

## THE EFFECT OF ENGLISH SONGS ON PRONUNCIATION SKILLS OF VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Leni Yuniati<sup>1</sup>, Ahmad Syafiq<sup>2</sup>, Dyah Sih Pratiwi<sup>3</sup>

Universitas Muhammadiyah Lampung<sup>1,2,3</sup>

[leniyuniati@gmail.com](mailto:leniyuniati@gmail.com)<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

The goal of this research was to find out whether pupils' pronunciation improves after listening to English songs taught at a vocational school in Bandar Lampung. Two cycles of three sessions each were used to conduct the study using a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design. In the 2023–2024 school year, thirty tenth graders served as the subjects. Assessments of pronunciation, classroom observations, and reflective notes were utilized to gather data. As a consequence of using Ed Sheeran's "Perfect" during practice in Cycle I, 60% of students were able to reach the minimum score requirement of 75 or above. The second cycle saw an increase of 83% thanks to Adele's Someone Like You. Students' motivation, engagement, and confidence in pronouncing English words all improved, according to the qualitative findings of this study. In conclusion, songs are a great way to make class more fun and interactive while also improving students' pronunciation abilities.

Keywords: *English Songs, Classroom Action Research, Pronunciation*

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

English is an international language used by various countries to establish communication so that each party can understand each other (Tatipang, et al. 2022). English can help someone communicate with other people from different countries or regions. Liando & Tatipang (2022) emphasized that English is not only a broad international communication tool, but also a foundation for unifying various languages throughout the world. This assertion emphasizes the value of English as the international language of business and politics, allowing people from different nations to communicate with one another. Therefore, expanding one's knowledge of English encompasses not just the four cornerstones of communication—hearing, speaking, reading, and writing—but also more advanced topics like grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary. Particularly in primary schools, fundamental tenets of

the English language are ingrained as part of the curriculum, laying the groundwork for subsequent generations to build upon.

One of the biggest obstacles that non-native speakers encounter while trying to learn English is pronunciation, according to Ikhsan (2017). While perfecting one's pronunciation is no easy feat, it is within the realm of possibility for students of English as a foreign language (EFL). Here, intrinsic motivation is crucial since it boosts pupils' desire to learn English. When instructors are able to foster an encouraging atmosphere by supplying engaging resources and constructing an enjoyable learning environment, students are more likely to succeed academically.

Students, particularly those studying English as a second or foreign language, frequently have difficulties with pronunciation when working with the English language in the classroom. Pronouncing words according to their spelling is a typical practice among students, but it doesn't always mean they're pronouncing them correctly. This provides additional evidence that proper pronunciation involves making sounds rather than only spelling words. They may feel less motivated to study English as a result of these pronunciation issues, which contribute to the idea that the language is difficult and complicated.

Based on observations made by researchers while being students at One of vocational school in Bandar Lampung, it was found that most students had difficulty in learning English, especially in pronunciation skills. This study highlights the need to improve students' pronunciation skills because some of them do not understand how to produce accurate pronunciation. In addition, there is a phenomenon where students often feel anxious or afraid when asked to pronounce words when communicating with peers.

The commonly observed teaching pattern is that many teachers adopt similar teaching techniques, such as giving too long explanations or only relying on teaching methods listed in textbooks, without paying attention to creativity that is adjusted to students' needs. This tends to cause boredom and disinterest in English among students. Therefore, the development of more diverse and interesting teaching techniques is an urgent need to improve students' interest and English skills.

Regarding this, there are many techniques that can be applied in teaching pronunciation, such as the use of songs, stories, games, and so on. In the context of English learning, the importance of creating a fun learning environment, building comfort for students, and facilitating pleasure in the learning process cannot be underestimated. As a result, this study aims to investigate the efficacy of including musical compositions into the process of teaching English pronunciation. Andriessen

(1965) stressed that music plays an important role not only cognitively but also emotionally in supporting learning, while Hardjana (1983) explained that music carries aesthetic values that enhance students' focus and receptiveness. Lado (1964) also pointed out that language evaluation should integrate pronunciation as a fundamental skill, reinforcing the relevance of songs as teaching media. As Abror (2013) highlighted, educational research must follow a systematic approach to ensure its accountability, which is why this study is framed under a structured research design.

