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Do You Like Listening To Song? : Students' Perspective On Vocabulary Learning Through English Song

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Abstrak

This study aims to examine students' perspectives on the use of English songs as a medium for vocabulary learning at MAN Negeri 1 Probolinggo. In the context of English language learning, vocabulary mastery plays an important role as the foundation for effective language proficiency. However, the lack of interest among students in learning English is often caused by unengaging teaching methods. Songs as a learning medium are presented to create a fun and interactive learning atmosphere. Through a qualitative approach, this research collects data from interviews, observations, and documentation of students participating in music-based English extracurricular activities. The research results show that songs can enhance learning motivation, facilitate vocabulary mastery, and improve listening and pronunciation skills. Students' positive perception of this method encourages increased engagement and understanding in English language learning. Therefore, the integration of songs in vocabulary learning can be an effective strategy to overcome affective barriers and improve student learning outcomes. This study recommends the implementation of more interactive and contextual learning methods, as well as the optimization of using songs as a medium for English language learning.

Kata kunci: Vocabulary, Song, English Learning, Student Perception

1. Background

Language is a fundamental aspect of human cognition and communication. It serves not only as a tool for expressing thoughts but also as a medium for abstract reasoning. According to (Block, 2023), language allows individuals to represent factual objects through abstract symbols, enabling them to conceptualize and reflect on things even in their physical absence. This abstract capacity of language facilitates critical thinking, imagination, and complex communication. Through language, individuals can share experiences, exchange knowledge, and build relationships. Moreover, language is at the core of educational development, providing the foundation for learning across various domains.

Among the many languages spoken globally, English holds a special status as an international lingua franca. Its widespread use in diplomacy, business, science, and education has positioned it as a critical skill in the 21st century. Proficiency in English encompasses four core skills listening, speaking, reading, and writing each contributing to effective communication. English is not merely a subject in school curricula; rather, it is a gateway for accessing global knowledge and opportunities (Rose et al., 2021). For students, acquiring English proficiency is essential not only for academic success but also for professional competitiveness in a rapidly globalizing world. However, achieving fluency in English remains a challenge in many educational contexts, especially where it is taught as a foreign language.

The challenges in English language learning are multifaceted, particularly in regions where students have limited exposure to English outside the classroom. In Indonesia, for instance, English is often introduced relatively late in the educational journey, typically starting at the secondary level. This delay, coupled with traditional teaching methods, affects students' motivation and performance. (Wiangga, 2024) emphasize that the lack of interest in learning English among students is partly due to uninspiring instructional approaches and limited teacher engagement. Many teachers rely heavily on textbooks without integrating innovative or student-centered methods, which results in a passive learning experience (Tang, 2023). The consequences are evident in students' limited vocabulary and their struggle to engage with English in meaningful ways.

This issue is particularly observable at MAN Negeri 1 Probolinggo, where English instruction is often treated as a formality. Students participate in English classes out of obligation rather than intrinsic motivation. The result is a notable deficiency in vocabulary acquisition, a core component of language learning. (Zhang & Graham, 2020)

argue that vocabulary knowledge is a crucial predictor of language proficiency, and without adequate vocabulary, students cannot fully engage in listening, speaking, reading, or writing tasks. Despite the increasing emphasis on English proficiency due to globalization, many students at MAN Negeri 1 Probolinggo continue to struggle due to the lack of meaningful and engaging instructional practices. This disconnect between institutional expectations and students' learning experiences needs to be addressed through more dynamic teaching strategies.

One of the promising methods to enhance student engagement in English learning is the integration of music, particularly English songs, into the classroom. Songs can serve as an enjoyable and effective medium for vocabulary acquisition. The rhythmic and repetitive nature of music aids memory retention and helps in contextualizing new words. As noted by (Wu et al., 2023), music creates an immersive environment that fosters language learning by engaging students emotionally and cognitively. Moreover, songs reflect authentic language use, which helps learners grasp pronunciation, grammar, and idiomatic expressions in a natural and enjoyable manner. In classrooms where students report boredom and disengagement, songs can revitalize the learning atmosphere and promote active participation.

