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Enhancing English Vocabulary Through Popular Song-Based Learning Experiences For The Eighth Grade Students

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effectiveness of integrating popular English songs as a medium for improving vocabulary mastery among eighth-grade students. The research was carried out at SMP Negeri 32 Semarang, involving 32 students from class VIII-B. A one-group pretest-posttest design was applied, allowing the researcher to evaluate the students' vocabulary mastery before and after the given treatment. The treatment involved two learning sessions utilizing the song "Blue" by Yung Kai, implemented through structured and interactive song-based learning activities. Data collection was carried out through pre-tests and post-tests that assessed both receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge. The results showed a significant improvement in students' vocabulary mastery, as the mean score increased from 62.19 (pre-test) to 85.69 (post-test). A paired sample t-test analysis using SPSS 26.0 confirmed a statistically significant difference with a p-value of 0.000. These findings suggest that using popular songs in English instruction is an effective strategy to support vocabulary development, student engagement, and retention of language in a meaningful and enjoyable context.

Keywords: Vocabulary Mastery, Popular Song, Song-Based Learning

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INTRODUCTION

The importance of mastering the four English language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing has become increasingly evident in the context of globalization. In Indonesia, English proficiency is crucial for enhancing individual competitiveness across various fields, including education and the workforce. Proficiency in English requires not only technical skills in speaking and writing but also a deep understanding of vocabulary. A strong vocabulary facilitates better comprehension in reading and listening, as well as smoother and more effective communication in speaking and writing. Previous studies, such as those conducted by Lestari & Hardiyanti, (2020) and Mariana et al., (2021), have shown that vocabulary mastery plays a significant role in language acquisition. Further research by Schmitt, (2019) and Nation (in Saputra et al., 2023) has confirmed that vocabulary mastery is the primary foundation for more complex language communication skills, making it a critical element in language learning. Therefore, a strong vocabulary is a key gateway to achieving deeper and more advanced English language proficiency.

However, despite the critical importance of vocabulary mastery, many students struggle to learn it effectively. Vocabulary instruction in Indonesia often relies on conventional methods such as worksheets, rote memorization, or the use of textbooks, which tend to be monotonous and less relevant to students' daily lives. A study by Rohmah & Indah (2021) indicates that these methods are often inadequate in enhancing long-term retention and understanding of new words. To address this issue, it is recommended that vocabulary learning should adopt more engaging and contextualized approaches, one of which is integrating popular English songs into the learning process.

Popular English songs have proven to be an effective tool for improving vocabulary mastery. Research by Anggaira et al. (2022) and Saputra et al. (2023) demonstrates that using popular songs in English instruction can enhance student engagement, ease vocabulary retention, and enrich students' understanding of word usage in context. Through songs, students can associate words with rhythm and melody, which helps them recall and apply vocabulary in more natural contexts. Compared to conventional methods that rely on repetitive drills, learning through songs is more enjoyable and easily understood by students, as it incorporates a musical element that increases motivation and class participation (Lestari & Hardiyanti, 2020). Therefore, vocabulary learning through songs offers a more enjoyable and effective learning experience that supports the retention and application of vocabulary in everyday situations.

This research integrates the popular song "Blue" by Yung Kai as a learning medium to enhance students' vocabulary mastery. The selection of this song is based on its relevance to students' interests, its clear lyrics, and its appropriate vocabulary for junior high school students. The use of "Blue" as a learning tool contributes significantly to more contextual and enjoyable learning experiences, which can support more effective vocabulary acquisition. Although many studies have explored the use of songs in language learning, there is a notable gap in research regarding its implementation at the junior high school level in Indonesia. Previous research, such as those by Rohmah & Indah (2021) and Mariana et al. (2021), has predominantly focused on higher education levels or settings outside of Indonesia. At the junior high school level, particularly at SMP Negeri 32 Semarang, the use of popular English songs in vocabulary learning remains underexplored. More importantly, previous studies have primarily utilized songs for passive recognition of vocabulary, focusing on word recall rather than its active use in communication. This research aims to fill this gap by using "Blue" to bridge the divide between passive vocabulary recognition and active vocabulary use in communication, providing students with not only the recognition of new words but also the opportunity to apply them in meaningful contexts. Consequently, this study not only contributes to the development of vocabulary teaching methods but also provides new insights into the educational

context in Indonesia..

