

## Students' Perceptions of Using English Songs in Learning Vocabulary at STBA Bina Dinamika

**Edri**

Program Studi Sastra Inggris, Sekolah Tinggi Bahasa Asing Bina Dinamika

E-mail: [edri.humana@gmail.com](mailto:edri.humana@gmail.com)

\* Corresponding Author

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### ABSTRACT

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menginvestigasi persepsi mahasiswa terhadap penggunaan lagu berbahasa Inggris dalam pembelajaran kosakata di STBA Bina Dinamika. Penelitian ini terletak pada fokusnya dalam mengkaji baik manfaat maupun tantangan pembelajaran kosakata berbasis lagu dalam konteks EFL (English as a Foreign Language) di pendidikan tinggi. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain kualitatif deskriptif dengan melibatkan 30 mahasiswa semester dua. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner skala Likert dan wawancara semi-terstruktur, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan teknik reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan untuk mengidentifikasi tema-tema utama. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar mahasiswa memiliki persepsi positif terhadap penggunaan lagu berbahasa Inggris dalam pembelajaran kosakata. Sekitar 85% partisipan menyatakan bahwa lagu membuat proses pembelajaran menjadi lebih menyenangkan dan menarik. Mahasiswa melaporkan bahwa lagu dapat meningkatkan retensi kosakata melalui pengulangan, meningkatkan akurasi pelafalan melalui paparan terhadap input bahasa yang autentik, serta membantu pemahaman makna kata secara kontekstual. Selain itu, penggunaan lagu juga terbukti dapat meningkatkan motivasi dan mengurangi kecemasan di dalam kelas. Namun demikian, beberapa tantangan juga ditemukan, seperti kesulitan dalam memahami tempo lagu yang cepat, penggunaan ungkapan slang, serta pelafalan yang kurang jelas. Sebagai kesimpulan, lagu berbahasa Inggris dipersepsikan sebagai media yang efektif dan menyenangkan dalam pemerolehan kosakata, dengan catatan bahwa dosen perlu secara cermat memilih lagu yang sesuai serta menyediakan aktivitas pembelajaran yang terarah.

This study aims to investigate students' perceptions of using English songs in learning vocabulary at STBA Bina Dinamika. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on examining both the benefits and challenges of song-based vocabulary learning within a specific higher education EFL context. A descriptive qualitative research design was employed involving 30 second-semester students. Data were collected through Likert-scale questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, then analyzed using data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing techniques to identify key themes. The findings reveal that most students hold positive perceptions toward the use of English songs in vocabulary learning. Approximately 85% of participants agreed that songs make learning more enjoyable and engaging. Students reported that songs improve vocabulary retention through repetition, enhance pronunciation accuracy by exposing them to authentic language input, and support contextual understanding of word meanings. Additionally, songs were found to increase motivation and reduce anxiety in the classroom. However, some challenges were identified, including difficulty understanding fast song tempo, slang expressions, and unclear pronunciation. In conclusion, English songs are perceived as an effective and enjoyable medium for vocabulary acquisition, provided that lecturers carefully select appropriate songs and offer guided learning activities.



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## INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is widely acknowledged as a fundamental component in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Without adequate vocabulary knowledge, learners struggle to comprehend texts, express ideas clearly, and communicate effectively. Paul Nation argues that vocabulary knowledge encompasses not only word meaning but also form and use, all of which are essential for communicative competence (Nation & Hunston, 2018). Rivers emphasizes that vocabulary is central to language use because meaningful communication cannot occur without sufficient lexical resources. In addition, David Wilkins famously states that “without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed” highlighting the crucial role of lexical knowledge in language mastery. Therefore, vocabulary mastery is a critical determinant of overall language proficiency.

