

The Effectiveness of Song-Based Instruction in Enhancing EFL Students' Vocabulary Mastery

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ABSTRACT

Vocabulary mastery is a fundamental component of language learning, and innovative instructional strategies are needed to improve students' vocabulary outcomes. This study aimed to investigate the effect of the Song media on the vocabulary development of tenth-grade students at SMA Negeri 5 Palu in the 2025/2026 academic year. The research employed a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design using a pre-test and post-test control group. Two classes were selected by random sampling and assigned to the experimental and control groups. Students' vocabulary achievement data were collected through vocabulary tests and analyzed statistically using SPSS, with the Mann-Whitney U Test applied to examine differences between groups. The statistical analysis revealed a significant difference in vocabulary learning outcomes between the two groups. This was indicated by an Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value of < 0.001, which was lower than the 0.05 significance level. In addition, the experimental group achieved a higher mean rank (36.96) than the control group (20.04), showing better post-test performance after the treatment. These findings imply that integrating songs into vocabulary instruction is significantly more effective than conventional teaching methods for improving students' vocabulary learning outcomes.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is a core component of English that underpins the development of the four language skills listening, speaking, reading, and writing, and effective communication cannot be achieved without adequate vocabulary mastery. Learners with limited vocabulary often struggle to express ideas, comprehend texts, and convey meaning accurately. A broad range of vocabulary also enables learners to understand information more effectively when reading. According to Tarigan [1], an individual's language ability is closely related to both the quantity and quality of vocabulary they possess, indicating that richer vocabulary

knowledge increases the likelihood of language proficiency. Similarly, Alqahtani [2] emphasizes that vocabulary is a crucial element of language learning, as learners cannot express ideas or understand messages properly without sufficient lexical knowledge. In line with this view, Aswal Syarifudin [3] argues that vocabulary serves as a fundamental foundation for learning English and represents the initial step for students seeking to master English skills.

In the Indonesian educational context, particularly within the Merdeka Curriculum, vocabulary instruction plays an essential role in supporting effective English language learning. The curriculum emphasizes the development of students' language abilities through mastery of vocabulary, enhancing speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. Students are encouraged to understand vocabulary in various contexts so that they can apply it appropriately in real-life situations. Furthermore, vocabulary enrichment is expected to help learners comprehend more complex texts and process information more efficiently [4]. Alpino Susanto [5] highlights that vocabulary learning is a vital aspect of foreign language education, with strong emphasis placed on understanding word meanings in both written and spoken communication. Moreover, the Merdeka Curriculum promotes learner autonomy by encouraging students to explore and build their own vocabulary actively. Kusmaryani [6] explains that this curriculum provides teachers with flexibility in implementing English learning activities, thereby increasing student engagement and supporting independent vocabulary development despite challenges such as limited instructional time.

However, based on classroom observations during teaching assistance in the MBKM Program at SMA Negeri 5 Palu, several problems related to students' vocabulary mastery were identified. Many students had difficulty distinguishing word classes, particularly nouns, verbs, and adjectives, which affected their ability to understand meanings and use words correctly in context. This condition indicates that students' vocabulary knowledge remains limited and requires more engaging and effective instructional strategies. To address this issue, the researchers considered using songs as an alternative medium for vocabulary learning [7].

Previous studies have shown that songs can be an effective tool in improving vocabulary acquisition. According to a study conducted by Dzanic & Pejic [8], incorporating songs into English language learning significantly increases students' motivation and facilitates the acquisition of new vocabulary. In addition, Ananda et al. [9] suggest that teachers can improve students' vocabulary mastery by applying effective techniques, including integrating English songs into classroom instruction. Likewise, Adnyani Dewi [10] states that the use of English songs is one of the teaching strategies that can enhance students' vocabulary development. Despite these findings, there is still limited quasi-experimental research examining the effectiveness of English songs in improving vocabulary mastery within the context of the Merdeka Curriculum at SMA Negeri 5 Palu.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate whether the use of English songs significantly improves the vocabulary mastery of tenth-grade students at SMA Negeri 5 Palu compared with conventional teaching methods.

2. METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach using a quasi-experimental design with a non-equivalent control group [11]. This design involved two intact classes, one assigned to the experimental group and the other to the control group. Both groups were administered a pre-test and a post-test to measure students' vocabulary mastery before and after the treatment. However, only the experimental group received instruction using the "Use Songs to Enhance Students' Vocabulary," while the control group was taught using conventional vocabulary-teaching methods. The design can be illustrated as follows:

Experimental	O ₁	X	O ₂
Control	O ₃		O ₄

Where:

- O₁ : Pre-test for experimental group
- O₂ : Post-test for experimental group
- O₃ : Pre-test for control group
- O₄ : Post-test for control group
- X : treatment using songs

The study population consisted of all tenth-grade students at SMA Negeri 5 Palu in the 2025/2026 academic year. Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun [12] explain that a population refers to the entire group to which the results of a study are intended to be generalized. From this population, two classes were selected as the research sample using a random sampling technique to ensure that each student had an equal chance of being chosen, thereby increasing the reliability and validity of the findings. The selected classes were X Merdeka 1 (experimental group) and X Merdeka 2 (control group), with 28 students in each class.

The treatment was conducted over six meetings (approximately six weeks) during regular English lessons. In the experimental group, songs were integrated into the 50-minute core activity of each 90-minute lesson. Songs were selected based on several criteria: they were English pop songs, appropriate to the students' vocabulary level, aligned with the syllabus topics, and contained clear examples of nouns, verbs, and adjectives. According to Anjar Sinta Dewi [13], songs play an important role in helping learners improve vocabulary mastery. Similarly, Lariva Mantika [14] states that songs function as alternative instructional media that positively affect students' learning achievement and attitudes toward learning. In contrast, the control group received instruction without games and used conventional vocabulary-teaching methods. Both groups were given pre-tests and post-tests to evaluate their vocabulary mastery before and after the intervention. According to A typical song-based lesson consisted of the following steps: 1) Introducing the topic and key vocabulary related to the song. 2) playing the song while students listened attentively to the lyrics. 3) asking students to identify and list vocabulary items from the lyrics, particularly nouns, verbs, and adjectives. 4) discussing the meanings and word classes of the identified vocabulary. 5) having students use the new vocabulary in sentences or short exercises. In contrast, the control group was taught using conventional vocabulary-teaching methods without songs. Instruction mainly involved teacher explanation, word translation,

vocabulary lists, drilling, and written exercises from the textbook. Both groups received the same learning objectives and materials, but differed only in the instructional strategy used. Pre-tests and post-tests were administered to both groups to measure vocabulary mastery before and after the intervention. As emphasized by Anissa'ul Afidah [15], vocabulary forms the foundation of English learning and plays a crucial role in language acquisition.

The instrument used in this study was a written vocabulary test consisting of two parts: a pre-test and a post-test. The pre-test was administered before the treatment to assess students' initial vocabulary knowledge, while the post-test was given after the treatment to measure improvement in vocabulary mastery. The test items included matching tests, essays, and choosing the correct word from a box to complete the sentences.

To ensure content validity, the test was developed based on the English syllabus and vocabulary materials taught during the treatment. The instrument was designed to align with the research objectives and accurately measure students' vocabulary mastery. A pilot test was conducted to assess the clarity and appropriateness of the items, and the instrument's reliability was analyzed using Cronbach's alpha to ensure consistent test scores.

Data were collected through the administration of pre-tests and post-tests to both the experimental and control groups. The pre-test data were used to determine students' initial vocabulary mastery, while the post-test data reflected students' vocabulary achievement after the instructional treatment. The test results from both groups were systematically recorded and prepared for statistical analysis.

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS version 24 [16], which is widely used in quantitative research for its accuracy and efficiency in analyzing statistical data. Before testing the research hypothesis, normality tests were conducted using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk tests to assess the data distribution. Since the data were not normally distributed, a non-parametric statistical test was applied.

The Mann–Whitney U Test was used to compare the post-test scores of the experimental and control groups. The level of significance was set at $\alpha = 0.05$. This analysis was conducted to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference in vocabulary mastery between students taught through songs and those taught through conventional methods, and to examine the effectiveness of song-based instruction in improving students' vocabulary mastery at SMA Negeri 5 Palu.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis reveals that using songs in teaching vocabulary to tenth-grade students at SMA Negeri 5 Palu is effective. The data from students' pre- and post-tests demonstrate that learning through songs can significantly enhance vocabulary achievement. After the pre-test and post-test data from both the experimental and control groups were collected, the researcher analyzed the results using the Mann–Whitney U test to identify whether there was a significant difference in vocabulary mastery between the two groups.

