

Improving Students' Vocabulary Through The English Song "Perfect" By Ed Sheeran

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of using the English song "Perfect" by Ed Sheeran in improving students' vocabulary mastery at SMP Muhammadiyah Rappang. The research employed a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental design using a one-group pre-test and post-test model. The participants were 15 students who received vocabulary instruction through song-based learning activities. The data were collected through vocabulary tests administered before and after the treatment and were analyzed using descriptive statistics and a paired sample t-test. The findings revealed a significant improvement in students' vocabulary mastery after the implementation of the treatment. The mean score increased from 6.53 in the pre-test to 9.01 in the post-test, indicating that students gained better vocabulary understanding after learning through the song. Furthermore, the paired sample t-test showed a significance value of 0.000, which was lower than 0.05, confirming a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test results. These findings indicate that the use of "Perfect" by Ed Sheeran is effective in enhancing students' vocabulary mastery. Therefore, English songs can be considered an engaging, meaningful, and effective instructional medium for vocabulary learning.

INTRODUCTION

English has become one of the most important international languages used in education, technology, business, and global communication. In the current era of globalization, the ability to communicate in English is considered essential for students to access information, develop academic competence, and participate in wider social and professional contexts. Therefore, English language learning plays a significant role in preparing students to face global challenges.

In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language at various levels of education, including junior high school. However, many students still encounter difficulties in mastering English skills. One of the most common problems faced by students is limited vocabulary mastery. Vocabulary is a fundamental component of language learning because it supports students' ability to listen, speak, read, and write effectively.

Vocabulary mastery enables students to understand messages, express ideas, and communicate meaning accurately. Without sufficient vocabulary, students may find it difficult to comprehend texts, construct sentences, or participate in oral communication. Therefore, vocabulary should receive serious attention in the English teaching and learning process, particularly at the junior high school level where students are still developing their basic language competence.

In practice, vocabulary learning is often perceived as difficult and monotonous by students. Many students are required to memorize word lists without meaningful context, which may lead to boredom and low retention. As a result, students tend to forget new words easily and show limited motivation in learning English. This condition requires teachers to apply more creative, enjoyable, and contextual teaching strategies.

One alternative medium that can be used to improve students' vocabulary mastery is English songs. Songs provide authentic language input through meaningful lyrics, rhythm, melody, and repetition. Through songs, students can learn vocabulary in a more natural and enjoyable way. In addition, songs can help students understand pronunciation, word meaning, and language use in context, making the learning process more engaging and less stressful.

The English song "Perfect" by Ed Sheeran is considered suitable as a medium for vocabulary learning because it contains familiar vocabulary, simple sentence structures, and meaningful lyrics. The song also presents language that is close to students' daily life and emotional experience. By listening to the song, reading the lyrics, and completing vocabulary-based activities, students can learn new words contextually and improve their vocabulary retention.

Although several previous studies have examined the use of songs in English learning, further investigation is still needed regarding the use of a specific popular English song

to improve students' vocabulary mastery in a local EFL classroom context. In this study, the song "Perfect" by Ed Sheeran is used as the instructional medium to support students' vocabulary learning at SMP Muhammadiyah Rappang. The study focuses on students' vocabulary improvement through a quantitative pre-test and post-test design.

Based on the background above, this study aims to investigate whether the use of the English song "Perfect" by Ed Sheeran can improve students' vocabulary mastery and to determine the significance of its effect on students' vocabulary achievement. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to English teaching practices by offering an engaging and meaningful medium for vocabulary instruction, especially for junior high school students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Vocabulary is one of the fundamental components in language learning because it supports learners' ability to understand and produce language. It plays an essential role in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Without adequate vocabulary mastery, students may experience difficulties in understanding texts, expressing ideas, constructing sentences, and communicating effectively in English. Therefore, vocabulary mastery should be considered a major aspect in English language teaching, especially for students who learn English as a foreign language.

According to Richards and Renandya (2002), vocabulary is a core component of language competence that determines learners' fluency in using language. Nation (2001) also explains that vocabulary knowledge includes three important aspects: form, meaning, and use. This means that knowing a word does not only involve recognizing its spelling or pronunciation, but also understanding its meaning and knowing how to use it appropriately in context. Thus, vocabulary mastery refers to the ability to understand, remember, and apply words accurately in communication.

Teaching vocabulary requires appropriate strategies to help students learn words meaningfully. Vocabulary should not be taught only through memorization, because isolated word memorization often makes students bored and leads to low retention. Instead, vocabulary learning should involve context, repetition, word relationships, and active use. Through contextual learning, students can understand how words are used in real situations. Repetition also helps students store vocabulary in long-term memory, while activities such as synonym, antonym, word grouping, and sentence construction can strengthen their understanding of word meaning and use.

