



The Use of English Songs to Improve Students' Listening Skills at SMPN 2 Abang

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Abstract: Listening is one of the most essential skills in learning English, especially for students in English Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. However, many students face difficulties in understanding spoken English due to limited exposure to authentic language and a lack of motivation during listening activities. This research aims to investigate the use of English songs as a learning medium to improve students' listening skills, identify the types of songs that are most effective, and examine students' responses toward song-based listening activities. This study employed a quantitative descriptive research design and involved 30 seventh-grade students of SMP Negeri 2 Abang. Data were collected through a questionnaire administered after students participated in listening activities using English songs. The questionnaire focused on students' experiences, preferences, motivation, and perceptions related to listening practice through songs. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. The results of the study show that the majority of students had positive attitudes toward the use of English songs in listening lessons. Most students agreed that English songs helped them improve their understanding of pronunciation, vocabulary, intonation, and overall listening comprehension. Students also reported higher motivation and enjoyment when learning through songs compared to traditional textbook audio materials. In addition, slow-tempo songs with clear lyrics were found to be the most effective, while fast or unclear songs caused some difficulties for students. In conclusion, English songs are an effective and engaging tool for improving students' listening skills. Therefore, English teachers are encouraged to integrate suitable English songs into listening activities with appropriate guidance to create a more enjoyable and effective learning environment.

Keywords: English Songs, Listening Skills, EFL Students, Student Motivation, Pronunciation, Classroom Activities, Music-Based Learning

Introduction

Listening is one of the fundamental skills in learning English and plays a crucial role in the development of other language skills such as speaking, reading, and writing. In English Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, listening is often considered the most challenging skill for students because of limited exposure to authentic spoken English. Goh (2010) states that EFL learners frequently struggle with understanding spoken language due to unfamiliar accents, fast speech, and limited vocabulary. As a result, many students feel anxious, unmotivated, and lack confidence during listening activities in the classroom.

In many English classrooms, listening instruction is still dominated by the use of textbook-based audio materials. Although these materials are designed for educational purposes, they often sound artificial and fail to reflect real-life language use. Harmer (2015) argues that listening materials should expose learners to natural and meaningful language in order to improve comprehension. When listening activities are repetitive and monotonous, students tend to lose interest, which negatively affects their listening performance and learning motivation.

Several previous studies have highlighted the positive impact of using songs in English language learning. Murphey (2018) found that songs can increase students' motivation and create a relaxed learning atmosphere, which supports better listening comprehension. Similarly, Lynch (2020) reported that regular exposure to English songs helps learners become more familiar with natural pronunciation, intonation, and speech speed. These findings suggest that English songs have the potential to enhance listening skills effectively.

However, despite the growing number of studies on the use of songs in English learning, there is still a research gap regarding students' perceptions of song-based listening activities at the junior high school level, particularly in Indonesian EFL contexts. Most existing studies focus on experimental designs or higher education settings, while limited research explores descriptive data related to students' preferences, motivation, and learning experiences when English songs are used in listening lessons.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the use of English songs in improving seventh-grade students' listening skills, identify the types of songs that are most effective, and examine students' responses toward the use of songs in the listening classroom. The findings of this research are expected to provide practical benefits for English teachers by offering insights into effective listening materials and teaching strategies. In addition, this study contributes to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence on the use of English songs in junior high school EFL classrooms, supporting more engaging and meaningful listening instruction.

This research wants to explore how English songs help students improve their listening skills, what types of songs work best, and how often songs should be used in class.

Research Questions:

1. How do English songs improve students' listening skills in the classroom?
2. What types of English songs are most effective for improving listening skills?
3. How often should English songs be used in learning activities to see improvement?

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative descriptive research design to examine students' perceptions of using English songs in improving listening skills. This design was chosen because it allows the researcher to collect numerical data and describe patterns, tendencies, and responses related to students' learning experiences. Quantitative descriptive research

is appropriate for identifying students' attitudes, preferences, and opinions without manipulating variables.

