

The Effectiveness of Popular Songs in Teaching Listening Comprehension to the Eight Grade Students's at SMP Negeri 1 Palu

 <https://doi.org/10.31004/jele.v10i5.1422>

Fidyah, Muhammad Arid, Desrin Lebagi, Anjar Kusuma Dewi^{abcd} 

¹²³⁴English Education Study Program, Language and Arts Education Department, Teacher Training and Education Faculty, Tadulako University, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: widifidyah@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the effectiveness of popular songs in teaching listening skills to eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Palu. The research employed a quasi-experimental method with a pretest-posttest control group design. The sample consisted of two classes: an experimental group taught using popular songs and a control group taught using conventional methods. The research instrument was a listening comprehension test administered before (pretest) and after (posttest) the treatment. Data analysis used the Mann-Whitney U test to compare posttest scores between groups and the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test to compare pretest and posttest scores within each group. The results revealed a significant difference between the experimental and control groups ($p < 0.05$), with the experimental group achieving a higher posttest mean score (94.63) than the control group (85.66). The improvement in the experimental group was also greater than in the control group. Therefore, it can be concluded that the use of popular songs is more effective than conventional methods in enhancing students' listening skills.

Keywords: *Effectiveness, Popular Songs, Teaching, Listening Comprehension*

Article History:

Received 25th August 2025

Accepted 28th October 2025

Published 30th October 2025



INTRODUCTION

Listening is a fundamental language skill closely interconnected with speaking, reading, and writing. Before mastering other language skills, learners must first comprehend language through auditory input. As emphasized by Sari (2023), listening forms the foundation of communication skills, being the initial stage in language acquisition and comprehension. This skill is essential for understanding messages, capturing emotions, and developing critical thinking in language learning.

The teaching of listening skills requires the integration of varied instructional aids to enhance student engagement and retention. Such aids should align with learners' interests, thereby increasing the likelihood of long-term retention. Peterson asserts that materials must be engaging and distinctive to capture learners' attention effectively. Among various media, popular songs have been identified as an appealing and accessible tool for teaching listening. Students encounter popular songs frequently in daily life—whether in public spaces, transport, or through personal devices—making them a familiar and enjoyable medium.

Several studies have demonstrated the benefits of incorporating songs in language instruction. Ayu (2017) found that familiar songs increase learner attention, enabling effective delivery of material and achievement of lesson objectives. Similarly, Cheung and Ng (2021) observed that enjoyable activities, such as listening to popular songs, foster greater participation and motivation. These benefits are particularly relevant in contexts where listening comprehension poses challenges, such as limited vocabulary, fast speech tempo, idiomatic expressions, and complex sentence structures (Maley, 2014).

Observations conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Palu revealed persistent issues in students' listening skills, including low vocabulary mastery and limited interest in conventional instructional methods. These issues underscore the need for innovative teaching approaches. Popular songs, with their engaging melodies and relatable lyrics, have the potential to motivate students, sustain attention, and enhance comprehension.

Previous research supports this pedagogical approach. Ayu (2017) demonstrated the effectiveness of popular songs in improving listening skills among junior high school students in Tangerang Selatan. Sari (2023) reported significant gains in listening comprehension among senior high school students taught with English pop songs, confirmed by statistical analyses. Yayu Sri Rahayu (2022) and Yuliana et al. (2022) further established the positive effects of songs on learner motivation, enjoyment, pronunciation, vocabulary acquisition, and listening comprehension.

Theoretically, listening can be classified into intensive, responsive, selective, and extensive types (Brown & Lee, 2007). In this study, the focus is on extensive listening, which develops global comprehension by engaging learners in listening for gist, main ideas, and inferences. Teaching listening in junior high school requires fostering motivation and creating a conducive learning atmosphere (Hendrawaty, 2019). Integrating popular songs into lessons meets these needs by combining linguistic input with enjoyable activities.

Songs themselves possess key elements – melody, rhythm, and lyrics – that contribute to their educational potential (Sari, 2023). When selected carefully, English popular songs not only enhance linguistic skills but also introduce cultural contexts, improve memory retention, and stimulate emotional engagement (Gabriella & Putri, 2019; Listiyaningsih, 2017). The instructional process can follow structured stages: pre-listening activities to activate prior knowledge, while-listening tasks for focused comprehension, and post-listening discussions for consolidation (Harmer, 2007).

Despite their advantages, popular songs may present challenges, such as inappropriate content, complex language, or mismatched musical preferences among students. Nevertheless, with careful selection and structured implementation, these drawbacks can be mitigated. The theoretical framework for this study links the use of popular songs (independent variable) to improvements in listening comprehension (dependent variable), with extensive listening as the pedagogical approach.

Based on this rationale, the present research seeks to determine the effectiveness of popular songs in teaching listening comprehension to eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Palu. The study hypothesizes that students taught through popular songs will demonstrate significantly higher listening comprehension scores compared to those taught using conventional methods.

