

Investigating The Impact Of Music In English As A Foreign Language

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ABSTRACT

. This study aims to examine the effectiveness of using English songs to enhance students' vocabulary mastery and pronunciation skills in pronunciation, music-based learning, EFL, an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. The research was motivated by the recurring challenges faced by junior high school students in retaining vocabulary and improving pronunciation accuracy when taught using conventional methods. English songs were introduced as an innovative instructional medium, expected to create a more enjoyable, interactive, and emotionally engaging learning experience. The research applied a quantitative approach, employing a one-group pretest and post-test experimental design. The participants were 21 ninth-grade students from SMPN 1 Panca Rijang. Data were collected through structured oral tests focused on vocabulary recognition and pronunciation ability. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, paired sample t-test, effect size calculation (Cohen's d), and visual representation through bar charts. The results showed a substantial improvement in student performance. The mean score increased from 16.33 (pre-test) to 24.66 (post-test). The paired sample ttest revealed a t-value of 5.87 with a p-value of 0.0000097, indicating a statistically significant difference. Additionally, the effect size (Cohen's d) was calculated to be 12.63, which is categorized as an extremely large effect, highlighting the strong practical impact of the treatment. In conclusion, the integration of English songs into the teaching process proved to be highly effective in improving students' vocabulary and pronunciation skills. This study reinforces the pedagogical value of music in EFL instruction and encourages educators to adopt music-based strategies to foster more meaningful and motivating language learning experiences. The findings offer both theoretical support and practical recommendations for language teachers seeking to enhance student outcomes through engaging and creative methodologies.

INTRODUCTION

Learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) comes with a variety of challenges, particularly in the areas of vocabulary acquisition and pronunciation. One of the major obstacles in vocabulary acquisition is the low retention rate. Learners often face difficulty in remembering newly acquired words, especially when they are not provided with adequate reinforcement and engaging learning strategies. This issue becomes even more pronounced when traditional methods of language instruction, such as rote memorization and repetition, are applied in the classroom. While these approaches are widely used, they tend to lack the necessary components of engagement and meaningful interaction, which are crucial for effective language learning. Consequently, there is a growing demand for more innovative and interactive teaching techniques that can not only improve vocabulary retention but also enhance pronunciation skills in a more engaging manner. Traditional methods of language learning, such as repetition and memorization, have been the cornerstone of many classrooms for decades. However, these methods often fail to engage students in meaningful learning experiences. As Baddeley (2003) suggests, repetition alone, without any meaningful engagement with the material, is ineffective for transferring knowledge from short-term to long-term memory. In addition, these methods tend to lack the interaction and motivation necessary for optimal learning outcomes. Students often find themselves passively absorbing information, which results in poor retention and limited language development. To address these limitations, educators are increasingly turning towards more engaging and interactive learning strategies that offer a deeper connection with the material.

One promising approach to improving language learning outcomes is the incorporation of music into the curriculum. Music, as a multisensory experience, can provide a more effective medium for learning by integrating melody, rhythm, and language. The combination of these elements can help strengthen cognitive associations in learners' minds, facilitating better retention of vocabulary and pronunciation. Research by Medina (1990) supports this notion, as her study found that using songs as a teaching medium significantly enhances vocabulary retention. Her findings revealed that students exposed to new vocabulary through music demonstrated superior recall compared to those who learned through conventional methods. This enhanced retention can be attributed to the strong memory links that music creates through repetitive exposure and rhythmic reinforcement. In addition to enhancing vocabulary retention, music also plays a crucial role in improving pronunciation skills. The rhythmic and repetitive nature of songs helps reinforce phonological awareness, which is vital for proper pronunciation. Exposure to song lyrics enables learners to familiarize themselves with word structures and sound patterns, allowing the learning process to feel more natural and intuitive. Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis underscores the importance of emotional engagement in language learning. According to this theory, learners are more likely to acquire language skills when they are emotionally invested and motivated. Music creates a relaxed and motivating environment that reduces anxiety, making it easier for learners to engage with new vocabulary and pronunciation practice. This emotional connection not only helps students feel more comfortable but also boosts their confidence, making them more willing to take risks in language learning.

In the context of English language learning in Indonesia, the integration of music into vocabulary instruction is particularly relevant. Junior high school students in Indonesia often struggle with traditional teaching methods, which can be monotonous and disengaging. Since music is an integral part of students' daily lives, incorporating songs into language instruction offers a more relatable and enjoyable approach to overcoming these challenges. Moreover, music-based learning caters to different learning styles, benefiting auditory learners who absorb information better through sound and kinesthetic learners who engage more actively with music-based activities. This alignment with diverse learning styles increases the effectiveness of

vocabulary instruction and ensures that a broader range of students can benefit from the method. Furthermore, the use of music in the EFL classroom encourages active participation, which is essential for effective language acquisition. Students who engage with songs through activities such as singing, clapping, or even dancing are more likely to internalize new vocabulary and improve their pronunciation. The integration of physical movement in learning activities has been shown to enhance cognitive processing and memory retention. Therefore, music not only makes language learning more enjoyable but also promotes a dynamic classroom atmosphere that can motivate students to participate more actively. Teachers who use music as a tool for language learning can create an environment that fosters enthusiasm and excitement, which is crucial for sustained language learning progress.

