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The Use of English Songs to Improve EFL Students' Pronunciation

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Abstract
The purpose of this study is to demonstrate whether providing grade eight students at SMP Negeri 1 Poso Pesisir Selatan with English songs may enhance their pronunciation. In contrast to the sounds in Indonesian, this investigation focused on the dental and palato-alveolar fricative sounds. In this quasi-experimental study, data from both the experimental and control groups were used, including pre-test and post-test results. Passing the pronunciation test required students to enunciate minimal pairs. Six treatment sessions were conducted with the experimental group, with the primary goal of listening to and practicing the pronunciation of specific songs. The results showed improvement in pronunciation ability, with a p-value of $0.000 < 0.05$, and the average score increased after the treatment. This study offers practical implications for English teachers to integrate engaging media into pronunciation instruction, encouraging better articulation and fluency. The findings suggest that English songs can serve as effective learning media to improve students' English pronunciation.

Keywords: English songs; Pronunciation; Teaching media.

INTRODUCTION

Pronunciation, which refers to the way words are articulated, is crucial for effective communication, as it enables the listener to understand the message clearly (Palupi et al., 222). Without it, even grammatically correct sentences can be misinterpreted, confusing. For language learners, the most crucial speaking skill for language learners to work on before practicing speaking in a real-world setting is pronunciationElfaizy et al., 2023). Good pronunciation not only builds confidence but also deepens students' understanding of the language, ensuring their messages are easily grasped. Therefore, students are expected to use accurate pronunciation in their daily conversations at school.

In the *Merdeka* Curriculum, pronunciation plays a crucial role in language skills. It emphasizes the comprehensive development of language skills of listening, speaking, and reading. Good pronunciation is a crucial component of speaking skills. According to the *Merdeka* Curriculum's eighth-grade syllabus, one of the fundamental competencies is the ability to communicate meaning in straightforward transactional (to complete tasks) and interpersonal (to socialize) conversations using clear, fluid, and appropriate pronunciation to engage with the environment.

The most common problem faced by EFL students in Indonesia is the inappropriate pronunciation of English words. The differences between the English and Indonesian languages cause this problem.

According to Tiono and Yostanto (2008), there are six consonant sounds found in English that do not exist in Indonesian: /v/, /θ/, /ð/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/, and /tʃ/. The absence of dental fricative sounds in Indonesian makes it difficult for the EFL students to pronounce some English words accurately. Meanwhile, another reason is that one letter in Indonesian is represented by a single sound, such as "aku" (a/-k/-u) in Indonesian and "than" (ðən) in English (Lengkoan, 2017). This is how English and Indonesian pronunciation differ. These differences can cause them to make incorrect pronunciations when speaking English.

Studies on the use of music to enhance pronunciation have already been conducted. Yusmita and Angraini (2017) found that students who listened to English music were able to acquire new words and develop their pronunciation. There is a clear connection: when students listen to songs, repeat the lyrics, and then pronounce the words correctly and smoothly, they are learning. The researchers also believe that songs help students recognize words they have heard before. This type of media can help people learn a language in a few ways. It can make learning more interesting and engaging, which helps people stay focused and motivated to learn. It can also help people learn how to recognize and produce the different sounds in a language, as well as how to combine those sounds to form words and sentences. (Juwita Amalia et al. 2025) argue that students' pronunciation can be effectively enhanced through a combination of rule-based instruction methods and entertaining materials, such as song lyrics. In addition, Munir and Zalsabila (2023) found that students who use media songs to study English are joyful and motivated. According to this study, songs can foster a more upbeat and stimulating learning atmosphere. It also demonstrated the emotional effects of using music in language instruction.

The studies mentioned above clearly show that using songs to improve pronunciation and increase engagement in language learning is a practical approach. This is further supported by the research conducted by Dinda et al. (2022), who found that the use of English songs greatly enhanced pupils' proficiency in pronouncing English words. Similarly, Yanti and Harahap (2022) found that using English songs effectively improved students' pronunciation skills. Surya et al. (2023) found that using song had a positive impact on students' pronunciation results, with the use of improvised song media resulting in improved English pronunciation.

While some previous studies affirm the benefits of songs for improving general speaking proficiency, intonation, and rhythm, this study adopts a phoneme-specific approach, particularly within the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) context in Indonesia, where certain sounds pose challenges for students. This approach explicitly addresses the persistent difficulty in producing the dental and palato-alveolar fricative sounds (/θ, ð/, /ʃ, ʒ/,/tʃ/, /dʒ/) by isolating these sounds in minimal pairs and targeting them through six consecutive sessions, by focusing on these contrastive phonemes within the specific linguistic context of SMP Negeri 1 Poso Pesisir Selatan.