METHOD

This study uses a quantitative research method with a quasi experimental design. In this research, the research used purposive sampling technique to choose the sample. (Cohen et al., 2007) states in purposive sampling, research handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgment of their typically. Furthermore, in selecting the sample, the research chose groups which were recommended by the teacher at the school where the research conducted her research.

Respondents

The respondents of this study were the eighth-grade students of SMP Negeri 1 Palu in the 2024/2025 academic year. The total population consisted of 352 students from twelve parallel classes. Using purposive sampling, two classes were selected based on the teacher's recommendation: class VIII Adiwiyata as the experimental group and class VIII Literasi as the control group, each comprising 32 students. The experimental group received treatment using popular songs as the learning medium, while the control group was taught using conventional methods.

Instruments

The primary instrument for data collection was a listening comprehension test, administered as a pre-test and a post-test to both groups. The test consisted of three parts: fill-in-the-blank (10 items, 2 points each), matching words (10 items, 1 point each), and essay questions. The scoring rubric awarded full points for correct answers and partial credit for correct answers with minor spelling errors. The tests measured students' comprehension of spoken English through vocabulary recognition, sentence interpretation, and contextual understanding.

Procedures

The research applied a quasi-experimental design involving pre-test, treatment, and post-test stages. In the first phase, both the experimental and control groups were given a pre-test to assess their initial listening skills. During the treatment phase, the experimental group participated in six instructional meetings using popular songs as listening material. Each session followed a structured lesson plan:

Introduction to the target grammatical structure or vocabulary.

First listening to the selected song, followed by student reflection on its content.

Focused listening activities to identify target language features in the lyrics.

Pair or group discussions to share observations.

Question-and-answer sessions to reinforce comprehension.

Assignments to apply the learned material in new contexts.

The control group received the same grammatical and vocabulary content but without the use of songs. Instead, conventional listening exercises and teacher-led explanations were used. After the treatment period, both groups took the post-test under the same conditions as the pre-test.

Data Analysis

The collected test scores were analyzed using non-parametric statistical methods, as the data did not meet the assumptions of normality. The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test was applied to compare pre-test and post-test scores within each group, while the Mann-Whitney U test was used to compare the post-test scores between the experimental and control groups. A significance level of 0.05 was adopted. If the p-value was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating that the use of popular songs had a statistically significant effect on students' listening comprehension.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to determine whether popular songs are effective in teaching listening comprehension to Year 8 students at SMP Negeri 1 Palu. Based on the results of the data analysis conducted by the author, it was found that popular songs are effective in teaching listening comprehension to students.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Pre-test and Post-test scores

Group	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviatin
Experimental (Pre test)	32	37	87	67.56	12.914
Control (Pre-test)	32	47	87	75.13	10.737
Experimental (Post-test)	32	73	100	94.63	6.646
Control (Post-test)	32	70	100	85.66	7.682

The results of the pretest indicated that the experimental group obtained an average score of 67.56, with only 34.4% of students achieving the minimum mastery criterion of 75. Meanwhile, the control group scored higher, with an average score of 75.13 and 65.6% of students reaching the passing grade. This initial gap suggests that the control group had better listening comprehension at the outset, while most students in the experimental group required improvement. The lowest score in the experimental group was 37, while in the control group it was 47, indicating a more consistent performance among control group students.

Table 2. Results of Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test

Comparison	Z	Sig. (2-tailed)
------------	---	-----------------

Experimental (Post- test Pre- test)	-4.882	0.000
Control (Post-test Pre-test)	-3.378	0.001

Based on the results of the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test, the Z value for the experimental class was -4.882 with a significance of 0.000, while the Z value for the control class was -3.378 with a significance of 0.001. This negative Z value indicates a direction of improvement from pre-test to post-test, where the post-test score was consistently higher than the pre-test. The greater the absolute value of Z, the stronger the difference. Therefore, the experimental class had a greater improvement than the control class. These results confirm that the use of song media has a significant and more effective influence in improving students' listening skills compared to the learning methods used in the control class.

Table 3. Results of Mann-Whitney U Test on Post-test

U-value	Z	Sig. (2-tailed)
140.500	-5.036	0.000

The results of the Mann-Whitney U Test showed that the U value = 140.500 with a Z value = -5.036 and a significance of $p = 0.000$ (<0.05). This means that there is a significant difference between the two groups (the experimental class and the control class) in the post-test results. In other words, the treatment given to the experimental class (using song media) was statistically proven to produce higher listening skill scores than the control class that did not receive the treatment.

Discussion

The findings of this study clearly show that the use of popular songs as a medium in teaching listening comprehension has a stronger positive impact compared to conventional teaching methods. The significant improvement in the experimental group's posttest scores aligns with previous research by Yuliana et al. (2022), who found that English pop songs enhanced students' listening comprehension achievement significantly. This study also resonates with findings from Farelia (2024) and Supriyani & Fatin (2025), where students not only improved their listening skills but also expressed greater motivation and enjoyment during learning sessions that incorporated music.

