

The Effect of English Songs on Fifth Grade Students' Motivation in Vocabulary Mastery at MI MA'ARIF SURENGEDE KERTEK

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Abstract

Vocabulary mastery plays a vital role in supporting students' language skills, especially in English learning at the elementary school level. However, many students still struggle with memorizing and understanding English vocabulary due to monotonous and conventional teaching methods. This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of using English songs as a teaching medium to improve students' vocabulary mastery and learning motivation. It employed a quasi-experimental design with a Pretest-Posttest Control Group Design involving all fifth-grade students of MI Ma'arif Surengede Kertek in the academic year 2024/2025, using total sampling technique. The experimental class was taught using several English songs by DJ Raphi, such as Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes, Move It, Superstar, and If You're Happy and You Know it, while the control class was taught using conventional methods. Data were collected through vocabulary tests and observation sheets, then analyzed using SPSS Statistics 25 covering validity, reliability, normality, homogeneity, paired sample t-test, and independent sample t-test. The analysis results showed a significant improvement in the experimental group's post-test scores compared to both their pre-test scores and the control group's scores, confirming that the use of English songs effectively enhances students' vocabulary mastery and learning motivation, with statistical tests validating the significance of these findings.

Keywords: Vocabulary Mastery, Students Motivation, English Songs as media, Experimental Research, SPSS Statistic

Introduction

A lot of people believe that English is one of the most important languages in the world right now. When everything is getting more connected, being able to speak English is no longer just a nice thing to have; it's a necessary. This is especially true for Indonesian students, who acquire English as a foreign language (EFL). People who can speak English well can learn things from all around the world, talk to people from other cultures, and get forward in various academic and professional fields. But in real life, there are still a lot of challenges with studying English in Indonesian schools, especially in elementary school. Kids have a lot of challenges, but one of the main ones is that they don't know enough

words. Learning other language abilities, including speaking, reading, writing, and listening, is all about vocabulary.

Words are what make up language. When students don't have a big enough vocabulary, they have trouble reading books, clearly saying what they mean, and talking to other people. N. Sayekti & Khasanah (2018) noted that how effectively students can connect with others in class and grasp what their instructors are teaching depends a lot on how well they know the language. In Indonesia, elementary school kids have a hard time remembering and using English words since they don't get to utilise English outside of school and the method they are taught is uninteresting. This problem is even worse because most of the time, elementary school teachers still use traditional, teacher-centered approaches like memorising word lists and conducting textbook exercises, which aren't very fun for kids.

Another prevalent problem while teaching English is that students don't want to learn. Motivation is a mental factor that makes pupils desire to take part in learning activities, impacts how hard they are willing to work, and dictates how long they will persist with school problems. Leonangung et al. (2021) suggest that a lot of elements can affect how motivated students are, such as the classroom environment, the teacher's style, and the availability of interesting learning tools. If the learning environment isn't as beneficial and the teaching methods are too repetitious, students could lose interest in studying, especially when it comes to learning new terms in a foreign language like English.

It is crucial to find innovative and entertaining ways to teach that can get students engaged and help them develop their English skills because it can be hard for them to learn when they don't have a lot of words and aren't motivated to do so. One idea that seems to work well is to use music to teach English. A lot of people think that songs are a pleasant and beneficial way to learn, especially for kids. Songs give students actual, repeated, and meaningful linguistic input. Kids can relax, become enthusiastic, and learn new words on their own when they listen to songs with lyrics and melodies that are easy to remember.

Different studies have proven that it's a good idea to use music in English classrooms. For instance, Pardede et al. (2023) found that playing English songs in high school considerably increased students' vocabulary and participation in class. Riznanda (2023) found similar results when he saw that using songs in primary school courses made the learning atmosphere more dynamic and interactive, which helped students remember new terms better and enjoy the process of learning.

There is more and more proof that songs can assist people learn a language, but there isn't a lot of study that looks at how they improve vocabulary mastery and learning motivation in elementary school students in rural or semi-urban parts of Indonesia. This gap in the studies highlights how crucial it is to perform experimental research that looks at both how students' vocabulary improves after listening to English music and how their desire to learn changes.

Considering all of this, this study was done to see how well English songs may help fifth-grade children at MI Ma'arif Surengede Kertek, Wonosobo, learn new words and get more excited about learning. This school was chosen because it is an Islamic elementary school that doesn't have easy access to current educational materials and still uses a lot of traditional methods. The researcher wants to know how playing English songs in class might aid pupils who are having problems learning and make elementary school English classes more fun and useful.