For this reason, this study aims to utilize English songs to address students' challenges in pronunciation. Songs can provide students with a wide range of English phonemes (individual sounds) in a natural and repetitive context, allowing them to learn and practice these sounds effectively. Songs play a key role in building confidence through repetition and a relaxed learning environment (Heddy, 2025). Songs can help students recognize and produce accurate sounds by presenting repetitive phonetic patterns and natural contexts (Misa, 2024). This repeated exposure helps students distinguish and understand these sounds. Songs can highlight minimal pairs (words that differ by only one sound, like "ship" and "sheep"), which are crucial for accurate pronunciation.

The students have difficulty pronouncing certain English words due to the absence of corresponding English sounds in Bahasa and the differences in pronunciation between the two languages. Therefore, the researcher will implement songs to determine the effect on students' pronunciation mastery. She formulates a research question as follows: Can the use of English songs improve the pronunciation of grade eight students at SMP Negeri 1 Poso Pesisir Selatan?

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

This inquiry was conducted using a quasi-experimental design and a quantitative technique. A non-equivalent group design was used, with experimental and control groups included. Before treatment, both

groups took a pre-test, and following treatment, they took a post-test. The control group got regular training, whereas only the experimental group received the treatment. Variables can be classified as either independent or dependent. The dependent variable is the outcome that results from the independent variable. English songs used as instructional materials are the independent variable. In contrast, the dependent variable is the ability of grade eight pupils at SMP Negeri 1 Poso Pesisir Selatan to pronounce words correctly. The research design followed the formula proposed by Best et al. (2017) as follows:

Experimental	O1	X	O2
Control	O3	C	O4

Where:

X	: Treatment
O1 and O3	: Pre-tests
O2 and O4	: Post-tests

Research Target

The sample of this study consisted of 48 grade eight students from SMP Negeri 1 Poso Pesisir Selatan. The sample was selected using a cluster sampling technique. The researchers prepared three cards, labeling them "control" and "experimental." The cards were shuffled and placed upside down on a table. Each class representative was asked to take one card, and the classes represented by the "control" and "experimental" cards constituted the research sample.

Research Procedure

This study employed a quasi-experimental design, consisting of an experimental class and a control class. The researchers administered the pre-test to both the experimental and control groups before the initiation of treatment. Finding out how well the pupils could pronounce the sounds was the aim of this test [/θ/, /ð/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/, /tʃ/ and /dʒ/]. There were 20 items of minimal pairs and 5 sentences that contained the minimal pairs given to the students. After administering the pre-test to the experimental class, the researchers used English songs to teach students how to pronounce words correctly. There were six sessions of treatment. Every session included song lyrics and music listening for the pupils. One aspect of the treatment they offered was instruction. After the treatment, a post-test was administered to examine the differences between the experimental and control groups and to determine whether employing music as a medium might improve students' word pronunciation. There were also 20 items of minimal pairs and 5 sentences that contained the minimal pairs given to the students.

This teaching method used a precise sequence to help students improve their pronunciation with English songs. It started with the teacher explaining how to make the sounds correctly. Then, students received lyric sheets with missing words and listened to the song, trying to fill in the blanks on their own. This helped them focus on the sounds in a real song. Next, students worked in small groups to compare their answers and identify words with the specific sound they were learning (such as/θ/). After this, each group presented its work. Importantly, the teacher listened and corrected any pronunciation mistakes, giving feedback to both individuals and the whole group. This step-by-step approach mixed direct teaching, individual work, group activity, and helpful feedback to make learning pronunciation through songs as effective as possible.

Instruments and Data Collection Techniques

This study employed assessment, specifically oral performance, as the data collection technique, and a pronunciation test and recorder as the research instruments. The test consisted of 20 items of minimal pair words containing the sounds of [/θ/, /ð/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/, /tʃ/, and /dʒ/] and 5 sentences that also contained minimal pairs. In collecting data for this research, the researcher focused on articulation. Specifically, she examined how EFL students pronounced the dental sounds /θ/ and/ð/, as well as the palato-alveolar sounds /ʃ/, /ʒ/, /tʃ/, and /dʒ/. The absence of dental fricative sounds in Bahasa has been creating challenges for EFL students in pronouncing words with these sounds. She used pop songs that were currently viral because

they often featured repetitive lyrics in the chorus, which could strengthen pronunciation patterns and build fluency. As mentioned by Muhammed (2024), songs, particularly pop music, help practice connected speech, which involves dropping specific sounds. Pop songs were very famous everywhere. They could be played on the radio, streamed online, and were available in various media. This meant students were likely already familiar with many pop songs.