3.1. Results

Based on the descriptive statistical results, it can be observed that there was a considerable improvement in the vocabulary mastery of the experimental class after being taught through songs [17]. The average pre-test score for the experimental class was 49.03, and it increased significantly to 87.86 in the post-test. This indicates that using songs helped students acquire new vocabulary more effectively and improve their overall vocabulary mastery. According to Maulana [18], modern English song lyrics are an effective medium for developing vocabulary mastery. In contrast, the control class, which was taught using traditional teaching methods, also showed improvement, although the increase was not as substantial as that of the experimental class. The control group's average pre-test score was 63.02, and it rose to 78.87 in the post-test.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-Test Experiment	28	64	22	87	49.03	17.351
Post-Test Experiment	28	27	71	98	87.86	8.304
Pre-Test Control	28	60	24	84	63.02	14.594
Post-Test Control	28	42	49	91	76.87	10.765
Valid N (listwise)	28					

Although both groups experienced progress, the improvement in the experimental group was higher than that of the control group. Overall, the descriptive analysis shows that students in the experimental class achieved greater improvement in vocabulary mastery compared to those in the control class. These results suggest that the use of songs positively enhanced vocabulary mastery among tenth-grade students at SMA Negeri 5 Palu.

Table 2. Test of Normality

Class		Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Result Vocabulary Learning	Pre-Test Experiment (Treatment)	.135	28	.200*	.955	28	.271
	Post-Test Experiment (Treatment)	.209	28	.003	.891	28	.007
	Pre-Test Control (Conventional)	.146	28	.131	.901	28	.012
	Post-Test Control (Conventional)	.141	28	.163	.920	28	.035

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

It was observed that the experimental group's pre-test obtained a significance (Sig.) value of 0.200 in the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test and 0.271 in the Shapiro–Wilk test. Because both values exceeded the 0.05 significance level, the data were regarded as normally distributed. In contrast, the experimental group's post-test produced Sig. Values of 0.003 (Kolmogorov–Smirnov) and 0.007 (Shapiro–Wilk), which were below 0.05, indicating that the data did not follow a normal distribution. For the control group, the pre-test results showed a Sig. value of 0.131 in the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test and 0.012 in the Shapiro–Wilk test. Because the Shapiro–Wilk test is more suitable for small sample sizes, the data were interpreted as nonnormal. Similarly, the post-test results of the control group revealed Sig. values of 0.163 in the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test and 0.035 in the Shapiro–Wilk test, which were below the 0.05 threshold, indicating non-normal distribution. Therefore, it can

be concluded that only the experimental group's pre-test data satisfied the assumption of normality, whereas the remaining datasets did not, suggesting that non-parametric statistical tests should be used in subsequent analyses.

Table 3. Mann-Whitney U Test Ranks

	Class	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Result of Vocabulary Learning	Experimental Class (Song to Enhance Vocabulary)	28	36.96	1035.00
	Control Class (Conventional)	28	20.04	561.00
	Total	56		

The Mann–Whitney test [19] indicated that the experimental group achieved a higher mean rank (36.96) and total rank score (1035.00) than the control group, which had a (mean rank of 20.04 and a total rank of 561.00). These results confirm that using songs is more effective than conventional teaching methods for improving students' vocabulary learning outcomes.

Table 4. Mann-Whitney U Test

Test Statistics ^a	
	Result of Vocabulary Learning
Mann-Whitney U	155.000
Wilcoxon W	561.000
Z	-3.895
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001

a. Grouping Variable: Class

Table 4 highlights the results of the Mann–Whitney test in the Test Statistics. The Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value was < .001, which is lower than the significance level of 0.05. This result indicates a statistically significant difference in post-test learning outcomes between the experimental and control groups. Therefore, it can be concluded that the use of the song-based learning technique had a significant positive effect on improving students' vocabulary mastery when compared with the conventional teaching method. In addition, the Z value of –3.895 further strengthens this finding by demonstrating a clear distinction between the two groups after the treatment was implemented.