The research questions addressed in this study are as follows: First, to what extent do eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 32 Semarang master English vocabulary before being taught through the song "Blue" by Yung Kai? Second, to what extent does their vocabulary mastery improve after being taught using the song? Third, is there a significant difference in their vocabulary mastery before and after the song-based learning intervention? The hypothesis of the study is as follows: The use of "Blue" by Yung Kai significantly improves the vocabulary mastery of eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 32 Semarang. The primary aim of this research is to assess the effectiveness of using "Blue" as a learning tool for enhancing vocabulary mastery, and to analyze whether there is a significant improvement in students' vocabulary after engaging in song-based learning activities. This study also seeks to compare students' vocabulary proficiency before and after using the song, while determining the significance of any changes in their vocabulary mastery.

METHODS OF RESEARCH

This study utilizes a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental design, specifically a one-group pretest-posttest model, to evaluate the effect of using the song "Blue" by Yung Kai on students' vocabulary mastery. The research was conducted at SMP Negeri 32 Semarang, involving 32 students from class VIII-B in the 2024/2025 academic year. The research design involved administering a pre-test to assess the students' initial vocabulary knowledge, followed by a treatment phase in which the students participated in two learning sessions using the song as the main instructional medium. The students were then given a post-test, identical to the pre-test, to measure any changes in their vocabulary mastery.

The sampling technique used was simple random sampling, which ensured that each student in the population had an equal chance of being selected. The research subjects were the eighth-grade students of SMP Negeri 32 Semarang, chosen to represent a typical group of junior high school learners. The data were collected using vocabulary tests designed to measure both receptive and productive knowledge. The tests included activities such as filling in missing lyrics, matching vocabulary with definitions, and constructing sentences using new words.

Data analysis was conducted using paired sample t-tests to compare the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test. This statistical test was selected to determine if there was a significant difference in students' vocabulary mastery before and after the intervention. The significance level was set at 0.05 to determine whether the observed differences were statistically significant.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1) Student's Vocabulary Mastery Before and After Learning Through an English Song

This section presents an analysis of the students' vocabulary mastery before and after the implementation of the song-based learning intervention. The pre-test was conducted to assess the students' initial vocabulary proficiency, while the post-test was administered after the intervention to measure any improvements. The treatment involved using the English song "Blue" by Yung Kai, which was integrated into the learning process through interactive and engaging activities. The results from both tests are compared to determine the effectiveness of the song-based approach in enhancing vocabulary mastery. The

following table provides a detailed description of the students' scores for both the pre-test and post-test, highlighting the overall progress made during the study.

Table 1. Description of Students Vocabulary Mastery

Students' Number	Pre-test Score	Post-test Score	Students' Number	Pre-test Score	Post-test Score
1.	55	86	19.	67	80
2.	56	76	20.	60	82
3.	60	80	21.	71	98
4.	56	82	22.	59	89
5.	70	89	23.	72	97
6.	68	86	24.	42	77
7.	61	79	25.	69	91
8.	55	80	26.	70	86
9.	63	81	27.	73	89
10.	52	79	28.	68	99
11.	61	82	29.	56	93
12.	65	92	30.	64	87
13.	60	88	31.	68	92
14.	57	84	32.	71	98
15.	60	79	Total	1990	2742
16.	61	77	Mean	62,1875	85,6875
17.	63	81	Maximum	73	99
18.	57	83	Minimum	42	76

(Source: SPSS26, 2025)

Table 1 presents the results of the vocabulary mastery of 32 students from class VIII-B at SMP Negeri 32 Semarang, measured through pre-test and post-test scores. The pre-test results show a wide range of vocabulary proficiency, with scores ranging from 42 to 73, and a mean score of 62.19. After the treatment (using the song "Blue" by Yung Kai), the post-test scores showed a noticeable improvement, with scores ranging from 76 to 99 and a mean score of 85.69. The results highlight a significant increase in students' vocabulary mastery, demonstrating a general improvement in both receptive and productive vocabulary skills.