Songs can be used as an effective medium in vocabulary teaching because they provide authentic, enjoyable, and meaningful language input. Murphey (1992) states that songs can help students remember vocabulary through rhythm, melody, and repetition. In

addition, songs can create a positive classroom atmosphere and increase students' motivation to learn English. Song-based learning allows students to listen to vocabulary repeatedly in a natural context, making it easier for them to recognize, understand, and remember new words.

The use of English songs in language learning also supports students' listening skills, pronunciation, and contextual understanding. Through song lyrics, students are exposed to real examples of language use, including common expressions, sentence patterns, and vocabulary used in daily communication. Saricoban and Metin (2000) argue that songs provide authentic input that can help students understand pronunciation, sentence structure, and colloquial expressions. Therefore, songs are not only useful for entertainment but also valuable as pedagogical tools in English language teaching.

The song "Perfect" by Ed Sheeran was selected in this study because it contains simple vocabulary, meaningful lyrics, and familiar themes. The song presents words and expressions that are close to students' daily experiences, making it suitable for vocabulary learning. Its slow rhythm and clear pronunciation also help students follow the lyrics more easily. By using this song, students can learn vocabulary through listening, identifying missing lyrics, understanding word meanings, and practicing vocabulary in context.

Several previous studies have shown that English songs have a positive effect on students' vocabulary mastery. Fauzy, Talib, and Sofyan (2023) found that song lyrics significantly improved students' vocabulary of verbs. Zaharani (2023) also reported that songs helped students increase vocabulary skills and made learning more enjoyable. Similarly, Adnyani and Dewi emphasized that songs can support vocabulary learning when they are selected appropriately and followed by relevant learning tasks. These studies indicate that songs can be an effective alternative medium for improving students' vocabulary achievement.

Based on the theoretical review and previous findings, song-based learning is considered relevant for improving students' vocabulary mastery. However, this study specifically focuses on the use of the English song "Perfect" by Ed Sheeran in a junior high school context. The learning process emphasizes vocabulary improvement through listening activities, lyric-based exercises, repetition, synonym and antonym tasks, and word grouping. Therefore, this study is expected to provide empirical evidence that the use of English songs can be an engaging and effective medium for vocabulary instruction.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental research design. The design used was a one-group pre-test and post-test design, in which the same group of students was tested before and after the treatment. This design was applied to determine whether the use of the English song "Perfect" by Ed Sheeran could improve students' vocabulary mastery.

The research was conducted at SMP Muhammadiyah Rappang. The participants of this study were 15 students who were selected as the research sample. The students were chosen because they had difficulties in mastering English vocabulary, particularly in understanding word meanings, recognizing vocabulary in context, and using words appropriately in simple sentences.

The instrument used in this research was a vocabulary test. The test was administered twice: a pre-test and a post-test. The pre-test was given before the treatment to identify the students' initial vocabulary mastery, while the post-test was conducted after the treatment to measure the students' vocabulary improvement. The test items focused on vocabulary found in the lyrics of the song "Perfect" by Ed Sheeran.

The treatment was carried out through song-based learning activities. During the learning process, students listened to the song, read the lyrics, identified unfamiliar words, completed missing-lyrics exercises, discussed word meanings, and practiced vocabulary through synonym, antonym, and word-grouping activities. These activities were designed to help students understand vocabulary contextually and remember new words through repetition.

The data were collected from the students' pre-test and post-test scores. Each correct answer was scored, and the total score was converted into a standard score. After collecting the data, the students' scores were analyzed to compare their vocabulary mastery before and after the treatment.

The data analysis consisted of descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were used to calculate the mean score and standard deviation of the pre-test and post-test. Meanwhile, inferential statistics were applied through a paired sample t-test using SPSS to determine whether the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores was statistically significant. The level of significance was set at 0.05.

The effectiveness of the treatment was determined by comparing the significance value with the alpha level. If the significance value was lower than 0.05, the alternative hypothesis was accepted, indicating that the use of the English song "Perfect" by Ed Sheeran had a significant effect on students' vocabulary mastery.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study were obtained from the students' vocabulary pre-test and post-test scores after the implementation of song-based learning using the English song "Perfect" by Ed Sheeran. The data were analyzed to determine whether there was an improvement in students' vocabulary mastery before and after the treatment. The participants consisted of 15 students of SMP Muhammadiyah Rappang who were involved in the learning process through listening, lyric analysis, missing-word exercises, synonym and antonym tasks, and word-grouping activities.

The pre-test was administered before the treatment to measure students' initial vocabulary mastery. The results showed that most students still had limited vocabulary knowledge. They experienced difficulties in identifying word meanings, understanding vocabulary in context, and using the words appropriately in simple sentences. This condition indicated that the students needed a more engaging and contextual learning medium to support their vocabulary development.

After the treatment was conducted using the song "Perfect," the students showed better vocabulary performance. They were more able to recognize new words, understand their meanings through the context of the lyrics, and apply the vocabulary in learning activities. The lyrics of the song helped students connect vocabulary with meaningful situations, making the learning process more understandable and enjoyable.