Several recent studies have highlighted the effectiveness of using songs in English language instruction. For example, (Rahmania & Mandasari, 2021) explored students' perceptions of using English songs to improve pronunciation. Their findings indicated a positive response, with students reporting greater enjoyment and ease in mastering pronunciation. Similarly, (Afriyuninda & Oktaviani, 2021) investigated the impact of English songs on students' overall language skills. They concluded that songs provide an accessible and enjoyable learning tool, especially for vocabulary and listening practice. Another relevant study by (Rahmawati, 2023) examined the use of English lyric analysis to improve grammar proficiency among high school students. The study demonstrated measurable improvements in grammar scores, showing that songs can contribute to multiple aspects of language development. These findings align with the notion that engaging, context-rich media like songs can enhance students' motivation and effectiveness in learning English.

Building on these insights, this study aims to explore students' perspectives on learning English vocabulary through songs, particularly at MAN Negeri 1 Probolinggo. Unlike previous studies that focused on specific language skills such as pronunciation or grammar, this research centers on vocabulary acquisition, which is foundational to all other language competencies. By understanding how students perceive the use of songs in vocabulary learning, educators can better tailor instructional approaches to align with student preferences and learning styles. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the growing body of literature on alternative and engaging methods for foreign language instruction, providing practical implications for English teachers, curriculum developers, and policymakers in similar educational contexts.

2. Research Method

This study employed a qualitative research approach to explore the perceptions and experiences of both students and teachers concerning the use of music as a learning medium for enhancing English vocabulary (Cresswell, 2013). The research was conducted at MA Negeri 1 Probolinggo and involved eight tenth-grade students participating in an English extracurricular program that integrates music-based learning. Each week, the English teacher selected songs relevant to the lesson content to help students discover, comprehend, and apply new vocabulary. This approach allowed students to engage with authentic English input in an enjoyable and meaningful context. According to (Cresswell, 2013), qualitative methods are effective for capturing the complexity of learner experiences in natural settings, making them suitable for exploring student engagement through musical media.

Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews with both students and teachers, classroom observations, and documentation analysis. The interviews aimed to investigate participants' perceptions of the effectiveness, benefits, and limitations of using English songs in vocabulary learning. Observations focused on how students interacted with the material and used new vocabulary in various classroom activities. Additionally, documentation in the form of students' assignments, song lyrics, and vocabulary worksheets was collected to assess progress in vocabulary acquisition over time. This triangulation of data sources enhances the validity of the study, as recommended by (Liang, 2019), ensuring that multiple perspectives are taken into account in the analysis.

Furthermore, a questionnaire was used as a supplementary instrument to quantify students' engagement and attitudes toward learning English through songs. The instrument was designed based on (Salmia, 2023) theoretical framework, which emphasizes the pedagogical value of English lyrics in improving listening comprehension, pronunciation, and vocabulary skills. The questionnaire was adapted and validated by the researcher, following the guidelines suggested by (Afriyuninda & Oktaviani, 2021), to ensure it accurately captured student perceptions and learning outcomes in the context of music-integrated language instruction.

3. Results and Discussion

This research aims to observe the improvement in students' vocabulary gained from English-language music audiovisual media. Proficiency in English is understood as a competency that must be learned and practiced continuously. The ability to master and understand a language cannot be obtained without effort and hard work. The ability to read, understand, and master a text is integrated into an activity called reading. Reading an English text is not just an activity to know the topic, content, and information contained in the text (Dewantara et al., 2022).

Based on the research problem, this study attempts to analyze a perspective on the use of English songs as a method of English language learning at the Excellent Language Organization (EXO) Dormitory. Therefore, this aims to understand a student's perspective on the use of English songs in vocabulary learning and to identify the factors experienced in their personal experiences.

