

Investigating the Relationship between Students' Perceptions of English Songs and Measured Learning Outcomes

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the correlation between students' perceptions of English songs and their English learning outcomes at SMK Negeri 1 Ambon. Employing a quantitative correlational design, the study involved 33 second-grade students from the Travel and Tourism Business department selected through simple random sampling. Data were collected using a Likert-scale questionnaire measuring students' perceptions of English songs' impact on six language skill areas while learning outcomes were assessed through semester English grades. The findings indicate that students hold highly positive perceptions of English songs as language learning tools (overall mean 3.95), with particularly strong ratings for listening (4.13), reading (4.10), vocabulary (4.07), and speaking (4.05) skills. While 87.9% of students achieved "Good" academic scores (80-89), preliminary normality testing necessitated non-parametric correlation analysis. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient ($r_s = 0.132$, $p = 0.466$) revealed a very weak, statistically insignificant relationship between perceptions of English songs and learning outcomes. This disconnect can be interpreted through situated learning theory, suggesting that while songs create authentic language engagement, their benefits may not translate to standardized vocational assessments. The study contributes to understanding how the perceived benefits of English songs relate to academic performance in vocational education, suggesting that strategic integration of songs requires alignment with tourism-specific language competencies and assessment approaches.

Keywords: English songs, learning outcomes, vocational education, correlation, language skills

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INTRODUCTION

When a student effortlessly recites lyrics to an English song they have never formally studied yet struggle with textbook dialogues rehearsed repeatedly in class, we witness the untapped potential of music in language acquisition. This striking disconnect between informal musical engagement and formal language education indicates a powerful yet underutilized pedagogical resource. According to Bokiev et al. (2018), songs create an intuitive connection to language by engaging cognitive and emotional pathways, potentially facilitating more effective language acquisition than traditional instructional methods. Despite widespread informal use of music for language learning, empirical evidence establishing direct relationships between perceptions of English songs and measurable learning outcomes remains limited and methodologically diverse, creating a critical gap in our

understanding of music's pedagogical value in language education, particularly in vocational contexts where assessment approaches may differ from general education settings.

Integrating English songs into language learning environments offers multiple theoretical advantages across various language domains. Songs provide authentic linguistic input through their lyrical content, incorporating diverse vocabulary, grammatical structures, and cultural references within engaging musical frameworks (Ludke, 2019). The melodic and rhythmic elements of songs enhance memorization, while their cultural authenticity fosters motivation and emotional connection to the target language (Sadiqzade, 2024). Additionally, lyrics often contain conversational patterns and idiomatic expressions rarely found in textbooks, potentially bridging the gap between classroom instruction and real-world language use. This study examines how students' perceptions of these theoretical benefits relate to measurable academic outcomes within a formal vocational educational setting, acknowledging that such relationships may be complex and influenced by educational context, assessment methods, and statistical considerations.

Previous research has explored various aspects of English songs in language learning, yet significant gaps remain regarding comprehensive learning outcomes in vocational education contexts. Wardiansyah et al. (2019) demonstrated a strong correlation between listening to English songs and vocabulary mastery among third-grade junior high school students. However, their findings are limited to general education settings. Similarly, Ananda et al. (2023) found English songs effective for vocabulary development at SMK Negeri 2 Gerung, yet focused solely on vocabulary rather than broader language skills. Studies by Syafirna et al. (2023) and Nadiyya & Suryadi (2024) confirmed English songs' effectiveness in improving listening skills, while Kamil (2023) explored connections between pop songs and vocabulary mastery. Faisal & Putri (2023) revealed positive perceptions (86% agreement) among higher-education students regarding songs for vocabulary learning but did not assess actual learning outcomes. Kumar et al. (2022) provided theoretical support through a literature review on music's benefits in EFL contexts, while Howe & Baumgartner (2024) focused primarily on tonal language learning. Despite these valuable contributions, methodological diversity across studies—including variations in statistical approaches, measurement instruments, and educational contexts—has produced inconsistent findings. No study has comprehensively examined how students' perceptions of English songs correlate with overall language learning outcomes within Indonesian vocational education settings, where English proficiency directly impacts employment opportunities and where distinct assessment approaches may necessitate specific analytical methods.

Preliminary observations at SMK Negeri 1 Ambon revealed that most second-grade students regularly listen to English songs, with many reporting perceived benefits across multiple language skill areas, including listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, and grammar. However, student opinions varied regarding the impact of English songs on their formal academic performance,

reflecting the broader uncertainty in the field. This discrepancy between perceived benefits and uncertain academic impact provides a compelling rationale for empirical investigation into the relationship between students' perceptions of English songs and learning outcomes within this specific educational context, recognizing that such relationships may be influenced by the distribution characteristics of academic performance data, which often cluster within narrow assessment ranges in vocational settings.