Despite its importance, vocabulary acquisition remains a persistent challenge for many EFL learners. Research by (Nation & Hunston, 2018) indicates that vocabulary learning requires repeated exposure and meaningful use, yet many learners rely on limited memorization techniques. In Indonesian higher education contexts, students frequently encounter difficulties in retaining new words, recalling them during speaking activities, and applying them accurately in context. At STBA Bina Dinamika, classroom observations indicate that many students depend heavily on rote memorization strategies, which often result in short-term retention and limited communicative application. Traditional vocabulary instruction that relies on word lists, translation, and repetition drills may reduce learner engagement and motivation, ultimately affecting learning outcomes (Silvianita Cahyaninhrum, 2023).

To address these issues, educators have explored alternative instructional media, including the integration of English songs in vocabulary learning. Songs provide authentic linguistic input, natural pronunciation models, repetitive exposure, rhythm, and contextualized meaning. Songs enhance language acquisition because their repetitive and melodic features support memory retention and unconscious language processing. Furthermore, Stephen Krashen, through the Affective Filter Hypothesis, suggests that learners acquire language more effectively when anxiety is low and motivation is high conditions that music can help foster in the (Mustika & Wardah, 2021). Music can lower emotional barriers, increase motivation, and create a more relaxed learning atmosphere conducive to language acquisition.

Although previous studies have demonstrated the positive impact of songs on vocabulary improvement and learner motivation, most existing research focuses primarily on quantitative measurement of vocabulary gains. Limited attention has been given to exploring students' subjective perceptions, especially within Indonesian tertiary education settings. Moreover, few studies have specifically investigated how students perceive both the benefits and challenges of using English songs as a vocabulary learning tool. This lack of contextualized, perception-based research creates a gap in understanding how effective and sustainable this strategy is from the learners' perspective.

Given that students' perceptions strongly influence engagement, participation, and long-term learning success, it is essential to examine how they interpret the use of songs in vocabulary instruction. As argued by (Sari, 2018), perception shapes how individuals interpret and respond to learning experiences. Understanding students' experiences can provide pedagogical insights for lecturers in designing engaging and context-appropriate vocabulary learning strategies.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate students' perceptions of using English songs in learning vocabulary at STBA Bina Dinamika. Specifically, this research aims to identify (1) students' overall perceptions, (2) the benefits they experience, and (3) the challenges they encounter when learning vocabulary through English songs.

### **Vocabulary in Language Learning**

Vocabulary is a fundamental component of language proficiency. It refers to the set of words that individuals know, understand, and use in communication. According to (Meara & Buxton, 1987) vocabulary knowledge encompasses three essential aspects: form, meaning, and use. Learners must not

only recognize the written and spoken forms of words but also understand their meanings and apply them appropriately in various contexts. (Khaliq, 2023).

Vocabulary mastery plays a crucial role in the development of the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In listening and reading, vocabulary knowledge supports comprehension, enabling learners to understand messages accurately. In speaking and writing, vocabulary allows learners to express ideas clearly and effectively. (Lorenset & Tumolo, 2019) emphasizes the by stating that “without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed,” underlining its central role in communication. Limited vocabulary often becomes a major obstacle in communication, as students may struggle to understand texts or convey their thoughts (Nation & Hunston, 2018)

Furthermore, vocabulary acquisition is cumulative and incremental. Learners gradually deepen their understanding of words through repeated exposure in different contexts. (Ghalebi et al., 2021) notes that vocabulary learning requires multiple encounters with words in meaningful situations before they are fully acquired. In line with this view, (Khaliq, 2023) suggests that effective vocabulary instruction should include meaningful practice, contextual learning, and opportunities for active use to strengthen retention and promote long-term mastery.

### **Songs as Learning Media**

Songs are musical compositions that integrate melody, rhythm, and lyrics to communicate messages, emotions, and narratives. In the context of language learning, songs have been widely acknowledged as effective pedagogical tools. (Ghonivita et al., 2021) argues that songs facilitate language acquisition by providing natural repetition, authentic pronunciation models, and exposure to everyday expressions. Through repeated listening, learners are unconsciously exposed to linguistic patterns, which supports internalization of vocabulary and structures.