Students Perspective

Perception is broadly understood as an individual's way of interpreting and making sense of experiences based on what they see, feel, and undergo in various contexts. In the educational context, student perception reflects their subjective interpretation of learning materials, instructional methods, or educational environments (Singh et al., 2023). These perceptions influence how they engage with the learning process and their motivation toward academic achievement. As (Wang et al., 2022) notes, perception is not merely a passive reception of information but an active cognitive process involving evaluation and judgment. Every student has a unique perspective based on prior knowledge, emotions, and experiences. When students perceive learning positively, they are more likely to feel inspired and committed to achieving their educational goals. Conversely, negative perceptions may inhibit participation and reduce academic outcomes. Therefore, understanding students' perceptions is critical for creating a responsive and effective learning environment that aligns with their cognitive and emotional needs (Strahan & Poteat, 2022).

Perception is highly individualized, rooted in each person's prior experiences and emotional framework, which explains the variety of opinions students may express toward similar classroom activities or content. (Ingold, 2021) defines perception as the process by which individuals interpret their environment and assign meaning to what they observe. This uniqueness often leads to diverse reactions toward a single instructional method. For example, while one student may find music-based vocabulary learning exciting and engaging, another may perceive it as distracting or unhelpful (Karolina, 2024). These differing views can influence classroom dynamics, engagement levels, and overall student achievement. Perceptions are thus closely linked to self-concept and personal beliefs about learning capabilities (Guo et al., 2022). Educators must recognize that these perceptions are not fixed but can be shaped by inclusive, student-centered pedagogies that validate learners' voices and promote adaptive feedback mechanisms (Bhardwaj et al., 2025).

Student perceptions can generally be categorized into two types: positive and negative. Positive perceptions often lead to proactive behaviors, such as attentiveness, participation, and curiosity. According to (Feather, 2021), students who perceive a learning method as useful are more likely to engage actively and apply the knowledge. In contrast, negative perceptions may result in resistance, disengagement, or passive learning attitudes. These distinctions align with the findings of (Tran, 2020), who observed that students' attitudes toward language instruction significantly influenced their vocabulary acquisition. A positive perception fosters receptiveness, while a negative one generates disinterest and cognitive barriers. Importantly, perception is not static it evolves through reinforcement and continuous exposure. For example, a student initially skeptical about using songs in language learning may develop a positive outlook once they experience its effectiveness. Teachers must therefore be intentional in creating meaningful, relevant, and enjoyable learning experiences that encourage favorable student perceptions (Amerstorfer & Frein von Münster-Kistner, 2021).

Multiple internal and external factors shape students' perceptions, including cultural background, motivation, past learning experiences, and learning environment. (Alamri et al., 2020) emphasize the significance of personal traits such as learning style and intrinsic motivation in determining how students perceive instructional methods. (Getie, 2020) argue that cultural influences can shape attitudes toward language learning and communication strategies. Internal factors refer to cognitive and emotional attributes such as confidence, interest, and prior knowledge, while external factors include classroom atmosphere, teacher behavior, peer interaction, and access to learning materials. These variables create a mental framework that influences how a student interprets a learning method. In the context of this study, music-based vocabulary learning may be embraced more readily by students from expressive or auditory-oriented backgrounds, whereas others may struggle to relate. Educators need to be aware of these nuanced influences to design instructional strategies that are inclusive, flexible, and culturally responsive (Getie, 2020)

The process of perception, as described by (Nurkhamidah, 2021), involves three stages: selection, organization, and interpretation. First, individuals selectively attend to stimuli in their environment based on their needs and expectations. Next, they organize this information into meaningful categories, and finally, they interpret it based

on prior experiences and context. This process explains why students may respond differently to the same teaching strategy. For example, a student with previous positive exposure to English songs may organize and interpret music-integrated vocabulary lessons more favorably than one without such experience. As stated by (Naibert et al., 2022), perception is filtered through layers of prior experience, emotional readiness, and cognitive engagement. External encouragement and structured classroom guidance can support students in progressing through these perceptual stages with greater openness. Understanding these stages allows educators to intervene effectively when students exhibit resistance or confusion toward a specific learning method (Chew & Cerbin, 2021).