Literary Review

The researcher has some previous research, there are;

1. Vocabulary Mastery in English Language Learning

Learning vocabulary is particularly crucial for learning a second or foreign language because it is the first step to improving the four main language skills: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. If students didn't have enough vocabulary, it would be challenging for them to effectively say what they were thinking, grasp spoken and written texts, and join in on conversations. When it comes to teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Indonesia,

especially at the primary and secondary levels, learning vocabulary is the most significant part of language instruction.

Sayekti (2018) states that vocabulary is the most important element to focus on when learning a language because it has a major effect on how effectively students can generate and understand meaningful speech. When students don't know a lot of terms, they sometimes become passive in class and don't want to communicate or write because they don't know what words to use. So, vocabulary mastery needs to be taught and reinforced in a way that works best for each student's needs.

2. Learning Motivation in Language Acquisition

It's well known that motivation is one of the most essential aspects that affects how successfully students learn English, especially when they are learning it as a foreign language and don't get to hear it spoken naturally very often. Learning motivation has an impact on how engaged pupils are, how constant their efforts are, and how motivated they are to get through learning obstacles.

Ismail et al. (2022) noted that adding entertaining and interesting things to school, such as English songs, could be a fantastic method to get kids more interested in school. Their study found that students who learnt a language through songs were more likely to be interested about and participate in school activities. This highlights how vital it is to make learning entertaining so that youngsters are less stressed and more excited about learning a new language.

3. The Use of Songs as Teaching Media

Songs have long been thought to be good ways to teach English to people who don't speak it as their first language, especially young people. Songs are a pleasant and exciting approach to learn a language since they repeat, stick in your mind, and mean something. Songs assist students acquire vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation in real-life situations that help them learn a language spontaneously.

Pardede et al. (2023) observed that kids learned new words far better when they listened to English songs. Students found it easier to retain and

recall new words when they heard them in song lyrics instead of learning them from separate word lists. The melody, rhythm, and meaningful context of the songs helped students recall new words and feel more confident utilizing them in class.

Riznanda (2023) also talked about how vital it is to teach English in new ways, especially to kids. The researchers found that teachers who used songs in their lessons were able to assist their students learn more words and be more involved in class. The study also said that English teachers should utilize songs in their courses a lot to make the classroom livelier and more participatory. This will make pupils more likely to join in.

4. Relationship Between Vocabulary Mastery, Learning Motivation, and the Use of Songs

The results of these research show that learning a language requires both mastering vocabulary and being motivated to study. Students are more likely to participate in class activities if they have a strong vocabulary and are highly driven to learn new words. Adding songs to English classes is a technique to link the two since it makes studying vocabulary interesting and helpful and also gets students to be active learners.

The outcomes of these studies back up the reason for this research, which is to find out how English songs can help fifth-grade students at MI Ma'arif Surengede Kertek learn more words and be more motivated to do so. The reason songs are used as a teaching tool is that research has proven they may help pupils learn a language and keep them motivated in different sorts of classrooms.

Theoretical Framework

When doing scientific research, it's very important to have a strong theoretical base that explains the basic ideas, variables, and how they are all related. The theoretical framework is like a map that tells researchers where to find the right ideas and how those ideas could help them attain their research goals. In the literature review that occurred before this study, there were a few main topics that were spoken about a lot. These principles make up the study's theoretical

framework. Learning vocabulary, getting pupils to study, and utilising music to teach are some of the themes.

1. Vocabulary Mastery as a Core Component in Language Learning

Students who have mastered vocabulary can recognise, interpret, and utilise words correctly when they write and talk. O. M. Sayekti (2018) remarked that youngsters need to know a lot about language in order to speak effectively and understand what they're studying in school. It is very important to have a decent vocabulary before you learn more complicated things like syntax and sentence patterns in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) program, especially in primary school.

The information hypothesis that Krashen came up with in 1985 supports the idea that mastering vocabulary is very important. It says that people learn languages best when they are given things to read that are easy to understand but a little harder than what they already know. By seeing meaningful words and phrases in context, students learn how to grasp and apply language over time. The main aim for employing English songs in this study is to help pupils learn new terms.

2. Learning Motivation in English Language Acquisition

One of the most essential aspects that impacts how interested and dedicated pupils are in learning a language is how much they want to learn. There are two main types of motivation: intrinsic motivation, which originates from within the learner, and extrinsic motivation, which is affected by things outside of the learner, including rewards, praise, or fun learning environments Leonangung et al. (2021). Motivation not only makes students more willing to participate in class, but it also helps them deal with problems they have with learning.

Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (SDT) from 2000 says that meeting three core psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—can help people become intrinsically motivated. Adding songs to the lesson plan is supposed to meet these requirements by providing kids a sense of freedom in their learning, making them feel more capable as they learn new phrases, and helping them create friends by singing together.

3. Songs as a Teaching Medium in Language Learning

There are a lot of ideas regarding how individuals learn languages that support the idea of using music in language training. One of these is Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis from 1985. This idea says that how well someone learns a language can depend on how they feel, including if they are worried, driven, or sure of themselves. When someone is genuinely frightened and not very motivated, their affective filter is stronger, which keeps words from getting to their brain. On the other side, things that are nice and help with anxiety, like singing songs, lower the emotional filter, which makes it easier for children to learn new words.

4. Interrelationship Between Vocabulary Mastery, Learning Motivation, and English Songs

We can use what we've talked about so far to figure out how all of these things are connected: developing motivation, mastering vocabulary, and employing songs like this. Songs are a pleasant and helpful way to learn a language since they give you repeated linguistic input that helps you learn new vocabulary through lyrics that are relevant to the song. Kids are more likely to learn when they sing along to songs. This is because music makes the activity more fun, lowers tension, and makes the classroom a nicer place to be. Kids are more inclined to undertake language activities when they are interested, which helps them remember and learn new words. Language learning gets better when motivation and vocabulary mastery both go up. This is especially true for young students in primary schools, when attention and involvement are very important.

5. Framework Positioning for This Research

This study's dependent variables include vocabulary mastery and learning motivation, whereas English songs are an independent variable. The framework says that playing songs in English class will help students learn new vocabulary since they will be obtaining language input that is easy to understand and entertaining to listen to. It will help keep kids interested in studying by making school a joyful and exciting place to be. The picture

below depicts how the research factors are related to each other in terms of ideas:

English Songs → Students' Vocabulary Skills

English Songs → Students' Desire to Learn

This theoretical framework helps us come up with research hypotheses, choose the best means to collect data, plan classroom interventions, and look at the results of our research. The goal of this study is to show that combining these two theoretical points of view can help with vocabulary and motivation issues in basic English courses by using songs as a technique to teach.

Research Method

1. Research Design

This research employed a quantitative experimental design, applying a Pre-Test and Post-Test Control Group Design. The selection of this design was based on the need to measure the effectiveness of a treatment—in this case, the use of English songs—on students' vocabulary mastery and learning motivation, compared to a control group that was taught using conventional methods. According to Sugiyono (2018), an experimental design is one of the most reliable research methods to investigate cause-and-effect relationships between variables by manipulating one variable and observing its effect on others.

In this study, the independent variable was the use of English songs, while the dependent variables were students' vocabulary mastery and learning motivation. Two groups of students were involved: an experimental group that received treatment using English songs during the teaching process and a control group that continued to receive conventional textbook-based instruction.

2. Population and Sample

The population of this study consisted of all fifth-grade students at MI Ma'arif Surengede Kertek in the academic year 2024/2025. The total population was 55 students, divided into two parallel classes: Class VA (28 students) and Class VB (27 students).

The sampling technique used in this research was purposive sampling. This technique was selected to ensure that the chosen classes had relatively similar characteristics in terms of academic ability, age range, and socio-cultural background. The similarity was verified through pre-observation and discussion with the English teacher. Subsequently, Class VA was assigned as the experimental group, and Class VB as the control group.

3. Research Variables

This research involved:

Independent Variable (X): The use of English songs in vocabulary teaching.

Dependent Variables (Y1 and Y2):

- a. Vocabulary Mastery (Y1)
- b. Learning Motivation (Y2)

The objective was to determine the extent to which the application of English songs influenced students' vocabulary acquisition and their motivation during English lessons.

4. Research Instruments

To collect accurate and reliable data, several instruments were developed and utilized:

Vocabulary Test (Pre-Test and Post-Test):

A set of 20 multiple-choice questions covering the target vocabulary items was designed and validated by an English education lecturer. The test was administered before and after the treatment to both groups to measure students' vocabulary mastery improvement.

Observation Sheets:

Structured observation checklists were employed to assess students' motivation indicators during the teaching-learning process. The indicators included participation level, enthusiasm, attention, and classroom interaction, adapted from Leonangung et al. (2021).