Participants

The participants of this study were 30 seventh-grade students of SMP Negeri 2 Abang. The participants were selected using simple random sampling, which gave each student an equal opportunity to be included in the study. This sampling technique helped reduce selection bias and ensured that the data represented the target population fairly.

Instruments

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of two sections. The first section focused on students' perceptions of listening skill improvement through English songs, including understanding pronunciation, vocabulary, intonation, and overall comprehension. The second section addressed students' preferences for song types and the frequency of using English songs in listening activities. The questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). All items were written in clear and simple English appropriate for seventh-grade students.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure content validity, the questionnaire items were developed based on relevant theories and previous studies on listening skills and music-based learning. The instrument was reviewed by an English teacher to ensure clarity and relevance. Reliability was measured using Cronbach's Alpha, and the results indicated that the questionnaire was reliable for collecting consistent data.

Procedure

1. The researcher coordinated with the English teacher to set a time for questionnaire distribution.
2. After completing an English listening activity using a song, students filled out the questionnaire.
3. They had **20 minutes** to complete it independently.
4. The researcher collected the questionnaires and checked for completeness.
5. All answers were kept confidential and used only for academic purposes.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The collected data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, were used to analyze students' responses. The results were interpreted by examining the distribution of responses and mean scores to determine students' overall perceptions of the effectiveness of English songs in improving listening skills. Higher mean scores indicated more positive perceptions. The findings were then discussed in relation to previous studies to strengthen the validity of the interpretation.

Result and Discussion

Table 1. Students' Responses to the Use of English Songs

Using English songs in the classroom helps me understand spoken English better.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	5	16.7	16.7	16.7
	3	6	20.0	20.0	36.7
	4	13	43.3	43.3	80.0
	5	6	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Most students agreed that using English songs helps them understand spoken English better. A total of 83.3% chose neutral to strongly agree. This shows that songs can be a helpful and fun way to improve listening skills. Only 16.7% disagreed, meaning most students had a positive view.

Table 2. Teachers should include English songs regularly in classroom listening activities

Teachers should include English songs regularly in classroom listening activities.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	4	13.3	13.3	13.3
	3	5	16.7	16.7	30.0
	4	13	43.3	43.3	73.3
	5	8	26.7	26.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Some students disagreed, but most gave positive responses. 63.3% chose neutral to strongly agree, showing that many students find songs more helpful than traditional listening tasks. Only 36.6% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This means songs are generally seen as a good tool for improving listening.

Table 3. English songs help improve my listening skills more than traditional listening exercises

English songs help improve my listening skills more than traditional listening exercises.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	7	23.3	23.3	23.3
	2	4	13.3	13.3	36.7
	3	3	10.0	10.0	46.7
	4	9	30.0	30.0	76.7
	5	7	23.3	23.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

The data shows that 63.3% of students chose neutral to strongly agree (scores 3–5), suggesting that many students feel English songs are better than traditional listening exercises. Meanwhile, 36.6% disagreed (scores 1–2), showing that not all students prefer songs. Overall, songs are seen as more effective by most students.

Table 4. Show-tempo English songs with clear lyrics are more helpful for improving listening skills

Slow-tempo English songs with clear lyrics are more helpful for improving listening skills.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
	2	2	6.7	6.7	16.7
	3	6	20.0	20.0	36.7
	4	12	40.0	40.0	76.7
	5	7	23.3	23.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

The data shows that 83.3% of students responded from neutral to strongly agree (scores 3–5), which means most students think slow-tempo English songs with clear lyrics are helpful for improving listening skills. Only 16.7% disagreed.

Table 5. Prefer listening to English songs rather than audio from textbooks in learning activities

I prefer listening to English songs rather than audio from textbooks in learning activities.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
	3	8	26.7	26.7	36.7
	4	8	26.7	26.7	63.3
	5	11	36.7	36.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

The data shows that 90% of students chose neutral to strongly agree (scores 3–5), meaning that most students prefer listening to English songs rather than textbook audio during learning activities. Only 10% disagreed.