The findings from Table 1 reflect a significant enhancement in students' vocabulary mastery after the implementation of the song-based learning method. The average increase of 23.5 points in the mean score indicates that integrating popular songs like "Blue" can provide an effective and engaging way to improve vocabulary retention and usage. Similar to studies by Anggaira et al. (2022) and Mariana et al., (2021), this approach has proven beneficial in increasing student engagement and motivation, which is crucial for long-term retention of vocabulary. By using music, students not only connect with the vocabulary in a fun and relatable context but also benefit from the repetitive exposure that enhances their memory and understanding of new words. The significant improvement in both receptive tasks (like matching and fill-in-the-blank activities) and productive tasks (like sentence construction) reinforces the idea that songs

provide a mean.

The results suggest that the use of popular English songs, specifically "Blue," provides an engaging and increasing students' vocabulary mastery (Sagala et al., 2025). The repetitive nature of songs, combined with the contextual and emotional connection they create, helps students retain and apply new vocabulary more effectively than traditional methods. This approach not only increased student engagement but also facilitated vocabulary retention and practical application in meaningful contexts.

2) Effectiveness of English Song to Improve Students Vocabulary Mastery

The integration of popular songs into language learning has been shown to increase student engagement and motivation, factors that are critical in vocabulary acquisition. Through repeated exposure to new words and phrases embedded within the context of a song, students are able to reinforce their understanding and retention of vocabulary. The song "Blue" by Yung Kai was selected for this study due to its clear lyrics, relevance to students' interests, and suitability for language learning. This section analyzed the results of the pre-test and post-test, using statistical methods to determine whether the song-based learning approach resulted in a significant improvement in vocabulary mastery among the students. The effectiveness of this method is assessed by comparing the mean scores of the students before and after the intervention, as well as by evaluating the overall impact of the learning process on their ability to apply new vocabulary in context.

Table 2. Result of Normality Test

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pre Test	0,112	32	.200*	0,948	32	0,126
Post Test	0,147	32	0,076	0,935	32	0,054

(Source: SPSS26, 2025)

Table 3 shows the results of the normality test conducted on the pre-test and post-test scores using both the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests. The significance values (p-value) for the pre-test were 0.200 (Kolmogorov-Smirnov) and 0.126 (Shapiro-Wilk), while for the post-test, the p-values were 0.076 (Kolmogorov-Smirnov) and 0.054 (Shapiro-Wilk). All these p-values are greater than the 0.05 threshold, which indicates that the data from both the pre-test and post-test follow a normal distribution. This confirms that the data is suitable for parametric analysis, ensuring that the assumptions for conducting further statistical tests are met.

Given that the results in Table 3 demonstrate that both the pre-test and post-test data follow a normal distribution, the study satisfies the necessary assumptions for the application of the paired sample t-test in hypothesis testing. This statistical method is deemed appropriate for comparing the mean differences between the two sets of scores, thereby enabling valid inferences regarding the effect of the song-based learning intervention on students' vocabulary mastery.

Table 3. Result of Normality Test

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Paired Differences			t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
			Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pre Test - Post Test	-23,5	5,803	1,026	-25,592	-21,408	-22,907	31	0

(Source: SPSS26, 2025)

Table 3 presents the results of the paired sample t-test, comparing the pre-test and post-test scores to assess the effectiveness of the song-based learning intervention. The mean difference between the pre-test and post-test scores is -23.5, with a standard deviation of 5.803 and a standard error mean of 1.026. The paired sample t-test produced a t-value of -22.907 and a significance value (p-value) of 0.000. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, it indicates a statistically significant difference between the two sets of scores, confirming that the treatment led to substantial improvements in students' vocabulary mastery.