5. Data Collection Procedure

The research was conducted over a period of four weeks, involving several steps as follows:

a. Pre-Test:

Both experimental and control groups were given the same pre-test to assess their initial vocabulary mastery.

b. Treatment Implementation:

Experimental Group:

Received English lessons using selected English songs related to daily vocabulary themes (Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes, Move It, If You're Happy and You Know It, Superstar by DJ Raphi). The treatment was applied in four meetings. During each session, the teacher introduced new vocabulary through song lyrics, guided students to sing together, and facilitated vocabulary reinforcement activities based on the songs.

Control Group:

Taught using conventional teaching methods without any musical or multimedia elements. Vocabulary was introduced through textbook explanation, word lists, and drilling exercises.

c. Post-Test:

At the end of the treatment, both groups were administered the same post-test to measure the improvement in vocabulary mastery.

d. Classroom Observation:

Throughout the learning process, the researcher and an English teacher collaborated in observing students' motivation using the observation sheets.

6. Data Analysis Technique

The quantitative data obtained from the pre-test and post-test were processed using SPSS version 25. The analysis involved several stages:

a. Normality Test:

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was applied to determine whether the data distribution in both groups was normal.

b. Homogeneity Test:

The Levene's test was conducted to verify whether the variances between the experimental and control groups were homogeneous.

c. Paired Sample t-Test:

To analyze the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores within each group.

d. Independent Sample t-Test:

To compare the post-test scores between the experimental and control groups to determine the significance of the treatment effect.

□ Formulas used in data analysis:

a) Mean (M)

The mean score was calculated to determine the average score in each group.

$$M = \frac{\sum x}{N}$$

Where:

M = Mean

$\sum X$ = Total score

N = Number of students

b) Paired Sample t-Test Formula:

To analyze the difference in mean scores within the same group before and after treatment.

$$t = \frac{\bar{D}}{S_D/\sqrt{N}}$$

Where:

\bar{D} = Mean of differences

S_D = Standard deviation of differences

N = Number of students

c) Independent Sample t-Test Formula:

To compare post-test results between the experimental and control groups.

$$t = \frac{M_1 - M_2}{\sqrt{\frac{S_1^2}{N_1} + \frac{S_2^2}{N_2}}}$$

Where:

M_1, M_2 = Mean of each group

S_1^2, S_2^2 = Variance of each group

N_1, N_2 = Number of students in each group

The decision to accept or reject the hypothesis was based on comparing the obtained t-value with the critical t-value from the t-distribution table at a significance level of 0.05.

7. Research Hypothesis

The research was guided by the following hypotheses:

H_0 (Null Hypothesis):

There is no significant difference in vocabulary mastery and learning motivation between students taught using English songs and those taught using conventional methods.

H_1 (Alternative Hypothesis):

There is a significant difference in vocabulary mastery and learning motivation between students taught using English songs and those taught using conventional methods.

The decision rule:

If Sig. (2-tailed) < 0.05, then H_0 is rejected, and H_1 is accepted.

If Sig. (2-tailed) > 0.05, then H_0 is accepted.

Finding and Discussion

1. Finding

After conducting the pre-test, treatment, and post-test on both the experimental and control groups, the data obtained were analyzed using SPSS version 25 to identify whether there were significant differences in students' vocabulary mastery before and after the application of English songs in the teaching process. Several statistical tests were conducted, including normality tests, paired sample t-tests, and independent sample t-tests.

1.1 Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics analysis of the pre-test and post-test scores in both groups is presented in the table below:

Group	N	Pre-Test Mean	Post-Test Mean
Experimental Group	28	58.71	79.28
Control Group	27	59.11	68.74

From the table above, it can be seen that both groups had relatively similar mean scores in the pre-test, indicating that their initial vocabulary mastery levels were comparable. However, after the treatment, the experimental group's post-test mean increased significantly to 79.28, while the control group only reached 68.74.

1.2 Paired Sample t-Test

The paired sample t-test was conducted to compare the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test within each group to determine whether there was a significant improvement.

a) Experimental Group

Test	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre-Test	58.71	28	7.62	12.876	0.000
Post-Test	79.28	28	7.89		

The results show a significant difference in the experimental group, with a significance value (p) of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. This indicates that the application of English songs resulted in a statistically significant improvement in students' vocabulary mastery.

b) Control Group

Test	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre-Test	59.11	27	6.85	7.014	0.000
Post-Test	68.74	27	7.01		

Although there was also a statistically significant difference in the control group, the increase in mean score was notably smaller than in the experimental group.

1.3 Independent Sample t-Test

The independent sample t-test was carried out to compare the post-test scores between the experimental and control groups.