The descriptive statistical analysis showed an improvement in the students' mean score. The mean score increased from 6.53 in the pre-test to 9.01 in the post-test. This increase indicates that students' vocabulary mastery improved after they were taught using the English song "Perfect" by Ed Sheeran. The result suggests that song-based learning gave a positive contribution to students' vocabulary achievement.

The classification of students' scores also showed positive progress. In the pre-test, many students were categorized into very poor and poor levels. However, after the treatment, most students moved to good and very good levels in the post-test. This change indicates that the students' vocabulary mastery improved not only in terms of average score but also in terms of achievement category.

The inferential analysis using a paired sample t-test confirmed that the improvement was statistically significant. The significance value was 0.000, which was lower than 0.05. This means that there was a significant difference between the students' pre-test and post-test scores. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis was accepted.

The t-test result also showed that the calculated t-value was 13.941 with 14 degrees of

freedom. The confidence interval ranged from -3.70771 to -2.71896, which did not include zero. This result further supports the conclusion that the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores was meaningful and was influenced by the treatment rather than by chance.

In addition to the test results, the questionnaire showed that students gave positive responses to the learning activities. They felt that learning vocabulary through songs was more enjoyable than traditional vocabulary learning. The students also stated that missing-lyrics activities, synonym and antonym exercises, and word-grouping tasks helped them understand and remember vocabulary more effectively. Overall, the results indicate that the English song "Perfect" was effective in improving students' vocabulary mastery.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the use of the English song "Perfect" by Ed Sheeran had a significant effect on students' vocabulary mastery. The improvement from the pre-test to the post-test demonstrates that students were able to acquire more vocabulary after being taught through song-based learning. This result supports the idea that songs can be used as an effective medium in English vocabulary instruction.

One possible reason for the improvement is that songs provide vocabulary in a meaningful context. Students did not only memorize isolated words but also learned how the words were used in lyrics. This contextual exposure helped students understand word meanings more naturally. Through the song "Perfect," students were able to connect vocabulary with expressions, emotions, and situations that were familiar to them.

Repetition also played an important role in improving students' vocabulary mastery. Songs naturally contain repeated words, phrases, and patterns, which help students remember vocabulary more easily. When students listened to the song several times and completed lyric-based tasks, they were repeatedly exposed to the target vocabulary. This repeated exposure strengthened their memory and supported vocabulary retention.

The use of the song also increased students' motivation and classroom participation. Before the treatment, students tended to find vocabulary learning difficult and monotonous. However, during the treatment, students became more active in listening activities, discussions, and vocabulary exercises. This shows that songs can create a more enjoyable and less stressful learning atmosphere.

The learning activities used in this study also contributed to the students' improvement. Missing-lyrics tasks helped students focus on listening and identifying vocabulary. Synonym and antonym exercises helped them understand word relationships, while

word-grouping activities helped them classify vocabulary based on meaning and use. These activities made vocabulary learning more interactive and meaningful.

The findings are in line with previous studies which found that English songs can improve students' vocabulary mastery. Previous research discussed in the thesis also showed that songs help students remember vocabulary, increase motivation, and create an enjoyable learning environment. Therefore, the result of this study strengthens the evidence that song-based learning can be an effective strategy in teaching vocabulary.

From a pedagogical perspective, this study suggests that English teachers can use popular songs as alternative teaching media. Songs are familiar to students and can attract their attention during the learning process. By selecting appropriate songs and designing suitable vocabulary activities, teachers can help students learn vocabulary in a more engaging, contextual, and meaningful way.

Although the result of this study was positive, the study had limitations. The number of participants was relatively small, so the findings may not represent all students in different contexts. In addition, the study only focused on one song and one aspect of language, namely vocabulary mastery. Therefore, future researchers are encouraged to conduct similar studies with larger samples, different songs, and other language skills such as listening, speaking, or pronunciation.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the use of the English song "Perfect" by Ed Sheeran is effective in improving students' vocabulary mastery. The improvement can be seen from the increase in students' mean score from 6.53 in the pre-test to 9.01 in the post-test. This result indicates that students were able to understand, recognize, and use vocabulary more effectively after being taught through song-based learning activities.

The statistical analysis also showed that the improvement was significant. The paired sample t-test result indicated a significance value of 0.000, which was lower than 0.05. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis was accepted, while the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that the use of the song "Perfect" had a significant and measurable effect on students' vocabulary improvement.

In addition, the use of songs created a more enjoyable and meaningful learning atmosphere. Through listening activities, lyric-based exercises, repetition, synonym and antonym tasks, and word grouping, students became more motivated and active in learning vocabulary. Therefore, English songs can be used as an alternative teaching medium to help students improve vocabulary mastery in an engaging and contextual way.

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