Also, pop songs were authentic materials created by native speakers, which gave the students real examples of the language, such as I Think They Call This Love by Elliot James Reay, Favorite Girl by Justin Bieber, Slipping Through My Fingers by ABBA, Birds of Feather by Billie Eilish, Treasure by Bruno Mars, and Drunk Text by Henry Moodie.

Data Analysis Technique

Using IBM SPSS Statistics version 25, the pronunciation test results were evaluated using the independent sample t-test technique. The mean scores of the two groups were compared using a two-sample t-test (Gerald, 2018). The purpose of this study is to ascertain if pupils who are taught English songs and those who are not have significantly different pronunciation abilities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

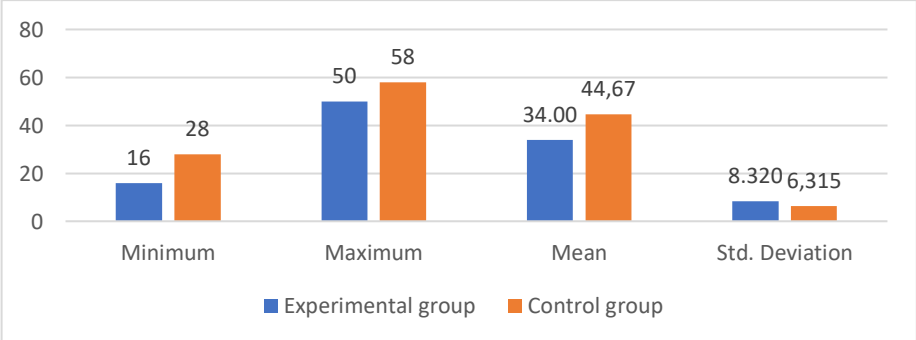
Descriptive Statistics

This part of the study was crucial as it compared the experimental group's pre- and post-test results to those of the control group. Before treatment began, a pre-test was administered. Following six treatment sessions, a post-test was administered at the end of each session. The study aimed to assess the data and determine if the experimental group had made substantial progress compared to the control group.

The main difference was that the control group received regular pronunciation instruction, whereas the experimental group did not. The pre-test consisted of a pronunciation test comprising 20 minimal pairs and 5 sentences. The data were categorized into pre-test experimental and pre-test control groups. Using SPSS 25, the researchers calculated the mean scores and standard deviations for both groups as follows:

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Pre-test

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-test experimental group	24	16	50	34.00	8.320
Pre-test control group	24	28	58	44.67	6.315
Valid N (listwise)	24				



Picture 1. Descriptive Statistics of Pre-Test

According to the previously given data, the experimental group's pre-test score ranged from a minimum of 50 to a maximum of 16, with an average of 34.00 and a standard deviation of 8.320. In contrast, the control group saw a low score of 28, a high score of 58, and a mean score of 44.67 with a standard deviation of 6.315. In terms of mean scores on the pre-test, the control group did better than the

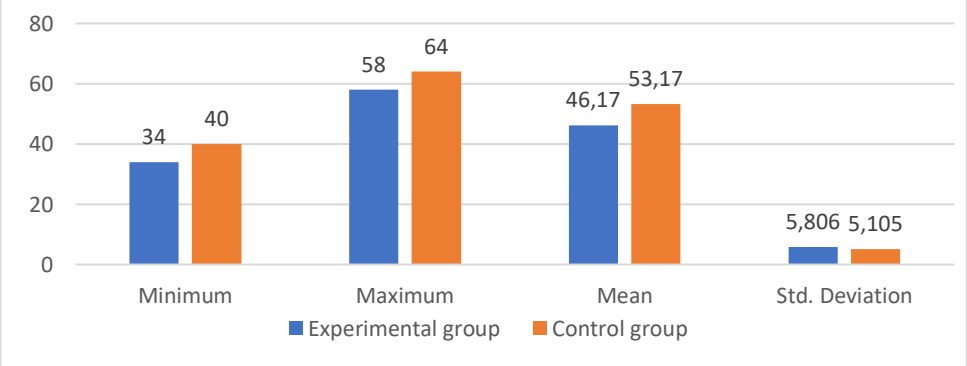
experimental group. The researchers believed there was potential for improvement, despite the experimental group initially doing worse. The effectiveness of English songs as a teaching tool for enhancing students' pronunciation will be evaluated using these pre-test results, which will serve as a standard for comparing post-test outcomes.