Perspective, a product of perception, is highly relevant in the adoption of innovative educational media, such as music for vocabulary learning. (Nurhasanah & Suryaman, 2022) argue that recognizing students' perspectives is essential for developing effective teaching materials that resonate with learners' interests and preferences. This perspective helps educators tailor their methods and foster positive attitudes toward learning innovations. For instance, when students perceive song-based vocabulary learning as enjoyable, they are more likely to engage enthusiastically and retain new terms. In support, (Somers & Llinares, 2021) found that integrating students' preferences into lesson planning significantly improved motivation and language retention. Educators who ignore student perspectives risk implementing strategies that feel irrelevant or ineffective to learners. Thus, incorporating student feedback into curriculum development fosters a collaborative classroom culture and ensures instructional approaches remain learner-centered and adaptive to evolving educational needs (Bhardwaj et al., 2025).

Vocabulary Learning

In the realm of English language learning, vocabulary occupies a central and indispensable role. It is widely acknowledged that vocabulary underpins the mastery of the four core language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. As (Thalib et al., 2024) note, many language experts now equate the importance of vocabulary with these primary skills, arguing that it forms the structural foundation of any language. Without sufficient vocabulary, learners cannot comprehend texts, construct sentences, or express ideas meaningfully. Vocabulary encompasses the set of words used in a particular language, each carrying distinct meanings and contextual uses. Its mastery allows learners to decode and encode messages effectively, making communication coherent and purposeful. According to (Normurodovna, 2025), vocabulary knowledge enables learners to participate more fully in both academic and real-world conversations. Therefore, acquiring a robust vocabulary is not just beneficial that it is essential for meaningful and functional language use.

Vocabulary acquisition is not only a component of language learning but also its core, directly influencing learners' ability to communicate fluently and accurately. (Al Habsyi et al., 2024) stress that vocabulary learning should be prioritized in language instruction, as limited word knowledge significantly impedes both comprehension and production. Students with restricted vocabularies often struggle to form coherent sentences, grasp reading passages, or engage in conversations. Mastering vocabulary opens doors to understanding context, inferring meaning, and applying words appropriately in different communicative settings. This ultimately supports reading comprehension and writing proficiency. Additionally, as (White, 2021) points out, vocabulary acquisition lays the groundwork for internalizing grammar and syntax. Hence, educators must adopt vocabulary-focused pedagogies, integrating word learning strategies into all language activities. Doing so not only supports general language acquisition but also fosters student autonomy in learning new words independently.

A rich vocabulary repertoire significantly enhances students' performance across all language domains. (Suryanto et al., 2021) emphasize that vocabulary development directly correlates with students' success in mastering the four language skills and understanding components like pronunciation, idioms, and grammar. The greater a learner's vocabulary bank, the easier it becomes for them to comprehend spoken language, articulate ideas clearly, and decode written texts. Moreover, sufficient vocabulary allows for greater accuracy and fluency in both oral and written communication. As (Choi & Zhang, 2021) explain, lexical knowledge also contributes to grammatical competence, as word choice often determines appropriate syntactic structure. Vocabulary learning therefore acts as a bridge between passive language exposure and active language production. In educational contexts, vocabulary is seen not only as a linguistic element but also as a cognitive asset that enhances students' capacity for analytical thinking, critical reading, and creative expression across disciplines.

In second language acquisition (SLA), vocabulary plays a crucial role in learner comprehension and communicative performance. Wei (2021) asserts that without adequate vocabulary, learners are unable to effectively engage in meaningful communication or academic discourse. Vocabulary limitations frequently hinder learners from participating in class discussions, writing essays, or understanding oral instructions. Consequently, building a strong vocabulary base becomes a prerequisite for advanced language development. (Namaziandost et al., 2021) also argue that vocabulary knowledge is vital for students to understand language use in various contexts, including idiomatic expressions, academic registers, and informal conversation. In the absence of this knowledge, learners face difficulties not only in expressing ideas but also in understanding others. Therefore, language

programs must systematically and consistently include vocabulary instruction, ensuring that learners are exposed to, practice, and apply new words in meaningful and contextualized ways.

