

The use of English songs in improving senior high school students' listening comprehension of descriptive texts

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this study are to find out whether there is an improvement in students' listening comprehension of descriptive text after being taught using English songs. This research was conducted at Swadhipa Senior High School with thirty-three students of the X.3 class. The research employed a quantitative approach using a one-group pretest-post-test design. Students were given a pretest, treated with listening lessons using selected English songs for 3 meetings, and then assessed through a post-test. The results showed a significant improvement in students' listening comprehension, evidenced by the increased post-test scores after being taught using English songs. This study concludes that English songs are an effective tool for developing students' listening skills, particularly in understanding descriptive texts. The findings support the integration of music into language learning curricula to foster more interactive and effective teaching strategies.

Keywords: *English songs, listening comprehension, descriptive texts.*

I. INTRODUCTION

There are four basic skills that are very important to be mastered in learning a foreign language: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Listening is one of the essential skills because it plays a major role in in-person communication. By mastering listening skills, learners can acquire information from what speakers are saying, and listening also contributes significantly to the development of other skills, especially speaking (Darti & Asmawati, 2017). Listening comprehension is a crucial component of language acquisition. Brown (2021) stated that listening is a major component in language learning and teaching, since in the classroom learners do more listening than speaking. Similarly, Gilakhjani and Sobouri (2016) emphasized that having good listening comprehension is one of the most crucial aspects of learning a language.

Despite its importance, many students still face obstacles in comprehending listening materials. One key issue is that "the pronunciation of the words may differ greatly from the way they appear in print" (Bloomfield et al., 2010, p. 3). Limited vocabulary also becomes a barrier, as students often lack the lexical knowledge and background understanding required for listening. Ali (2020) noted that listening is not covered adequately in many curricula, and more time and attention should be given to teaching listening skills. In addition, not all schools have supporting facilities such as language labs, loudspeakers, or headphones. Students also tend to feel bored with repetitive audio materials that use the same format every time.

Because of these challenges, educators should continually seek innovative media to enhance students' listening skills. Using a variety of methods can make students more comfortable and help them enjoy the listening class. One method that has gained increasing attention is integrating English songs into language learning. Songs have the potential to engage learners, expose them to authentic language use, and create enjoyable learning experiences. As a universal language, songs possess

unique qualities that make them an ideal tool for language educators. Previous studies have shown that songs can improve students' listening comprehension by offering exposure to different accents, vocabulary, and pronunciation patterns.

In the last five years (2019 - 2024), several researchers have discussed this topic. Previous studies, such as Siahaan et al. (2022), Afriyunda and Oktaviani (2021), and Ali (2020), explored the effectiveness of English songs in improving listening skills, yet none focused on the use of songs for listening comprehension specifically in descriptive text. Earlier research involved participants from elementary, junior high, and university levels, while this study focused on senior high school students. Thus, this research addressed a gap by examining the use of English songs in the context of descriptive text, particularly texts describing a person, which had not been explored before.

Based on these gaps, the present study aims to investigate the improvement of senior high school students' listening comprehension of descriptive text after being taught using English songs. Therefore, this study addresses the research question: Is there any improvement in senior high school students' listening comprehension of descriptive text after being taught using English songs? In line with this, the objective of the research is to find out whether English songs can improve senior high school students' listening comprehension of descriptive text.

II. METHODS

This study examined the use of English songs to enhance students' listening comprehension through a quantitative research design. The quantitative approach involved collecting numerical data using a pre-test, post-test, and treatment sessions. The pre-test was administered to measure students' listening comprehension before receiving any treatment, while the post-test was conducted after the treatment to determine improvement. During the treatment phase, students were taught listening using English songs within the context of descriptive text.

Participants

The participants of this study were students from the 10th grade of Swadhipa Senior High School. The researcher selected one class from the entire population to serve as the research sample. Before conducting the study, the researcher prepared the teaching materials, including selecting appropriate English songs that contained descriptive texts and were suitable for the students' age and proficiency levels. The chosen songs had clear lyrics and engaging content to help students better understand descriptive language.

Instrument

The instrument used in this study was a listening assessment consisting of a pretest and post-test designed to measure students' listening comprehension after exposure to English songs. The test aimed to evaluate how well students understood descriptive texts presented through songs. To ensure the instrument accurately reflected the research objectives, validity and reliability were carefully examined throughout the process. Content validity was ensured by aligning each test item with syllabus learning objectives and essential listening sub-skills, such as recognizing literal meaning, understanding vocabulary, identifying main ideas, and making inferences (Brown, 2000). A pilot test with non-sample students was

conducted to check clarity and difficulty. Construct validity followed Tyagi's (2013) framework of listening comprehension to ensure items measured the intended construct. For reliability, the researcher used the test-retest method, and the Guttman Split-Half Coefficient showed a score of 0.918, indicating high reliability. The discrimination analysis eliminated 5 weak items from the tryout, leaving 25 valid questions. Difficulty analysis categorized 5 items as easy, most as average, and 1 as difficult. All 25 items were retained for both the pretest and posttest, confirming that the instrument was appropriate, effective, and dependable for measuring students' listening skills.

Data Collection Procedures

The study begins by administering a try-out with a small group to check the clarity, difficulty, and suitability of the test items before the main study. Next, a pre-test is given to assess students' initial listening comprehension of descriptive texts and establish a baseline. The treatment then involves teaching descriptive texts using selected English songs to illustrate descriptive language and enhance listening skills. After the treatment, a post-test—parallel in format to the pre-test—is administered to measure students' listening comprehension. Finally, the data are analyzed by comparing pre-test and post-test results using appropriate statistical methods to determine the effectiveness of English songs in improving listening comprehension.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The purpose of this research was to determine whether there was an improvement in senior high school students' listening comprehension of descriptive text after being taught using English songs. To answer the research question, the researcher conducted a pretest, treatment, and post-test in the experimental class (X.3), while the try-out was conducted in class (X.2) to ensure the quality of the test instruments.