There is new evidence that shows how using creative media may boost students' public speaking skills. For example, vodcasting significantly improved students' speaking abilities, as demonstrated by a significant improvement in their post-test results (Pratiwi, Efiyani, and Syafiq, 2024). This shows that media based on technology and those without it may interest students and boost their self-esteem. Consistent with this, the current research looks at using English songs as a different way to help students with their pronunciation. It is critical to investigate efficient methods of instruction, such as music-based learning, because, as pointed out by Liando (2022), community and parental attitudes significantly impact students' proficiency in second language acquisition. Based on this phenomenon, the study entitled " The Effect of English Songs on Pronunciation Skills of Vocational High School Students".

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

English is widely recognized as the primary international language that facilitates cross-cultural and transnational communication (Tatipang, et al., 2022). Liando and Tatipang (2022) assert that English is not merely a global communication tool but a foundation that unifies various languages worldwide, particularly in the realms of business and politics. Consequently, a comprehensive mastery of English encompasses the four main pillars—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—as well as essential linguistic components such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation.

A significant obstacle frequently encountered by non-native speakers in learning English is pronunciation (Ikhsan, 2017). The primary issue arises from the students' tendency to pronounce words based on their spelling (spelling-based pronunciation), which often results in inaccurate sounds. This condition carries both psychological and pedagogical impacts, including:

- **Decreased Motivation:** Difficulties in pronunciation create a perception that English is a complicated language, thereby reducing students' interest in learning.
- **Language Anxiety:** There is a phenomenon where students feel anxious or fearful when asked to practice pronunciation in front of their peers.

Field observations indicate a teaching pattern that tends to be monotonous, where educators rely too heavily on lengthy theoretical explanations or textbook-based instructions without creative adaptation. This leads to boredom and low student engagement in the classroom. Therefore, a transformation toward more diverse teaching techniques is necessary to foster students' interest and language skills.

Songs are viewed as an effective instructional medium for creating an enjoyable learning environment and enhancing student comfort. Theoretically, music contributes significantly in two main domains:

- **Cognitive and Emotional Domains:** Music plays a vital role in supporting cognitive processes while simultaneously addressing the learners' emotional aspects (Andriessen, 1965).
- **Aesthetic Value and Receptivity:** The presence of aesthetic value in music is capable of increasing focus and the students' receptivity to the material (Hardjana, 1983).
- **Communicative Competence:** Pronunciation is a fundamental skill that must be integrated into language evaluation (Lado, 1964), and songs provide authentic input for students to practice these skills systematically.

The use of creative media, whether technology-based—such as vodcasting—or non-technological, has been proven to significantly enhance students' speaking abilities and confidence (Pratiwi, Efiyani, & Syafiq, 2024). The use of English songs as an instructional strategy aligns with these innovative efforts, where a learning environment supported by engaging media can mitigate external barriers, including the influence of social environment attitudes on the success of second language acquisition (Liando, 2022).

### III. RESEARCH METHOD

It was believed that a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach would be most suitable for this study's goals of addressing classroom issues and enhancing students' learning outcomes. Planning, doing, observing, and reflecting are the four primary steps that make up CAR, as stated by Kemmis and McTaggart (2000). By utilizing this approach, educators are able to assess their own methods and

consistently enhance the learning experience. While Sugiyono (2019) stressed the need of qualitative methods for investigating students' learning experiences thoroughly, Sudjana (2012) pointed out that CAR is an excellent way to systematically reflect on and enhance the teaching process. Although survey and experimental methodologies have their uses, Morissan (2017) argued that CAR is better for dealing with problems that arise in the classroom.