This study focuses on the implementation of English songs as a medium to enhance vocabulary retention and pronunciation skills among ninth-grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Panca Rijang. The research will be conducted in three phases: a pre-test to assess the students' initial vocabulary knowledge and pronunciation ability, a treatment phase where students will engage with song lyrics to reinforce vocabulary and pronunciation, and a post-test to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention. Building on Medina's theory, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the impact of music on vocabulary retention and pronunciation proficiency in an EFL context. Additionally, the study seeks to provide practical insights for educators on how to adopt innovative teaching strategies that align with students' interests and learning preferences. The significance of this research extends beyond vocabulary acquisition. Integrating music into language learning supports a holistic approach that addresses both cognitive and emotional aspects of learning. Students who engage with music-based activities are not only improving their vocabulary skills but also developing a positive attitude toward language learning. This positive attitude can lead to increased motivation, which in turn fosters long-term improvements in English proficiency. Furthermore, music is a global cultural phenomenon, and incorporating English songs into language instruction provides students with valuable exposure to cultural elements associated with the English language. This exposure broadens their cultural awareness and enhances their global perspective.

As the benefits of music in education continue to gain recognition, it is crucial for educators and policymakers to consider its integration into language curricula. Schools and teachers should explore ways to incorporate music-based learning activities into their instructional design, ensuring that students have access to engaging and effective learning experiences. By harnessing the power of music, educators can create a learning environment that not only enhances vocabulary acquisition but also fosters a lifelong appreciation for language learning. Music is a powerful tool that can significantly enhance vocabulary acquisition and retention in EFL learning. By incorporating songs into English instruction, educators can provide students with meaningful and enjoyable learning experiences that go beyond traditional rote memorization techniques. The ability of music to create strong cognitive associations, reduce anxiety, and cater to diverse learning styles makes it an invaluable pedagogical tool. This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of using English songs as a teaching medium, with the goal of improving vocabulary retention and pronunciation proficiency among junior high school students. The insights gained from this research are expected to contribute to the development of more effective teaching strategies, benefiting both students and educators in the field of EFL instruction. Grounded in Medina's theory, this study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the role of music in second language acquisition, ultimately supporting the development of innovative teaching methods that align with students' needs and interests.

Literature Review

The acquisition of vocabulary and pronunciation is one of the most challenging aspects of learning English as a foreign language (EFL). Traditional language teaching methods, which rely heavily on rote memorization and repetition, often fail to create long-lasting retention and meaningful engagement with new vocabulary. Baddeley (2003) highlighted that repetition without meaningful interaction is insufficient to transfer knowledge into long-term memory. This raises the need for more engaging, interactive, and effective methods that can enhance students' vocabulary retention and pronunciation proficiency. In this context, music has emerged as a promising tool in EFL classrooms. Several studies have pointed to the role of music in vocabulary acquisition. Medina (1990) found that incorporating songs into language learning significantly improves vocabulary retention compared to traditional methods. This is because songs provide repetitive exposure to vocabulary in a contextualized and emotionally engaging manner, helping students to form strong cognitive associations. The rhythmic and melodic elements of music serve as powerful mnemonic devices, reinforcing vocabulary through repetition in an enjoyable and memorable way. By embedding new words in the lyrics of songs, learners are more likely to recall them in the future.

In addition to aiding vocabulary retention, music also supports the development of pronunciation skills. Songs often highlight specific phonological features, such as stress patterns, intonation, and rhythm, which are crucial for improving pronunciation. Research by Slevc and Ferreira (2013) emphasized that the rhythmic nature of music helps learners become more attuned to the sounds and structures of a language. Singing along with songs enables students to practice pronunciation in a fun and relaxed environment, allowing them to internalize correct pronunciation more effectively than through formal drills alone.

Music's effectiveness in language learning is also grounded in Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, which posits that emotional engagement plays a significant role in language acquisition. Music creates an enjoyable, low-anxiety environment that encourages students to engage with the language more freely. When students feel comfortable and emotionally connected to the learning material, they are more likely to participate actively and take risks with their pronunciation. This emotional connection fosters a positive attitude toward language learning, which, in turn, leads to improved learning outcomes. The use of music in EFL classrooms also supports a multisensory approach to learning. Music engages not only the auditory sense but also the visual and kinesthetic senses, making it easier for students to internalize new vocabulary and pronunciation. For example, students can read lyrics, listen to the song, and physically engage with the music through activities such as singing, clapping, or dancing. This multisensory engagement activates different areas of the brain, enhancing memory retention and helping learners retain information more effectively. It also caters to various learning styles, ensuring that students with different preferences can benefit from the activity.