The paired sample t-test results reveal a significant improvement in students' vocabulary mastery following the song-based learning intervention. The mean increase of 23.5 points, along with the statistically significant t-value of -22.907 and the p-value of 0.000, demonstrates that the integration of the song "Blue" by Yung Kai had a positive impact on students' vocabulary acquisition. This finding is consistent with the work of Mariana et al., (2021) and Lestari & Hardiyanti (2020), who found that song-based learning not only enhances vocabulary retention but also increases student engagement. The repetition and contextualization of vocabulary in songs likely played a crucial role in helping students internalize new words, improving both their recognition and application of vocabulary in meaningful contexts (Triwardani, 2022). These results support the notion that engaging and interactive learning methods, such as song-based learning, are effective tools in fostering vocabulary mastery among junior high school students (Rohmah & Indah, 2021).

Futhermore, English songs are effective in enhancing vocabulary mastery because they provide students with a natural and engaging context for learning new words. The rhythmic and melodic elements of songs make vocabulary easier to remember, as they provide an additional layer of sensory engagement (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2020; Sulaymonova, 2019). Moreover, songs often contain conversational language and context-rich expressions that help students understand how words are used in real-life situations, thereby improving their ability to apply vocabulary accurately (Fitri, 2023; Gita et al., 2021; Listyaningtyas et al., 2024). The use of songs also lowers students' affective filter, making them more open to language acquisition (Yaoqing, 2021). Studies by Saputra et al. (2023) and Anggaira et al. (2022) further emphasize that songs promote not only vocabulary retention but also improve pronunciation and listening skills through repetitive exposure to words and phrases. By integrating songs into the learning process, students are provided with opportunities to practice new vocabulary in a dynamic, interactive, and enjoyable way, making the learning experience both effective and motivating.

Furthermore, the engagement with English songs provides a multisensory learning experience that enhances vocabulary retention. The combination of auditory input through listening, visual engagement with lyrics, and kinesthetic activity, such as filling in the blanks or singing along, activates multiple areas of the brain, which has been shown to facilitate better memory retention (Isnaini & Aminatun, 2021). This multisensory approach supports the findings of Ghonivita et al., (2021), who argued that learning through

songs enables students to internalize words more effectively due to the repeated exposure in various formats. Additionally, students are exposed to the rhythm, stress, and intonation of the language, which not only helps with vocabulary retention but also improves their overall pronunciation and fluency (Hendrawaty, 2019). These elements are crucial in building students' confidence in using vocabulary in both spoken and written contexts.

The results also suggest that the use of songs can help bridge the gap between passive recognition of vocabulary and active use in communication. As students learn new words within the context of the song, they are able to understand and apply vocabulary more naturally in everyday conversations or writing exercises. This approach aligns with the idea that learning vocabulary in context, rather than through isolated drills, leads to better retention and more meaningful usage (Karim et al., 2022; Kholid et al., 2024; Tanjung, 2020). As students interact with the song's lyrics and meanings, they gain a deeper understanding of the words' practical application in real-world situations. Thus, song-based learning offers an effective strategy to help students not only memorize vocabulary but also integrate it into their broader language skills, which is essential for their development as proficient English speakers.

CONCLUSION

The results suggest that the use of popular English songs, specifically "Blue," provides an engaging and effective method for teaching vocabulary. The repetitive nature of songs, combined with the contextual and emotional connection they create, helps students retain and apply new vocabulary more effectively than traditional methods. This approach not only increased student engagement but also facilitated vocabulary retention and practical application in meaningful contexts. Overall, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on the use of music in language learning, particularly in vocabulary acquisition. It highlights the potential of incorporating popular songs into English language instruction at the junior high school level, especially in Indonesia, where such methods have not been widely explored. Based on the positive outcomes observed in this study, it is recommended that English language teachers consider integrating songs into their teaching practices to improve student motivation, engagement, and language proficiency. Further research could explore the long-term effects of song-based learning on other language skills such as listening, speaking, and writing.

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