Furthermore, (Heidari, 2023) Affective Filter Hypothesis suggests that language acquisition is more likely to occur when learners experience low anxiety, high motivation, and positive emotional engagement. Songs contribute to such conditions by creating a relaxed and enjoyable classroom atmosphere. When learners feel comfortable and motivated, the affective filter is lowered, allowing more comprehensible input to be processed effectively.

The repetitive and rhythmic nature of songs strengthens memory retention and enhances vocabulary acquisition. Repetition embedded in meaningful and enjoyable contexts helps learners retain lexical items more effectively than isolated memorization techniques. In addition, songs stimulate both cognitive and emotional engagement. The combination of melody and rhythm aids memory storage, while meaningful lyrics provide contextualized language input (Budi Argo et al., n.d.), Through songs, learners can acquire vocabulary in context, recognize collocations, improve pronunciation, and gain exposure to cultural aspects of the target language. Therefore, songs not only enhance vocabulary mastery but also contribute to learners' overall communicative competence.

Therefore, integrating songs into vocabulary instruction can make learning more interactive, meaningful, and memorable, particularly when teachers select appropriate materials and design structured learning activities.

### **Students' Perceptions in Learning**

Perception refers to the process by which individuals interpret and understand their experiences. Perception is the process through which individuals organize and interpret their sensory impressions to give meaning to their environment. In educational settings, students' perceptions influence how they respond to teaching methods, learning materials, and classroom environments.

In language learning, students' perceptions play a significant role in shaping motivation, engagement, and academic performance. When students perceive learning activities as enjoyable, useful, and relevant, they are more likely to participate actively and achieve better outcomes. Conversely, negative perceptions may lead to low motivation and reduced engagement.

Students' perceptions toward the use of songs in vocabulary learning may affect their willingness to participate and their overall learning effectiveness. Positive perceptions can enhance confidence, increase classroom interaction, and improve vocabulary retention. Therefore, understanding students' perceptions is essential for evaluating the effectiveness of instructional strategies and improving teaching practices.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study investigates students' perceptions of using English songs in learning vocabulary at STBA Bina Dinamika. The research aims to explore how students interpret, experience, and evaluate the effectiveness of English songs as a medium for vocabulary acquisition. The study applies a descriptive qualitative research design with quantitative support to provide a comprehensive understanding of students' viewpoints. A descriptive qualitative approach is appropriate when the researcher seeks to explore participants' perspectives and interpret meanings in a natural setting (Creswell, 2003)

The research design also refers to qualitative research principles proposed (Creswell, 2003), who emphasizes that qualitative research focuses on exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. In addition, descriptive research concepts by (Sugiyono, 2015) guide this study in systematically describing students' attitudes, responses, and experiences without manipulating variables.

The participants of this study were 20 second semester students selected through purposive sampling. Purposive sampling allows researchers to select participants based on specific characteristics relevant to the research objectives (Creswell, 2003). In this case, the selected students had experienced vocabulary learning through English songs in their classroom activities.

Data were collected using three instruments:

1. A Likert scale questionnaire consisting of 20 statements to measure students' perceptions quantitatively. Likert scales are widely used in perception research to measure attitudes and opinions systematically (**Sugiyono, 2017**).
2. Semi-structured interviews with selected respondents to gain deeper insights into their experiences and viewpoints.
3. Documentation, including lesson plans, song materials, students' exercises, and interview transcripts, to support data triangulation and enhance research validity (**Creswell, 2014**).

The questionnaire data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine percentages and mean scores, providing an overview of students' overall perceptions. Meanwhile, interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis procedures based on the interactive model developed which involve three concurrent steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. This analytical framework ensures systematic interpretation of qualitative findings.