This study investigates the relationship between students' perceptions of English songs and their English learning outcomes at SMK Negeri 1 Ambon, addressing the research question: What is the nature and strength of the relationship between students' perceptions of English songs and their English learning outcomes? By examining this relationship within a vocational high school context and employing appropriate statistical methods determined by data distribution characteristics, this research aims to provide empirically sound evidence to inform pedagogical decisions regarding the integration of music into language curricula. The findings will contribute to the theoretical understanding of music's role in language acquisition and practical applications for educators seeking to enhance learning outcomes through innovative instructional approaches, potentially transforming how music is utilized in language education.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative methodology with a correlational design to investigate the relationship between English songs and students' English learning outcomes. As defined by Mohajan (2020), quantitative research produces empirical findings through statistical procedures or other forms of quantification. The correlation design is particularly suitable for this study as it aims to assess the existence and strength of the relationship between two variables: students' perceptions of English songs (predictor variable) and their English learning outcomes (outcome variable). According to Shao et al. (2022), correlational research requires data collection to determine a relationship between two or more variables and to what extent that relationship exists.

The study addressed the research question: What is the nature and strength of the relationship between students' perceptions of English songs and their English learning outcomes at SMK Negeri 1 Ambon? This formulation allows for methodological flexibility in determining the most appropriate analytical approach based on data distribution characteristics. The null hypothesis (H0) stated that no significant relationship exists between students' perceptions of English songs and their English learning outcomes. In contrast, the alternative hypothesis (H1) proposed that there is a significant relationship between these variables. This wording acknowledges that relationships can be assessed through various statistical approaches depending on data properties.

Research Participants

The population for this study consisted of all second-grade students enrolled at SMK Negeri 1 Ambon during the 2023/2024 academic year, totaling 200 students distributed across seven classes. These students were enrolled in various departments, including office management, hospitality and tourism services, accounting and finance, and business and marketing.

The sampling technique employed was simple random sampling, which was conducted through a lottery process. This method ensures that each member of the population has an equal chance of being selected, thereby minimizing selection bias. As a result of this process, Class XII E from the Travel and Tourism Business department was selected as the sample group. The final sample consisted of 33 students representing the broader population of second-grade students at SMK Negeri 1 Ambon.

Data Collection and Analysis

This study utilized two primary data collection techniques: survey and document study. The survey was conducted online via Google Forms, where participants were asked to complete a questionnaire designed using a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree). The questionnaire consisted of 30 questions categorized into six indicators: listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary. These indicators were designed to assess students' perceptions of the benefits of English songs for various language skills.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, content validation was performed in collaboration with the supervising lecturer. The questionnaire was then piloted and assessed for validity using the Pearson correlation formula, with all 30 items being validated with correlation values greater than the r table value of 0.388 at a significance level of 0.05. The reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha formula, yielding a value of 0.956, greater than the r table value, indicating high reliability.

For the document study, students' English grades from the even semester of the 2023/2024 academic year were collected. These grades reflected their overall academic performance in English and served as the measure of their learning outcomes.

The analytical framework incorporated both descriptive and inferential statistical approaches. Descriptive statistics were calculated to characterize central tendencies and distribution patterns in questionnaire responses and academic performance data. For questionnaire results, mean scores were interpreted using the following scale ranges: 1.00-1.80 (Very Low), 1.81-2.60 (Low), 2.61-3.40 (Moderate), 3.41-4.20 (High), and 4.21-5.00 (Very High). Learning outcomes were categorized according to the institutional grading system employed at SMK Negeri 1 Ambon: 90-100 (Excellent), 80-89 (Good), 60-79 (Enough), and <60 (Poor).

Before inferential analysis, a preliminary examination of data distribution characteristics was conducted to determine the appropriate correlation approach. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was applied to assess normality, yielding an Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.001, which is substantially below the conventional threshold of 0.05. This result indicated a significant deviation from the normal distribution in the dataset.

Based on this significant violation of normality assumptions, Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (r_s) was selected as the methodologically appropriate non-parametric measure to examine the relationship between students' perceptions of English songs and their English learning outcomes. This methodological decision aligns with established statistical practices in educational research, as Shao et al. (2022) recommended, which emphasizes that different correlation methods may yield substantively different results based on data distribution characteristics. For non-normally distributed educational data, non-parametric approaches generally provide more robust and accurate assessments of relationship strength than parametric alternatives (Grech & Calleja, 2018).