One of the major challenges in vocabulary learning lies in students' ability to retain and recall new words. While exposure to vocabulary is necessary, it is not sufficient without meaningful reinforcement. (Pamzan et al., 2023) found that learners who struggle with vocabulary recall often lack motivation to engage in productive language tasks, particularly in writing. Similarly, (Teng et al., 2021) emphasizes that without frequent and contextual practice, vocabulary is easily forgotten, undermining learners' confidence and fluency. Memorization strategies must therefore be combined with practical usage, such as through storytelling, dialogue practice, and multimedia engagement. In this way, vocabulary becomes more than a list of words to memorize which it becomes a tool for communication. Additionally, using songs, games, or interactive tools can significantly increase learners' retention by embedding vocabulary in emotionally and cognitively engaging experiences, further promoting long-term acquisition and application.

Vocabulary learning encompasses several essential dimensions: meaning, pronunciation, spelling, and usage in context. Understanding the meaning of words enables students to derive accurate interpretations of spoken or written discourse. Pronunciation allows learners to articulate words clearly and be understood by others, while spelling ensures correct representation in written communication. According to (Newton & Nation, 2020), vocabulary knowledge also involves active (productive) and passive (receptive) vocabulary. Active vocabulary consists of words students use regularly, while passive vocabulary includes words they recognize but rarely use. Familiarity with both is essential for comprehensive language development. Idiomatic expressions, for example, enrich students' ability to communicate naturally and culturally appropriately. Furthermore, vocabulary learning fosters students' ability to express their ideas both in spoken and written forms, contributing to greater communicative competence. As highlighted by (Numonova, 2024), instruction that integrates vocabulary into meaningful context ensures that learners not only recognize new words but also understand how to use them effectively.

English Song

English songs function not only as an engaging form of entertainment but also as an effective pedagogical tool in language learning. As (Kumar et al., 2022) assert, songs serve as an unlimited media resource that students can access anytime, inside or outside the classroom. Their flexible nature makes them ideal for supplementary vocabulary instruction, allowing learners to revisit and practice language repeatedly. According to (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2020), songs enhance language acquisition by presenting vocabulary in context, offering meaningful repetition, and introducing students to natural pronunciation and sentence patterns. Songs also create a relaxed, enjoyable environment that fosters learner motivation and reduces language anxiety. This combination of linguistic, emotional, and motivational benefits positions songs as an effective medium for both formal and informal vocabulary development. As such, their use in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms has become increasingly favored by teachers aiming to make language learning both effective and enjoyable.

The integration of songs into the language classroom offers substantial benefits for the continuity of learning. (Fitriana, 2021) emphasizes that songs are a rich learning resource, capable of inspiring learners and promoting positive attitudes toward English. Students are more likely to enjoy the process of acquiring new words when learning is embedded in musical contexts that feel natural and meaningful. Moreover, songs expose learners to real-life usage of language, enabling them to grasp pragmatic and cultural elements that textbooks might overlook. (Avdiu, 2021) highlights that both students and educators globally have acknowledged the motivational power of songs in second language acquisition. The familiarity and accessibility of music can improve learners' engagement and increase their willingness to interact with the language more frequently. Thus, the use of English songs goes beyond linguistic development, contributing to learner confidence and a more holistic understanding of language as part of everyday culture and communication.

Songs also play a pivotal role in supporting vocabulary acquisition by leveraging melody, rhythm, and repetition. The repetitive nature of song lyrics helps reinforce word recognition and memorization, while rhythmic cues facilitate recall with minimal cognitive effort. Students often retain words encountered in songs more easily than those encountered in textbooks due to the auditory and emotional connection established through music. Additionally, songs can energize the classroom and stimulate learners' enthusiasm, creating a positive emotional environment conducive to learning (Bao, 2023). Emotional engagement is a critical component of effective vocabulary learning, as it enhances memory and cognitive processing. By integrating English songs into vocabulary instruction, teachers can bridge cognitive and affective domains, enabling students to learn with enjoyment. This emotional resonance helps anchor new vocabulary into long-term memory, making songs an invaluable addition to any language learning toolkit.