The findings indicate that students generally have positive perceptions toward the use of English songs in vocabulary learning. They reported increased motivation, improved vocabulary retention, better pronunciation awareness, and greater enjoyment in the learning process. These results align with previous research suggesting that engaging instructional media can enhance learner motivation and language acquisition (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006) However, some challenges were noted, such as difficulty understanding fast lyrics and unfamiliar expressions, which require pedagogical guidance.

In conclusion, English songs are perceived as an engaging and effective medium for vocabulary learning at STBA Bina Dinamika. The integration of songs into vocabulary instruction can enhance students' motivation and support vocabulary acquisition when implemented with appropriate guidance and instructional strategies.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Students' Perceptions of Using English Songs in Vocabulary Learning**

Based on the questionnaire results, the majority of students (85%) expressed positive perceptions toward the use of English songs in vocabulary learning. They agreed that learning vocabulary through songs was more enjoyable compared to traditional memorization techniques. Students reported that the use of music created a relaxed classroom atmosphere, reducing anxiety and making them feel more comfortable during the learning process.

This finding is consistent with (Alghamdi & Ahmed, 2018) who through the Affective Filter Hypothesis argues that language acquisition is more effective when learners experience low anxiety and high motivation. Music can lower emotional barriers and create a supportive learning environment. Similarly, explains that songs contribute to a positive classroom atmosphere because they are enjoyable, memorable, and emotionally engaging, which supports language acquisition.

Furthermore, students stated that English songs increased their motivation to participate actively in classroom activities. They felt more engaged when listening to music, completing lyric-based tasks, and discussing song meanings. This supports the argument of (Fitriyani, 2017), who emphasizes that motivation plays a central role in second language learning success, as motivated learners are more willing to invest effort and participate actively. Songs, as engaging instructional media, can stimulate intrinsic motivation and enhance learner involvement.

These findings suggest that incorporating English songs into vocabulary instruction positively influences students' attitudes, emotional engagement, and willingness to learn, thereby supporting both affective and cognitive aspects of language acquisition.

### **Benefits of Using English Songs in Vocabulary Learning**

The findings reveal several significant benefits perceived by students when English songs are used as learning media.

#### **1. Improved Vocabulary Retention**

Students reported that repetition in song lyrics helped them remember new vocabulary more effectively. The recurring words and phrases reinforced their memory through repeated exposure. Many students mentioned that they could recall specific words simply by remembering parts of the song.

This finding supports the idea that repetition strengthens memory retention, particularly in second language acquisition. According to (Meara & Buxton, 1987), vocabulary learning requires multiple encounters with words in meaningful contexts before they can be firmly stored in long-term memory and explains that repeated exposure to lexical items is essential for strengthening form–meaning connections and promoting retention.

#### **2. Better Pronunciation**

Students indicated that listening to native singers improved their pronunciation skills. By repeatedly hearing correct pronunciation, stress patterns, rhythm, and intonation, students developed better phonological awareness. Some students reported practicing pronunciation by singing along with the songs.

Songs provide authentic input and natural models of spoken language. Through continuous exposure to accurate pronunciation, learners become more familiar with how words are naturally pronounced in connected speech. The melody and rhythm of songs also help students recognize patterns of stress and intonation more easily than in regular spoken texts.

In addition, meaningful listening input contributes significantly to improving speaking accuracy, as learners tend to reproduce sounds, rhythm, and intonation they frequently hear. By listening and imitating repeatedly, students gradually internalize correct pronunciation patterns. Therefore, songs can serve as effective listening materials that expose students to natural pronunciation models, helping them enhance phonological awareness and overall speaking accuracy.

#### **3. Contextual Understanding of Vocabulary**

Another benefit identified by students was the ability to understand vocabulary in context. Instead of learning isolated words, students encountered vocabulary within meaningful sentences and situations presented in song lyrics. This contextual exposure helped them infer meanings more easily and understand how words are used in real communication.