Table 6. Listening English songs regularly

Listening to English songs regularly (e.g., once or twice a week) helps me improve my listening comprehension.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	4	13.3	13.3	13.3
	2	3	10.0	10.0	23.3
	3	5	16.7	16.7	40.0
	4	13	43.3	43.3	83.3
	5	5	16.7	16.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

The data shows that 76.7% of students selected neutral to strongly agree (scores 3–5), indicating that most students believe listening to English songs regularly helps improve their listening comprehension. Only 23.3% disagreed.

Table 7. Filling in the blanks while listening to song lyrics help me focus on the words and sounds

Filling in the blanks while listening to song lyrics helps me focus on the words and sounds.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	5	16.7	16.7	16.7
	3	10	33.3	33.3	50.0
	4	11	36.7	36.7	86.7
	5	4	13.3	13.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Based on the table, most students agree that filling in the blanks while listening to songs helps them focus on the words and sounds. 11 students (36.7%) agree, and 4 students (13.3%) strongly agree. Only 5 students (16.7%) disagree. This means the activity is useful for improving listening focus.

Table 8. English songs help me recognize pronunciation and intonation more easily

English songs help me recognize pronunciation and intonation more easily.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	4	13.3	13.3	13.3
	3	8	26.7	26.7	40.0
	4	12	40.0	40.0	80.0
	5	6	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

The table shows that most students think English songs help them recognize pronunciation and intonation. 12 students (40%) agree, and 6 students (20%) strongly agree. Only 4 students (13.3%) disagree. This means that English songs are helpful for learning how words sound in English.

Table 9. Using English songs makes listening activities more enjoyable and less stressful

Using English songs makes listening activities more enjoyable and less stressful.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	5	16.7	16.7	16.7
	2	2	6.7	6.7	23.3
	3	9	30.0	30.0	53.3
	4	7	23.3	23.3	76.7
	5	7	23.3	23.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

The table shows that many students feel English songs make listening more fun and less stressful. 14 students (46.6%) gave a score of 4 or 5, which means they agree. 9 students (30%) were neutral. Only 7 students (23.4%) disagreed. This means most students enjoy listening activities more when using English songs.

Table 10. Teachers should include English songs regularly in classroom listening activities

Teachers should include English songs regularly in classroom listening activities.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	4	13.3	13.3	13.3
	3	5	16.7	16.7	30.0
	4	13	43.3	43.3	73.3
	5	8	26.7	26.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Most students think teachers should use English songs in class. 13 students (43.3%) agree, and 8 students (26.7%) strongly agree. Only 4 students (13.3%) disagree. This shows that students support the idea of using songs as part of classroom listening activities.

Table 11. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Using English songs in the classroom helps me understand spoken English better.	30	2	5	3.67	.994
English songs help improve my listening skills more than traditional listening exercises.	30	1	5	3.17	1.533
Slow-tempo English songs with clear lyrics are more helpful for improving listening skills.	30	1	5	3.60	1.221
I prefer listening to English songs rather than audio from textbooks in learning activities.	30	2	5	3.90	1.029
Listening to English songs regularly (e.g., once or twice a week) helps me improve my listening comprehension.	30	1	5	3.40	1.276
Filling in the blanks while listening to song lyrics helps me focus on the words and sounds.	30	2	5	3.47	.937
English songs help me recognize pronunciation and intonation more easily.	30	2	5	3.67	.959
Using English songs makes listening activities more enjoyable and less stressful.	30	1	5	3.30	1.368
Some English songs are too fast or unclear, making it difficult to understand the lyrics.	30	1	5	3.17	1.315
Teachers should include English songs regularly in classroom listening activities.	30	2	5	3.83	.986
Valid N (listwise)	30				

The results of the descriptive statistics show that students generally have positive attitudes toward using English songs in listening activities. Most students agree that English songs help them understand spoken English better ($M = 3.67$) and recognize pronunciation and intonation more easily ($M = 3.67$). They also prefer songs over traditional textbook audio ($M = 3.90$) and believe that teachers should include songs regularly in class ($M = 3.83$). These findings suggest that English songs are seen as an engaging and effective tool for improving listening skills.