Beyond vocabulary development, English songs also support learners' bodily-kinesthetic and emotional intelligences. (Kumalasari & Wulandari, 2025) observed that learners show increased motor engagement—such

as gestures, head movements, and expressive facial reactions when interacting with music-based learning activities. These physical responses are signs of embodied learning, where language input is processed through sensory and motor channels, leading to deeper cognitive absorption. Movement linked to rhythm can enhance memory and make learning more dynamic and multi-sensory. As (Juntunen, 2020) notes, the use of music in language education contributes to a more holistic form of engagement, involving both physical and emotional dimensions. This kind of active learning environment helps students feel more comfortable and confident, thereby improving their ability to comprehend and retain new vocabulary. Thus, music-based vocabulary learning supports not only linguistic development but also emotional regulation and physical expressiveness, reinforcing the idea that learning should address multiple intelligences.

Songs also encourage speaking, pronunciation, and listening practice in a way that feels effortless and enjoyable for students. According to (Saldiraner & Cinkara, 2021), learners who frequently engage with English songs benefit from improved pronunciation, intonation, and rhythm, as they tend to imitate the natural flow of native speakers. The repetitive structure of songs also facilitates listening comprehension, allowing students to decode spoken language more easily over time. Moreover, through repeated exposure, students begin to internalize chunks of language and sentence structures without formal instruction. (Sakhaei et al., 2024) emphasize that such implicit learning helps bridge the gap between passive vocabulary recognition and active language use. By practicing songs repeatedly, students become familiar with new vocabulary and phrases, embedding them into long-term memory. Thus, the use of songs enables vocabulary learning to be more than rote memorization it becomes experiential, contextual, and participatory.

English songs serve as an accessible and authentic language resource that incorporates vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and cultural understanding. Their availability across digital platforms allows learners to continue practicing language skills outside the classroom, turning learning into a self-directed and lifelong endeavor. As (Jain, 2024) argue, exposure to authentic language enhances students' ability to understand real-world communication, including idioms, slang, and cultural references. Songs introduce students to various sociolinguistic contexts and help build cultural competence alongside linguistic skills. Additionally, when students enjoy learning through music, their intrinsic motivation is boosted, making them more likely to engage with English independently. Prior studies have consistently shown positive outcomes from music-based language instruction. These findings support the integration of songs into EFL curricula, not just as supplementary material but as a core strategy to improve vocabulary, comprehension, and communicative ability in a culturally rich and enjoyable manner.

4. Conclusion

Based on the discussion of students' perspectives, vocabulary learning, and the use of English songs, it is evident that these three components play a crucial role in enhancing the effectiveness of English language education. Students' perceptions significantly influence learning outcomes, as their attitudes, motivations, and engagement levels determine how well they respond to the instructional methods used. When students have positive views toward English learning and feel that the methods align with their preferences, they are more likely to participate actively and retain information more effectively. In terms of vocabulary learning, meaningful interaction with new words is essential. Students must be exposed to vocabulary in authentic and relevant contexts, rather than merely through rote memorization. Engaging with vocabulary through activities that involve listening, speaking, reading, and writing helps deepen their understanding and facilitates long-term retention. When vocabulary is taught as part of a broader communicative approach, learners are more likely to apply it confidently in real-life situations. English songs serve as a powerful and enjoyable medium to support vocabulary acquisition and overall language development. Songs introduce learners to pronunciation, grammar, and cultural references in a natural and engaging way. They help reduce anxiety, enhance motivation, and create a relaxed atmosphere where students can absorb language intuitively. The rhythmic and repetitive nature of songs aids in memorization, making vocabulary learning more effective. Therefore, integrating students' perspectives, effective vocabulary instruction, and music as an engaging teaching tool can lead to a richer, more enjoyable, and more effective English learning experience. These strategies not only foster linguistic skills but also promote emotional connection, self-expression, and motivation key ingredients in long-term language success.

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