Vocabulary is more effectively learned when it is presented in meaningful contexts rather than through isolated word lists. When learners see words used in sentences, dialogues, or real-life situations, they can better understand not only the meaning of the words but also how they function grammatically, how they combine with other words, and how they are appropriately used in communication.

Songs naturally provide this kind of contextualized input. Through lyrics, learners are exposed to authentic language, expressions, and patterns that reflect real communication. As a result, songs help students develop a deeper understanding of vocabulary and improve their ability to use new words accurately and confidently in speaking and writing.

#### **4. Increased Motivation and Reduced Anxiety**

Students emphasized that music creates a fun and less stressful learning environment. They feel that learning through songs is more enjoyable and flexible compared to textbook-based learning, which is often perceived as rigid. The enjoyable atmosphere encourages students to participate more actively and reduces their fear of making mistakes during the learning process.

These findings indicate that songs contribute to a positive and supportive learning environment, which is essential for effective vocabulary acquisition. When students feel relaxed and emotionally

secure, they are more willing to take risks, engage in classroom activities, and process new language input more effectively. A comfortable atmosphere also increases confidence in speaking and using new vocabulary in context.

Overall, the results show that music has a positive impact on language learning, particularly in increasing motivation, retention, and student engagement. Students at STBA Bina Dinamika demonstrate positive perceptions toward the use of English songs in vocabulary learning. Songs help improve vocabulary retention, pronunciation, contextual understanding, and learning motivation. However, lecturers need to carefully select appropriate songs and design guided learning activities to address potential challenges, such as unfamiliar expressions or fast-paced lyrics.

### **Challenges Faced by Students in Learning Vocabulary through Songs**

Despite the generally positive perceptions, several challenges were reported by students.

1. Fast Tempo of Songs

Some students found it difficult to follow songs with a fast tempo. Rapid lyrics made it challenging to catch individual words, especially for lower-proficiency learners. This sometimes caused frustration and reduced comprehension.

2. Slang and Informal Expressions

Students reported confusion when encountering slang, idiomatic expressions, or informal language commonly found in popular songs. Since such expressions are not always taught in formal classroom settings, students struggled to understand their meanings.

3. Unclear Pronunciation

Certain songs featured unclear pronunciation due to artistic style, accent variation, or sound effects. This created difficulty in identifying words accurately, particularly for students who are still developing listening skills.

These challenges suggest that lecturers must carefully select songs appropriate to students' proficiency levels. Songs with clear pronunciation, moderate tempo, and suitable vocabulary should be prioritized. Additionally, pre-listening and post-listening activities, such as vocabulary preview and lyric analysis, can help minimize comprehension difficulties.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study aimed to investigate students' perceptions of using English songs in learning vocabulary at STBA Bina Dinamika. Based on the findings obtained from questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, it can be concluded that students generally have positive perceptions toward the integration of English songs as a medium for vocabulary instruction. The majority of participants viewed songs as an enjoyable, engaging, and motivating learning tool compared to traditional memorization techniques.

The results indicate that English songs contribute significantly to vocabulary retention through repetition, enhance pronunciation by providing authentic language input, and support contextual understanding of word meanings. Additionally, songs help create a relaxed classroom atmosphere, which lowers students' anxiety and increases their willingness to participate actively in learning activities. These affective benefits align with theories suggesting that positive emotional conditions facilitate language acquisition.

However, the study also identified several challenges, including difficulty understanding fast song tempo, slang expressions, and unclear pronunciation. These findings suggest that while songs are effective, their successful implementation depends largely on careful song selection and appropriate instructional guidance. Lecturers need to consider students' proficiency levels and design structured pre-listening and post-listening activities to maximize learning outcomes.

In conclusion, English songs are perceived as an effective and enjoyable medium for vocabulary learning in the EFL context at STBA Bina Dinamika. When used strategically, they can enhance students' motivation, engagement, and vocabulary development. Therefore, integrating English songs into vocabulary instruction is recommended as an alternative pedagogical approach to support meaningful and sustainable language learning.

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