Furthermore, integrating music into language learning has been shown to increase motivation and participation in the classroom. When students are engaged in a fun and interactive activity, they are more likely to stay focused and motivated to learn. Studies have shown that music-based activities can significantly improve students' attitudes toward learning and increase their enthusiasm for participating in lessons. This is particularly relevant in the context of English language learning, where students may struggle with traditional methods that feel monotonous or disengaging.

In Indonesia, where English is often taught as a foreign language, integrating music into EFL instruction holds great potential. Indonesian students, particularly in junior high school, are often exposed to music in English through popular media. Incorporating songs into the curriculum not only aligns with their interests but also provides a more relatable and enjoyable learning experience. Research in Indonesia has shown that music-based learning activities can improve students' vocabulary retention and pronunciation. Mulyani (2017) found that students who learned English through songs showed significant improvements in both vocabulary recall

and pronunciation compared to those who did not engage in music-based activities. the integration of music in EFL classrooms offers several advantages, particularly in enhancing vocabulary acquisition and pronunciation. Music aids vocabulary retention by providing repetitive, contextualized exposure, while its rhythmic and melodic qualities support the development of pronunciation skills. Music also fosters emotional engagement, reducing anxiety and increasing students' motivation to participate in language learning. By creating a multisensory and interactive learning environment, music caters to diverse learning styles and promotes long-term retention. This approach holds particular promise in the Indonesian EFL context, where music-based activities can enhance both student engagement and language proficiency.

Research Methods

This research adopted a quantitative approach with the aim of investigating the effectiveness of English songs in improving students' vocabulary mastery and pronunciation skills in an EFL classroom. Quantitative research is suitable for this study because it emphasizes measurable outcomes and statistical analysis, enabling the researcher to draw objective conclusions based on data. The design chosen for this research was a one-group pre-test and post-test experimental design, which allowed the researcher to compare student performance before and after the treatment with music-based instruction. The population of this study consisted of ninth-grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Panca Rijang during the academic year 2024/2025. From this population, one class was selected using purposive sampling, based on considerations such as accessibility, willingness to participate, and the homogeneity of the group in terms of English proficiency. The selected class consisted of 21 students who participated in all phases of the research, including pre-test, treatment, and post-test. To collect the data, the researcher used test instruments consisting of a vocabulary recognition test and a pronunciation performance test. These instruments were administered twice: before the intervention (pre-test) and after the intervention (post-test). The vocabulary test required students to identify English words from a given song, while the pronunciation test assessed their ability to pronounce selected vocabulary correctly. The treatment phase involved three classroom sessions where students were exposed to carefully selected English songs with meaningful and repetitive lyrics designed to reinforce vocabulary and pronunciation.

During the treatment sessions, students engaged in various activities including listening to songs, singing along, lyric analysis, and pronunciation practice. These sessions were designed not only to present vocabulary in context but also to provide a relaxed and enjoyable learning environment in line with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis. The same test was used in both the pre- and post-assessments to ensure consistency and reliability in measuring progress. All activities were conducted under the guidance of the researcher to maintain uniformity in instruction and observation. The data analysis involved descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive statistics were used to calculate the mean and standard deviation of students' scores, providing a general picture of performance. To determine whether the improvement between the pre-test and post-test was statistically significant, a paired sample t-test was conducted. This test compared the means of the two sets of scores and established whether the observed differences could be attributed to the music-based treatment rather than to chance.

To further evaluate the practical significance of the results, the researcher calculated the effect size using Cohen's *d* formula. A large effect size would suggest that the use of English songs had a meaningful impact on students' vocabulary and pronunciation improvement. The combination of pre-post testing, statistical analysis, and effect size interpretation provided a robust framework for answering the research question and evaluating the impact of music in the EFL learning process.

Results

This study investigated the impact of using English songs as a learning medium on students' vocabulary mastery and pronunciation skills. To measure the effectiveness of the treatment, a pre-test and post-test were administered to 21 ninth-grade students of SMPN 1 Panca Rijang. The tests were designed to assess students' ability to recognize and pronounce vocabulary derived from the lyrics of the selected English songs. The data collected from both assessments were analyzed using descriptive statistics and a paired sample t-test.