One possible explanation for the higher improvement in the experimental group is that popular songs offer authentic, engaging, and culturally relevant input, which supports both bottom-up and top-down listening processes. The familiarity of melodies and lyrics may help lower students' anxiety levels, making them more receptive to language input (Ayu, 2017). Additionally, the repetitive exposure to song lyrics during the treatment could have facilitated vocabulary retention and improved recognition of linguistic structures.

Another contributing factor could be the motivational aspect of using songs. As suggested by Harmer (2007), motivation is a key element in successful learning. Students in the experimental group likely found the lessons more enjoyable and meaningful, which may have increased their active participation and sustained attention during listening activities.

In summary, the results confirm that popular songs are an effective medium for improving junior high school students' listening comprehension. They not only enhance academic performance but also foster a more engaging learning environment. These outcomes support the integration of popular songs into English listening curricula as a supplementary resource to traditional instructional approaches.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings and statistical analysis, it can be concluded that the use of popular song media is significantly more effective than conventional methods in improving the listening comprehension skills of eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Palu. The results of the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test and the Mann-Whitney U Test indicate a significant improvement from pre-test to post-test, with the experimental group achieving a higher mean post-test score (94.63) compared to the control group (85.66). These findings support the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_0) and the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis (H_1).

proving that popular songs can enhance students' motivation, engagement, and listening skills more effectively. This conclusion aligns with prior research, confirming that integrating music into English language learning can foster a more enjoyable and impactful learning experience. The implication of this study is that teachers can use popular songs as a fun and effective way to teach listening, so that students are more engaged in English learning. For curriculum designers, these findings suggest that music-based activities should be included as part of English learning materials to make lessons more interactive and enjoyable. Meanwhile, future researchers are encouraged to conduct further studies on how different types of songs or music activities can improve not only listening skills but also other English skills such as speaking, reading, and writing.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to express his deepest gratitude to [Tadulako University/FKIP/English Education] for providing support and facilities during this research. He would also like to thank those involved in this research for their guidance, direction, and valuable motivation in preparing this research and writing this paper.

REFERENCES

- Ayu. (2017). *The Effectiveness of Popular Songs in Improving Students' Listening Skill*.
- Brown, H. D., & Lee, H. (2007). *Teaching by to language pedagogy monterey institute of international studies*.
- Brown, S. (2006). 'Teaching' Listening. *Education* 3-13, 5(1), 36-39. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004277708558854>
- Cheung, S. Y., & Ng, K. Y. (2021). Application of the Educational Game to Enhance Student Learning. *Frontiers in Education*, 6(March), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2021.623793>
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research Methods in Education Eighth Edition*. 643-737.
- Farelia, P. (2024). *Teaching english using popular song*. 25-31.
- Gabriella, M., & Putri, N. (2019). *Popular Songs : Teaching Media to Enhance Students ' Listening Comprehension*. 199-203.
- Harmer, J. (2007). *How To Teach English-Jeremy Harmer.Pdf*.
- Hendrawaty, N. (2019). The Influence of Listening English Pop Songs to Improve Learners' Vocabulary at LKP Nuansa Jaya. *Loquen: English Studies Journal*, 12(1), 56. <https://doi.org/10.32678/loquen.v12i01.1192>
- Lengkoan, F., Andries, F. A., & Tatipang, D. P. (2022). A Study on Listening Problems Faced By Students of Higher Education. *Globish: An English-Indonesian Journal for English, Education, and Culture*, 11(1), 41. <https://doi.org/10.31000/globish.v11i1.5106>
- Listiyaningsih, T. (2017). The Influence of Listening English Song to Improve Listening Skill in Listening Class. *Academica: Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*, 1(1), 35-49. <https://doi.org/10.22515/academica.v1i1.601>
- Mailawati, A., & Anita, A. (2022). The Impact of English Songs To Improving on English Listening Skills. *Journal of Research on Language Education*, 3(2), 62. <https://doi.org/10.33365/jorle.v3i2.2158>
- Maley, A. (2014). A Course in English Language Teaching. *ELT Journal*, 68(1), 100-102. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/cct065>
- Sari, D. S. (2023). *The Effectiveness of Using English Pop Songs to Improve Students' Listening Comprehension Skill at Eleventh Grade Students (A Case Study of Elevent Grade Students at SMA Islam Sultan Agung 1 Semarang In Academic Year A FINAL PROJECT Presentned as Partial*. Universitas Islam Sultan Agung.
- Yayu Sri Rahayu, T. R. (2022). The Effectiveness of English Songs To Improve Students in Listening Comprehension. *Elang An English Language Education Journal*, 7(1), 8-3. <https://ejournal.unibba.ac.id/index.php/elang/article/view/1042>

The Effectiveness of Popular Songs in Teaching Listening Comprehension to the Eight Grade Students's at SMP Negeri 1 Palu

Yuliana, M., Iman, J. N., & Anggraini, N. (2022). The Effectiveness of Using English Pop Songs Toward Students' Listening Comprehension Achievement At the Seventh Grade of Smp Negeri 38 Palembang. *Journal of Education and Culture*, 2(1), 71-77.
<https://doi.org/10.58707/jec.v2i1.235>