The research was carried out in one of Bandar Lampung's vocational schools with 30 second graders as participants. Improving students' pronunciation via learning English songs was the primary aim of the study. The reason this particular spot was picked is because the researcher saw a lot of pupils struggling with correct pronunciation, which made them feel less confident when they spoke English.

Data were collected from multiple sources, including students' test results, classroom observations, and reflective notes. The data collection procedures followed the CAR steps:

- a) Planning: preparing lesson plans, learning media, and pronunciation assessment instruments.
- b) Action: implementing teaching activities by integrating English songs into pronunciation practice.
- c) Observation: monitoring students' participation, motivation, and progress during the learning activities.
- d) Reflection: analyzing the outcomes to identify strengths and weaknesses, and revising plans for the next cycle.

We used both quantitative and qualitative methods to analyze the data. The percentage formula was used to examine quantitative data from students' test results in order to measure their level of knowledge. A score of 75 or higher was considered successful. According to Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), methods including reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing were used to examine qualitative data, including classroom observations and students' replies.

The criteria of success in this study were: (1) at least 75% of students achieving the minimum mastery score, and (2) students showing increased participation and confidence in practicing pronunciation. By following these steps, the study was expected to demonstrate the effectiveness of using songs in improving pronunciation skills and to create a more enjoyable English learning atmosphere (Li & Brand, 2009; Sari, 2018).

#### IV. FINDING

The purpose of the study was to find out if using English songs might help students improve their pronunciation. There were two cycles of three meetings each. Ed Sheeran's "Perfect" and Adele's "Someone Like You" were chosen for this research. Both songs are great for learning pronunciation since they contain moderate tempos, clear lyrics that focus on rhythm, intonation, and stress, and clear articulation. Consistent with the findings of this study, Darcy (2021) verified that students' clarity and fluency may be greatly improved with the integration of explicit pronunciation instruction into classroom activities.

##### Cycle I

Ed Sheeran's "Perfect" was the primary emphasis of the first cycle, which introduced pronunciation practice. The appropriateness of this song was based on its straightforward lyrics and distinct consonant and vowel sounds. As part of the lesson, students had to pay attention to the way certain words were spoken when they listened to the song, sang along, and repeated after the audio. Observations during Cycle I showed that students were enthusiastic, but some still faced difficulties in producing accurate sounds, especially with consonant clusters and certain vowel distinctions. For example, several students struggled with the difference between the sounds /θ/ and /t/ in words like "worth" and "tonight". Despite these challenges, most students enjoyed the activity because the song was familiar and engaging.

The evaluation results of Cycle I indicated that 18 out of 30 students (60%) achieved the minimum passing grade ( $\geq 75$ ) in pronunciation tests, while the remaining 12 students (40%) had not yet reached mastery. This result suggested progress but had not yet fulfilled the expected success criteria of 75% mastery. Therefore, improvements were needed in the next cycle, such as providing more guided repetition, focusing on difficult sounds, and extending practice through a second song. This finding is consistent with Lado's (1964) argument that pronunciation should always be a key criterion in language evaluation, as it directly affects communicative competence.

##### Cycle II

In Cycle II, the researcher introduced a new song, "Someone Like You" by Adele. This song was selected because of its slow tempo, emotional tone, and rich examples of stress and intonation. The teaching strategy included listening activities, lyric completion exercises, and singing in groups to practice rhythm and fluency. Students were also guided to pay special attention to rising and falling intonation patterns, as well as stressed syllables in longer words.

Compared to Cycle I, students showed more confidence and fluency in this cycle. Many of them were able to pronounce words more clearly, and their intonation sounded more natural. The reflective notes also indicated that the emotional connection of the song helped students engage more deeply with the learning process, making pronunciation practice feel less like a formal drill and more like an enjoyable activity.