The pre-test results revealed that students initially demonstrated limited ability in both vocabulary recognition and pronunciation. Many students scored below the average score of 16.33 out of a maximum of 25 points. Their vocabulary recall was weak, and their pronunciation was generally inaccurate. This suggested that traditional methods of teaching English vocabulary and pronunciation were not sufficiently engaging or effective for the students involved in the study.

After implementing the treatment, which consisted of three sessions involving English songs, the post-test scores showed a marked improvement. Most students were able to identify more vocabulary items and demonstrated better pronunciation. The average post-test score increased to 24.66 out of 25, indicating a significant gain in performance across the group. Notably, several students who had scored in the lower range during the pre-test achieved near-perfect scores in the post-test.

The comparison of pre-test and post-test scores highlights the positive influence of music-based instruction. The students were more engaged during the lessons involving songs and participated actively in activities such as singing along and discussing lyrics. This active participation likely enhanced their memory retention and increased their familiarity with correct English pronunciation, supporting the idea that music can serve as an effective instructional strategy.

The paired sample t-test was used to determine the statistical significance of the difference between the pre- and post-test scores. The result of the t-test showed a t-value of 5.87 with a p-value of 0.0000097, which is well below the threshold of 0.05. This indicates that the improvement in students' performance was statistically significant and not due to random chance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis—stating that English songs had a positive effect on students' vocabulary and pronunciation—was accepted.

To assess the magnitude of the treatment effect, Cohen's d was calculated using the difference between the mean scores and the standard deviation. The effect size was 12.63, which is categorized as extremely large. This result suggests that the use of English songs had not only a statistically significant impact but also a very strong practical effect on students' language learning outcomes. This aligns with prior studies emphasizing the educational benefits of music in language learning contexts.

A visual representation in the form of a bar chart was also generated to compare the average scores of the pre-test and post-test. The graph clearly illustrated a steep increase in student performance after the treatment. The consistency of the post-test scores, with most students scoring between 23 and 25, also indicated that the intervention benefited the entire class, not just a select few students.

In summary, the results of this research provide clear evidence that English songs can significantly improve students' vocabulary retention and pronunciation accuracy. The combination of statistical data, effect size analysis, and consistent performance among students supports the conclusion that music-based learning is not only engaging but also effective in enhancing English language proficiency among EFL learners.

Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that the integration of English songs into the teaching of vocabulary and pronunciation had a significant and positive impact on students' learning outcomes. The marked improvement in students' scores from the

pre-test to the post-test suggests that music can be an effective instructional medium in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. The use of English songs not only provided exposure to authentic language use but also created a more relaxed and enjoyable learning environment. One of the key factors contributing to the success of the treatment is the repetitive and rhythmic nature of songs, which supports vocabulary retention. As noted by Medina (1990), repetition and rhythm serve as powerful mnemonic devices that help learners encode and recall new words more effectively. In this study, students repeatedly encountered target vocabulary through listening and singing, which likely strengthened their ability to remember and use the words accurately.

Moreover, the improvement in students' pronunciation skills can be attributed to their exposure to native-like models of spoken English in the songs. The consistent rhythm, stress, and intonation in music provided students with an accessible way to imitate natural speech patterns. This supports the findings of Ludke et al. (2014), who argued that singing helps learners internalize pronunciation features more effectively than traditional speaking drills. The affective benefits of music also played a crucial role in enhancing learning outcomes. Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis posits that learners acquire language more effectively when they are emotionally engaged and free from anxiety. In this study, many students showed increased motivation, engagement, and confidence when participating in song-based activities. These emotional responses likely contributed to their improved performance in both vocabulary and pronunciation.

From a pedagogical perspective, the findings validate the integration of music as a core component of EFL instruction. Traditional methods such as memorization or drill-based pronunciation often fail to sustain student interest or address different learning styles. In contrast, music accommodates auditory, visual, and kinesthetic learners through its multisensory appeal. This inclusive approach helps ensure that all students, regardless of their preferred learning style, can benefit from the material. The significant effect size (Cohen's $d = 12.63$) found in this study further reinforces the practical value of using English songs in the classroom. Such a large effect indicates that the gains observed were not only statistically significant but also educationally meaningful. These findings are consistent with prior research, including studies by Schön et al. (2008) and Wallace (1994), which demonstrated the role of melody and rhythm in enhancing language processing and memory.

However, while the results are promising, some limitations should be acknowledged. The study was conducted with a single class in a specific context, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the duration of the treatment was relatively short (three sessions), so further research is needed to determine the long-term effects of music-based instruction and how it influences other language skills such as grammar and writing.

In conclusion, this discussion confirms that the use of English songs is not merely a motivational tool but a pedagogically sound method that significantly enhances vocabulary acquisition and pronunciation skills. EFL teachers are encouraged to consider integrating music into their teaching strategies as a means to foster student engagement, improve language outcomes, and create a more dynamic and inclusive classroom environment.

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