However, some statements received more mixed responses. For example, when asked if English songs improve listening skills more than traditional exercises, the mean was 3.17, indicating a neutral tendency with a high standard deviation ($SD = 1.533$), showing that opinions vary widely. A similar pattern is seen in the statement about understanding songs that are too fast or unclear ($M = 3.17$, $SD = 1.315$). This suggests that while many students find songs helpful, the clarity and tempo of the songs used in class are important factors to consider.

Discussion

The findings of this study support existing theories that emphasize the importance of authentic and engaging listening materials in EFL learning. According to Harmer (2015), exposure to natural language input helps learners develop better listening comprehension. English songs provide authentic linguistic input, allowing students to hear natural pronunciation, rhythm, and intonation, which are often absent in textbook-based materials.

The positive impact of English songs on students' motivation is consistent with Murphey's (2018) theory, which states that music creates a relaxed and enjoyable learning atmosphere. When students feel less anxious, they are more willing to engage in listening tasks and take risks in understanding spoken language. This finding also aligns with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, which suggests that low anxiety and high motivation facilitate language acquisition.

Furthermore, students' preference for slow-tempo songs with clear lyrics confirms Goh's (2010) argument that listening materials should match learners' proficiency levels. Songs that are too fast may overload students' cognitive processing and hinder comprehension. Therefore, careful selection of listening materials is essential to ensure effective learning.

However, the variation in students' responses indicates that not all learners benefit equally from song-based listening activities. This supports the view that individual learning styles differ, and teachers should combine songs with other listening strategies to accommodate diverse learners.

Conclusion

This study concludes that English songs are an effective instructional medium for improving students' listening skills in an EFL classroom. The findings show that students perceive English songs as helpful in enhancing pronunciation awareness, vocabulary acquisition, and overall listening comprehension. In addition, song-based listening activities increase students' motivation, enjoyment, and engagement during English lessons.

The results also highlight the importance of song selection. Slow-tempo songs with clear lyrics are more suitable for junior high school students, while fast or unclear songs may cause comprehension difficulties. Therefore, teachers should carefully select songs based on students' language proficiency and provide supporting activities such as gap-filling or vocabulary preview to maximize learning outcomes.

The implications of this study suggest that English teachers should integrate English songs regularly into listening instruction as a complementary learning tool. Using songs can create a positive learning environment, reduce students' anxiety, and encourage active participation.

For future research, it is recommended to conduct experimental studies to measure the direct impact of English songs on listening achievement. Future researchers may also explore the use of different music genres, digital platforms, or investigate the effects of songs on other language skills such as speaking or pronunciation accuracy. Studies involving larger samples and different educational levels are also suggested to strengthen generalizability.

Recommendation

Based on the results of this study, there are several recommendations for English teachers, schools, and future researchers. First, English teachers are encouraged to use English songs regularly in listening lessons. Songs can help students improve their listening comprehension, pronunciation, and vocabulary in a fun and engaging way. Teachers should choose songs that are suitable for the students' level, especially songs with slow tempo and clear lyrics.

Second, it is important to combine songs with interactive activities, such as filling in the blanks, matching lyrics, or group discussions. These activities can help students focus more and enjoy the learning process. Teachers are also advised to prepare students before listening by introducing difficult vocabulary or giving context about the song.

Third, schools should support the use of music in the classroom by providing equipment like speakers or projectors, and allowing access to digital platforms. When learning becomes more enjoyable, students are more likely to be motivated and active in class.

Finally, for future researchers, it is recommended to explore the use of different genres of music or compare the use of songs in listening with other language skills such as speaking or writing. It would also be helpful to conduct similar research with a larger number of students or different age groups to see if the results are consistent.

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