also enhance the students' 4C skills, the essential skills that students need to be successful in this 21st century.

Challenges

Although SUNO has clear potential in the language classroom, it does present challenges. The first challenge of utilizing SUNO is this tool is very much teacher-dependent, and when the teachers enter vague or poorly formatted questions and instructions (prompts), the output can be of relatively poor quality. For instance, if a teacher entered a prompt that does not contain well-defined learning outcomes or precise elements, it would mislead the AI and the songs created will not address the intended lesson plans appropriately. This tends to be quite frustrating, especially for a teacher who probably does not know how to create prompts to receive the most ideal response. Thus, having the ability to create clear, concise, and detailed instructions (prompts) is vital for teachers if they want SUNO to produce targeted songs.

Another main challenge in the utilization of SUNO relies on technological reliance where the internet and compatible equipment are essential components. This requirement becomes a major limitation for schools or educators in areas with low technology development or places with poor internet connection. The teachers from underprivileged areas will not be able to optimize the use of the tool, more likely they will not be able to use it at all due to a lack of high-speed internet and up-to-date devices. Consequently, investing in infrastructure could be one of the vital ways to address this problem so that all teachers can access and use SUNO regardless of their location.

CONCLUSION

SUNO is an enhancement of educational technology, where it helps to provide a flexible teaching aid in making fun and educative songs. The application of artificial intelligence means that through SUNO, teachers can easily create good quality age-appropriate songs for children in a short time. SUNO can save time in searching for songs, allowing for the selection of songs based on the focus of the lesson and changing content as per students' preferences. Not only does it help in the easy preparation and organization of the lessons, but it also helps make changes to the content in a way that will be more interesting to the students.

It is undoubtedly that there are certain shortcomings to talk about. It should also be noted that the quality of the songs created with the help of SUNO often depends on the input prompts. Teachers are supposed to create clear and concise instructions so that SUNO can create the aimed songs. Further, the availability of an internet connection as well as owning compatible devices may be another significant challenge for some teachers in using SUNO.

In conclusion, it can be seen that although SUNO provides good solutions and outlooks and has significant advantages for teachers and learners, it should be used only with an understanding of its problems and constraints. When integrated with other activities such as filling the missing lyric, karaoke, or role-play, SUNO will afford educators the best way of achieving valuable learning outcomes while at the same time offering an enriched flexible way of learning to the students. For more information on SUNO and its features, visit <https://SUNO.com>.

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