The gathered data was divided into two categories by the researchers: the experimental group's and the control group's post-test results. The mean, minimum, maximum, and standard deviation were among the descriptive statistics she calculated using SPSS 25 to examine these findings. The specific post-test results are detailed below:

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Post-test

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Post-test experimental group	24	34	58	46.17	5.806
Post-test control group	24	40	64	53.17	5.105
Valid N (listwise)	24				

To analyze the post-test findings for the experimental and control groups, the researchers used the previously provided data. The experimental group obtained results with a mean score of 46.17, a minimum score of 34, a maximum score of 58, and a standard deviation of 5.806 points. While the control group's score ranged from 40 to 64, it had a maximum score of 53.17, a mean score of 53.17, and a standard deviation of 5.105.



Picture 1. Descriptive Statistics of Post-Test

The table above presents a comparison of the mean pronunciation test scores between the Experimental Group, which was taught using English songs, and the Control Group, which received regular instruction over six treatment sessions. In the pre-test, the Experimental Group had a lower initial mean score of 34.00, compared to the Control Group's mean score of 44.67. After the six-session treatment, the mean scores of both groups increased. The Experimental Group experienced a significant increase in its mean score to 46.17, indicating an improvement of 12.17 points. Meanwhile, the Control Group also showed improvement, with a post-test mean score of 53.17, which represented an increase of 8.50.

Reliability Test

The researchers determined the inter-rater reliability using the intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) in SPSS with two raters. The results showed that the inter-rater correlation coefficient for the pre-test was excellent (r = 0.98; 95% CI, 0.98-0.99). Subsequently, the inter-rater correlation coefficient for the post-test was excellent (r = 0.97; 95% CI, 0.96, 0.98) and is therefore acceptable.

Table 3. Test of Reliability (Intraclass Correlation Coefficient)

	Intraclass Correlation[b]	95% Confidence Interval		F Test with True Value 0			
		Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Value	df1	df2	Sig
Single Measures	.981[a]	.966	.989	103.075	47	47	.000
Average Measures	.990[c]	.983	.995	103.075	47	47	.000

	Intraclass Correlation[b]	95% Confidence Interval		F Test with True Value 0			
		Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Value	df1	df2	Sig
Single Measures	.957[a]	.925	.976	45.738	47	47	.000
Average Measures	.978[c]	.961	.988	45.738	47	47	.000

Normality Test

The experimental and control groups' pre- and post-test scores were compared using the Shapiro-Wilk normality test to determine if they were normal. This test is essential because the data distribution serves as the foundation for any subsequent statistical analysis. It was decided that the data were normally distributed if the p-value was less than 0.05; otherwise, they were considered not normally distributed. This normalcy test's findings are shown as follows:

Table 4. Test of Normality (Shapiro-Wilk)

		Shapiro-Wilk		
	Class	**Statistic**	**df**	**Sig.**
Score	Pretest A (Control)	.907	24	.031
	Posttest A (Control)	.972	24	.724
	Pretest B (Experimental)	.976	24	.819
	Posttest B (Experimental)	.984	24	.959

It was established that the experimental group's pre-test and post-test data, as well as the control group's pre-test and post-test data, had a normal distribution based on the Shapiro-Wilk test analysis. The calculated significance values were 0.031 for the control pre-test, 0.724 for the control post-test, 0.819 for the experimental pre-test, and 0.959 for the experimental post-test, consistently indicating normality across all data.

Independent Sample T-test

Students who were taught English songs and those who were not were compared using an independent t-test for this study. We used an independent sample t-test to compare the mean scores of two groups (Gerald, 2018). In this study, a t-test with a significance threshold of 0.05 was employed. A two-tailed significance value below 0.05 demonstrated the difference, or affirmation of the hypothesis. Alternatively, the hypothesis was rejected if the two-tailed significance value was 0.05. The researchers processed the data with SPSS version 25 for Windows as follows:

Table 5. Independent Sample T-test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Hasil	Equal variances assumed	.396	.532	4.436	46	.000	7.000	1.578	3.823	10.177
	Equal variances not assumed			4.436	45.258	.000	7.000	1.578	3.822	10.178

Table 4 above shows the t-test statistics for independent samples for both the experimental and control groups. The independent sample t-test yields a p-value of 0.000 as a consequence. The image has $0.000 < 0.05$. As a result, it can be said that the experimental and control groups differ from one another. Thus, the null hypothesis (H0) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H1) is accepted. As a result, this shows that the research question can be answered: "There is an effect in improving the pronunciation of grade eight students using English song media at SMP Negeri 1 Poso Pesisir Selatan."