The evaluation results in Cycle II showed significant improvement. 25 out of 30 students (83%) successfully achieved the minimum passing grade, while only 5 students (17%) remained below the standard. This exceeded the success criteria, demonstrating that the combination of both songs was effective in enhancing students' pronunciation skills.

### Comparison Between Cycles

The comparison between Cycle I and Cycle II shows that students' pronunciation skills improved significantly after the use of two English songs. In Cycle I (using *Perfect*), mastery was 60%, while in Cycle II (adding *Someone Like You*), mastery increased to 83%. This improvement of 23% highlights the effectiveness of incorporating songs as a learning medium. Moreover, classroom observations confirmed that students became more active, motivated, and confident in practicing pronunciation.

Overall, the results suggest that integrating English songs into the teaching of pronunciation not only improved students' accuracy and fluency but also created a more engaging and supportive learning environment. The combination of *Perfect* by Ed Sheeran and *Someone Like You* by Adele proved to be highly effective, as both songs provided clear models of English pronunciation, varied stress patterns, and authentic rhythm, which are essential for developing communicative competence in English.

Table 1. The Comparison between Cycles

Cycle	Total Students	Students Achieved Mastery ( $\geq 75$ )	Students Not Achieved Mastery ( $< 75$ )	Percentage of Mastery (%)
Cycle I ( <i>Perfect</i> – Ed Sheeran)	30	18	12	60%
Cycle II ( <i>Someone Like You</i> – Adele)	30	25	5	83%

## V. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the use of English songs, namely “Perfect” by Ed Sheeran and “Someone Like You” by Adele, effectively improved students’ pronunciation skills. The mastery percentage increased from 60% in Cycle I to 83% in Cycle II, showing that songs provide authentic input of rhythm, stress, and intonation which are essential in pronunciation learning (Murphey, 1992; Gilakjani, 2012).

In addition, students were more motivated and confident when practicing through songs, supporting previous studies that highlight the role of music in reducing learning anxiety and increasing engagement (Li & Brand, 2009; Sari, 2018). While a small percentage of students still struggled, the overall improvement confirms that integrating songs into classroom activities is an effective strategy to enhance pronunciation in vocational high school contexts.

## VI. CONCLUSION

One vocational school in Bandar Lampung found that using English songs significantly improved students' pronunciation abilities quantitatively. The results show that there was a discernible improvement between the first and second cycles. In the initial round, when pupils polished their pronunciation using Ed Sheeran's "Perfect," just 18 out of 30 students (or 60%) managed to get the required minimum score ( $\geq 75$ ). Until now, this outcome has fallen short of the target success metric of 75% mastery. In general, these findings are in line with those of earlier researchers in the field of music education and theory who have highlighted the significance of creativity, contextual learning, and the aesthetic and motivating potential of music to support student accomplishment (Andriessen, 1965; Hardjana, 1983; Komalasari, 2013; Setiawan, 2017; Suardi, 2018; Surakhmad, 2012).

Improvements were implemented in Cycle II by introducing a second song, “*Someone Like You*” by Adele, which provided additional practice in stress, intonation, and rhythm. The quantitative results showed a significant increase, with 25 out of 30 students (83%) achieving the minimum passing grade. This represents an improvement of 23% compared to Cycle I, and it successfully exceeded the established success criteria.

The numerical comparison between cycles highlights that the use of songs is an effective instructional medium for pronunciation learning. The increase from 60% mastery in Cycle I to 83% mastery in Cycle II indicates that song-based learning not only supported incremental progress but also brought the majority of students to the

required level of achievement. These results confirm that integrating English songs into pronunciation practice can lead to substantial quantitative improvements in students' learning outcomes.

In conclusion, the study provides evidence that English songs can be effectively used as a teaching strategy to enhance pronunciation skills in vocational high school settings. Future study may expand the quantitative scope by applying more cycles, involving larger samples, or comparing different types of songs to further validate the consistency of improvement across diverse learning contexts.

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