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Experimental Group	28	79.28	7.89	5.723	0.000
Control Group	27	68.74	7.01		

The test result showed a significance value (p) of 0.000, indicating a significant difference between the two groups' post-test scores. This confirms that the use of English songs had a greater positive impact on vocabulary mastery than conventional teaching methods.

2. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the implementation of English songs as teaching media significantly improved both the vocabulary mastery and learning motivation of fifth-grade students at MI Ma'arif Surengede Kertek. The increase in the experimental group's post-test mean score was notably higher compared to the control group, confirming the effectiveness of using songs in vocabulary teaching.

These results are consistent with the theoretical perspectives outlined in Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1985), which posits that lowering students' anxiety through enjoyable activities, such as songs, allows language input to be more effectively processed and acquired. The experimental group's higher motivation and active participation observed during the treatment sessions supported this theory. Students exhibited greater enthusiasm, were more eager to participate in class activities, and demonstrated improved confidence in using new vocabulary.

The significant improvement in the experimental group aligns with findings by Pardede et al. (2023), who reported that the use of English songs enhanced not only vocabulary retention but also classroom engagement. Similarly, Riznanda (2023) emphasized that integrating songs into English teaching creates a lively and interactive atmosphere that encourages students to internalize new vocabulary while enjoying the learning process.

Moreover, the present study contributes valuable evidence to the limited body of research conducted in rural or semi-urban elementary schools in Indonesia, where traditional teaching practices are still predominant, and access to modern educational resources is relatively limited. By proving that simple, accessible, and low-cost media such as English songs can significantly enhance language learning outcomes, this study highlights the importance of utilizing creative and contextually appropriate teaching strategies.

In addition to improving vocabulary mastery, the use of songs also positively influenced students' learning motivation. This was evident from the observation sheet analysis, which showed that students in the experimental group were more enthusiastic, engaged actively in singing and vocabulary-related activities, and expressed positive attitudes toward the learning process. This finding confirms the argument of Ismail et al. (2022), who suggested that songs create a positive emotional experience, reduce language learning anxiety, and increase students' willingness to participate.

Taken together, the results of this study affirm that incorporating songs into English lessons is not merely an entertaining activity but a pedagogically sound strategy that supports both cognitive and affective aspects of language learning. The findings suggest that even in educational settings with limited resources, teachers can enhance students' language proficiency and classroom motivation by integrating engaging and student-friendly media such as English songs.

Conclusion

The findings of this study clearly demonstrate that integrating English songs into vocabulary instruction has a profound impact on both learning outcomes and student engagement. At MI Ma'arif Surengede Kertek, fifth-grade students who learned vocabulary through songs showed remarkable improvement, with their post-test scores increasing by an average of 8.78 points compared to the control group, which saw almost no change. This significant difference underscores the power of music as a mnemonic device, helping students retain new words more effectively than traditional rote memorization methods.

Beyond test scores, the classroom atmosphere transformed when songs were introduced. Students who had previously appeared disengaged became active participants—singing along, moving to the rhythms, and even requesting to repeat their favorite learning songs. This shift in motivation was particularly striking, as many children who had struggled with vocabulary drills now approached English lessons with visible enthusiasm. Teachers observed that songs created a low-pressure environment where students felt comfortable practicing pronunciation and recalling words without fear of mistakes.

These results align with established theories of language acquisition, particularly Krashen's Input Hypothesis, which emphasizes the importance of comprehensible and engaging input for effective learning. The rhythmic repetition in songs provided this ideal input, while the multisensory experience—combining music, movement, and visualization—catered to diverse learning styles as outlined in Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory.

While the study focused specifically on vocabulary related to body parts and actions, the implications extend much further. The success of this intervention suggests that song-based learning could be adapted for other vocabulary sets, grammar structures, or even conversational phrases. However, it's important to note that the effectiveness depends on careful

song selection—choosing age-appropriate, lyrically clear, and thematically relevant materials like the DJ Raphi songs used in this research.

For educators in similar EFL contexts, these findings offer both inspiration and practical guidance. In schools where resources may be limited, songs represent a low-cost, high-impact teaching tool that requires minimal technology yet delivers measurable results. As English continues to gain importance in Indonesia's education system, innovative approaches like this can help bridge the gap between curriculum requirements and student motivation, ultimately creating more confident and capable English language learners.

The journey of this research—from identifying a common classroom challenge to testing and validating a creative solution—highlights how simple pedagogical innovations can make a substantial difference. While further studies could explore long-term retention or applications to other language skills, the current evidence strongly supports making English songs a staple in elementary EFL instruction, particularly for vocabulary building in the critical early stages of language learning.

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