Discussion

According to the study's findings, students' pronunciation improved when they were taught using English music media. The average score for the experimental group showed this, rising from 34.00 on the pre-test to 46.17 on the post-test. However, when the control group received consistent pronunciation instruction, their average pre-test score rose from 44.67 to 53.17 before the test. Although both groups showed gains, the findings of the independent sample t-test are crucial for determining the effectiveness of English music media. This test yielded a Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. This means that the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted, while the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected. Though the impact is minimal, this conclusion may thus be regarded as comparable to earlier findings. The experimental group's students were likely less capable at first, as their pre-test average score was 34.00, compared to 44.67 for the control group. Additionally, students in the experimental group may have been more focused on the song itself rather than on their pronunciation, which could have limited their rate of improvement.

A previous study by Ridhayatullah et al. (2020) also found that students exposed to English songs showed an improvement in their pronunciation skills. However, the average scores increased slightly, but the difference between the experimental and control groups was minimal, suggesting that while English songs may have a positive impact on pronunciation, this impact may be limited by factors such as initial language ability, students' focus on the enjoyment of the songs rather than pronounce the sounds, and a lack of structured pronunciation instruction integrated into the song.

On the other hand, this study did show that English music media can be a helpful tool for improving speech. There is potential for improvement in the lower experimental group's initial performance, as indicated by their average pre-test score of 34.00, compared to the control group's score of 44.67. Given that the experimental group's average post-test scores increased, it would seem that the English song-based treatment played a significant role in closing this gap and promoting improvement. The Shapiro-Wilk test was used to verify that there was an equal distribution of all data sets, including the control and experimental groups, as well as the pre-test and post-test.

By increasing their mean scores from the pre-test to the post-test, the control group, which received regular pronunciation instruction, also showed improvement. A statistically significant difference was found in the independent sample t-test between the two groups after the treatment, suggesting that English music media is a more effective method of teaching pronunciation than traditional instruction.

This study supports the findings of Fahmiliya et al. (2023), which showed that songs have a positive effect on students' pronunciation in both the experimental and control groups. This suggests that using English songs as a learning tool can have a positive impact on students' pronunciation. Meanwhile, Lasmaria et al. (2024) found that students' pronunciation proficiency significantly improved with the use of songs as a medium during the 2023/2024 academic year. This result supports the hypothesis that using songs as a medium for pronunciation learning can significantly improve students' proficiency.

However, several limitations in this study need to be acknowledged. Firstly, the use of pre-existing classes in this quasi-experimental design means students were not randomly assigned to groups. The second is that the intervention was limited to only six sessions. Although a significant short-term gain was observed, the long-term retention of the newly acquired phonemes was not measured. Finally, students were more focused on the song itself than on the target phonemes. To address this issue, future research is expected to consider Increasing Explicit Phoneme Emphasis and modifying Post-Song Activities (Follow-up Activities).

Overall, the eighth-grade students in the experimental group at SMP Negeri 1 Poso Pesisir Selatan demonstrated a slight improvement in their pronunciation skills when English songs were integrated into their learning. This suggests that incorporating English songs can be a practical approach to enhance students' pronunciation skills and enrich their overall language learning experience.

CONCLUSION

According to this study, students' pronunciation can be improved by listening to English songs. According to post-test findings, the experimental group, which learned English songs, showed greater improvement than the control group, which received standard teaching. After the treatment was given, the experimental group's average score specifically rose from 44.00 to 46.17. According to the findings of the Independent Sample T-test, the alternative hypothesis was accepted with a Sig. (2-tailed) of 0.000. This suggests that English song media can enhance students' pronunciation, both in terms of pronunciation patterns and fluency.

Based on the finding that English song media is efficacious in improving students' pronunciation, the next step should focus on wider implementation and further research. It is recommended that SMP Negeri 1 Poso Pesisir Selatan consider integrating English songs as a regular component of their English curriculum, potentially developing lesson plans and special activities that utilize this media for pronunciation practice. Additionally, other schools in the region can explore adopting similar methodologies to improve their students' pronunciation skills.

The long-term effects of using English songs on pronunciation retention, the efficacy of various English song genres or types, and how English song media can be modified for students with different learning styles or proficiency levels would all be worthwhile areas for future research. Additionally, the research can delve into the specific phonetic elements that are most effectively improved through song-based learning and how these findings can inform targeted teaching strategies.

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