3.2. Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that using songs as a learning medium is more effective than conventional teaching methods for improving students' vocabulary mastery. This conclusion is supported by the Mann–Whitney U test, which yielded a p-value of < .001, indicating a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups. In addition, the experimental group obtained a substantially higher mean rank (36.96) than the control group (20.04). These statistical results confirm that students taught through songs achieved better vocabulary outcomes than those taught through conventional instruction.

When examining students' vocabulary gains, the experimental group demonstrated remarkable improvement from the pre-test to the post-test, with the mean score increasing from 49.03 to 87.86. Although the control group initially showed a slightly higher mean score in the pre-test, the vocabulary improvement in the experimental group was considerably greater. This suggests that the observed improvement was not merely due to initial ability differences, but instead to the effectiveness of song-based instruction. In contrast, the conventional method, which is typically teacher-centered and positions the teacher as the primary source of information while students act as passive recipients [20]. Appeared less effective in facilitating meaningful vocabulary growth.

The effectiveness of songs in vocabulary learning can be attributed to several pedagogical factors. Songs provide meaningful linguistic context, repeated exposure to vocabulary, and rhythmic and phonological patterns that support memory retention. Through repeated listening and engagement with song lyrics, students can internalize new words more naturally and recall them more easily. In addition, songs create a more relaxed and enjoyable learning atmosphere, helping reduce students' anxiety and increasing their motivation to participate in learning activities actively.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research highlighting the benefits of integrating songs into language learning. Studies conducted by Purnamasari [21], Solihatun Toyyibah [22], and Felicia [23] similarly reported significant improvements in students' vocabulary mastery following the use of songs in classroom instruction. Furthermore, research by Setiyadi [24] and Muflihah [25] demonstrated that songs enhance students' motivation and engagement, contributing not only to vocabulary development but also to a more positive and interactive learning environment. These studies support and strengthen the present findings, suggesting that song-based learning is an effective pedagogical approach.

Despite the positive results, several challenges were identified during the implementation of the song-based instruction. Some students experienced difficulty understanding unfamiliar vocabulary or idiomatic expressions found in song lyrics. Additionally, a number of students tended to remain passive during group activities, which may have limited their vocabulary development compared to more actively engaged learners. These issues indicate that the successful use of songs in vocabulary instruction requires effective teacher facilitation, including explicit explanation of difficult words, guidance on idiomatic expressions, and strategies to ensure equal student participation.

This study also has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research was conducted in a single school with a limited sample size consisting of only two classes (56 students), which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Second, the treatment duration was relatively short, which may not fully capture the long-term effects of song-based instruction on vocabulary mastery. Third, the study focused on a limited range of vocabulary topics and employed only one type of assessment. Finally, participants were assigned at the class level rather than the individual level, a common limitation in quasi-experimental designs.

In terms of practical implications, English teachers are encouraged to integrate songs into vocabulary instruction on a regular basis rather than as a one-time activity. Songs should

be carefully selected to match students' language proficiency levels, learning objectives, and syllabus content. Teachers are also advised to prepare supporting activities, such as vocabulary explanation, sentence construction, and discussion of cultural or idiomatic expressions, to maximize learning outcomes. With proper guidance, songs can serve as an effective instructional medium that promotes active engagement and meaningful vocabulary learning.

Future research is recommended to explore the use of different song genres, longer instructional interventions, and the integration of songs to develop other language skills, such as listening comprehension and pronunciation. Further studies may also replicate this research in different schools or grade levels to enhance generalizability. Additionally, comparing song-based learning with other multimedia or technology-based instructional strategies could provide deeper insights into effective approaches for vocabulary instruction.

4. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the use of songs as an instructional medium has a significant and positive effect on students' vocabulary mastery at SMA Negeri 5 Palu. The statistical evidence confirms a meaningful difference between students taught through song-based instruction and those taught through conventional instruction, indicating that learning with songs leads to substantially better vocabulary outcomes. Beyond the statistical results, these findings highlight the pedagogical value of songs as an effective, engaging, and practical tool for vocabulary instruction in senior high school contexts. By providing meaningful context, repeated exposure, and an enjoyable learning atmosphere, songs support students' vocabulary development more effectively than traditional, teacher-centered approaches. Therefore, English teachers are encouraged to integrate carefully selected songs into vocabulary lessons to enhance students' engagement, retention, and overall language learning achievement.

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