The results showed a significant improvement in students' listening comprehension after the treatment using English songs. Students' scores in the post-test increased compared to the pretest, indicating that English songs were effective as a medium for improving listening comprehension.

Table 1. Statistics of the Pretest and Post-test Results.

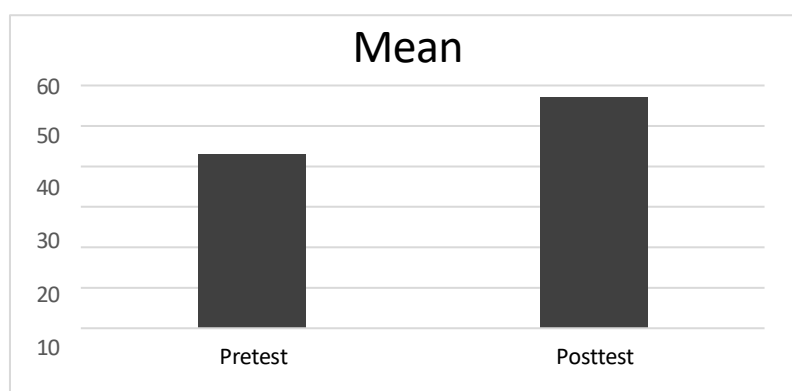
Statistics		Pretest	Posttest
N	Valid	33	33
	Missing	0	0
Mean		10.82	14.39
Std. Error of Mean		.527	.621
Median		11.00	14.00
Mode		11	12 ^a
Std. Deviation		3.025	3.570
Variance		9.153	12.746

Range	12	13
Minimum	5	8
Maximum	17	21
Sum	357	475

The pretest consisted of 25 multiple-choice listening items administered in 45 minutes. The total score was 357, with a mean of 10.82. The lowest score was 5, and the highest was 17. This test measured students' initial listening comprehension before the treatment.

After three meetings of treatment using English songs, students took a posttest containing the same 25 items (but rearranged). The total score increased to 475, with a mean score of 14.39. The lowest score was 8, and the highest was 20. This increase indicated noticeable improvement in students' listening comprehension.

Picture 1. The Improvement of Pretest and Posttest



A paired sample T-test was used to test the hypothesis. The mean score increased from 10.82 (pretest) to 14.39 (post-test). The significance value (2-tailed) was 0.000, which is lower than 0.05. Therefore:

H1 (there is an improvement) was accepted
H0 (there is no improvement) was rejected

This indicates a statistically significant improvement in students' listening comprehension of descriptive text after being taught using English songs. Based on the improvement in mean scores and the significant T-test results, it can be concluded that English songs effectively improved students' listening comprehension of descriptive text, particularly in describing a person. This aligns with previous research suggesting that English songs can enhance listening skills and overall language learning.

Discussion

The findings of this research confirmed that using English songs significantly improved students' listening comprehension of descriptive text, supporting the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis (H1). This result aligns with the idea that listening is an active process that involves constructing meaning through linguistic

and contextual cues (Brown, 2001; Tyagi, 2013). Since songs provide authentic language input, varied pronunciation patterns, and repeated exposure to meaningful text, they enhance listening comprehension in ways described by Lynch (1996) and Shipley (2010).

Students showed clear improvement in recognizing literal meaning and understanding vocabulary, the two listening micro-skills with the highest gain. Repeated listening allowed students to focus on descriptive language, especially adjectives commonly used in describing a person. This supports the findings of Afriyunanda & Oktaviani (2021), who stated that English songs help improve students' listening skills by making input more accessible. Similarly, Ali (2020) found that integrating songs into language learning positively affects students' listening comprehension, and Siahaan et al. (2022) showed that songs are more effective than traditional lecture methods for improving listening ability.

During the treatment, the use of various English songs helped students understand descriptive content presented both explicitly and implicitly. Some songs conveyed clear descriptive messages (Back to December, Prom Queen), while others required deeper interpretation (Style, The Logical Song). This combination allowed students to practice both literal and interpretive comprehension.

However, the effectiveness of the songs depended on how well the content aligned with descriptive text objectives. For example, Just the Way You Are and Back to December were not fully suited for describing physical appearance or personality traits, as they focused more on emotions than descriptive details. This highlights the importance of selecting songs that match the learning goals more directly.

Overall, the discussion confirms that English songs significantly improve students' listening comprehension of descriptive text by increasing engagement, providing authentic input, supporting vocabulary growth, and motivating students in the learning process.

CONCLUSION

This research offers strong proof that using English songs in language learning curricula improves students' listening comprehension abilities. The results of the study show that, as assessed by the pre-test and post-test, students who were exposed to English songs significantly improved their listening comprehension and interpretation of descriptive texts. This implies that songs are a useful teaching tool for building students' listening comprehension.

The study demonstrates many advantages of using English songs in the classroom. Songs give students real-world exposure to language by exposing them to a variety of vocabulary, dialects, and colloquial expressions that are frequently used in everyday conversations. This exposure helps students understand the nuances and complexity of language, which is especially beneficial for improving listening comprehension in descriptive text. The researcher also realizes that songs must be selected carefully to match the concept of describing someone. Choosing songs that contain clear descriptive language ensures that the material supports the learning objectives effectively.

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