The Spearman correlation analysis was computed using IBM SPSS Version 26 to ensure computational precision and analytical rigor. The correlation coefficient was interpreted according to conventional thresholds for relationship strength: 0.00-0.19 (very weak), 0.20-0.39 (weak), 0.40-0.59 (moderate), 0.60-0.79 (strong), and 0.80-1.0 (very strong). Statistical significance was evaluated using the standard alpha level of 0.05.

RESULTS

Students' Perceptions of English Songs for Language Learning

The data collected from the questionnaire revealed that students at SMK Negeri 1 Ambon generally have positive perceptions toward English songs as a language learning tool. The overall mean score for all indicators was 3.95, categorized as "High" according to the established interpretation scale. This indicates that students perceive English songs as beneficial for their language learning experience across various skill areas.

Among the six language skill indicators measured, listening skills received the highest mean score (4.13), followed closely by reading (4.10), vocabulary (4.07), and speaking (4.05). These four skills all fell within the "High" category, suggesting that students particularly value English songs for developing receptive skills and building vocabulary. Grammar skills received a mean score of 3.83, while writing skills scored the lowest at 3.53, though both still fell within the "High" category. Table 1 summarizes students' perceptions of the impact of English songs on the six language skill areas.

Table 1. Summary of Students' Perceptions of English Songs for Language Learning

Language Skill Area	Mean Score	Interpretation
Listening	4.13	High
Speaking	4.05	High
Reading	4.10	High
Writing	3.53	High
Grammar	3.83	High
Vocabulary	4.07	High
Overall Mean	3.95	High

Several items received "Very High" ratings (mean scores above 4.21) when examining specific aspects of each skill area. For listening skills, students strongly agreed that "listening to songs helps me pick up new vocabulary words" (4.36) and "listening to songs makes it easier for me to understand spoken English" (4.33). In the speaking category, students particularly valued songs for improving pronunciation (4.36). For reading, students gave their highest ratings to "reading song lyrics helps me improve my reading comprehension skills" (4.55) and "songs help me learn new vocabulary words while reading the lyrics" (4.48). In the vocabulary category, students strongly agreed that "singing along to songs helps me remember vocabulary words better" (4.48) and "songs make it fun for me to expand my English vocabulary" (4.30).

The lowest-rated item was "Songs inspire me to write creatively," with a score of 3.03, which falls in the "Medium" category. This suggests that while students find songs helpful for most language learning aspects, they perceive less direct benefit for creative writing tasks.

Students' English Learning Outcomes

Analyzing students' English grades from the even semester of the 2023/2024 academic year showed generally positive learning outcomes. The mean score for the 33 participants was 82.24 (SD = 2.818), with scores ranging from a minimum of 74 to a maximum of 87. When categorized according to the school's grading system, the majority of students (87.9%, $n = 29$) achieved scores in the "Good" category (80-89), while a smaller proportion (12.1%, $n = 4$) received scores in the "Enough" category (60-79). None of the students scored in either the "Excellent" (90-100) or "Poor" (<60) categories. Table 2 presents the distribution of students' English learning outcomes based on the school's grading categories and the relevant descriptive statistics.

Table 2. Distribution and Descriptive Statistics of Students' English Learning Outcomes

Distribution by Category		
Category	Frequency	Percentage
Excellent (90-100)	0	0%
Good (80-89)	29	87.9%
Enough (60-79)	4	12.1%
Poor (<60)	0	0%
Total	33	100%

Distribution by Category	
Descriptive Statistics	
Statistic	Value
Minimum Score	74
Maximum Score	87
Mean	82.24
Standard Deviation	2.818

The relatively small standard deviation indicates that students' scores were clustered fairly closely around the mean, suggesting a consistent level of academic performance across the sample. The distribution shows that the vast majority of students achieved "Good" scores, with none reaching the "Excellent" category but also none falling into the "Poor" category.

Correlation between English Songs and Students' Learning Outcomes

The Spearman rank correlation analysis examining the relationship between students' perceptions of English songs and their English learning outcomes revealed a coefficient (r_s) of 0.132 with a significance (p) value of 0.466. Table 3 presents the complete results of this non-parametric correlation analysis.

Table 3. Spearman Rank Correlation Analysis

		English Songs	English Learning Outcomes
Spearman's rho	English Songs	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.466
		N	33
English Learning Outcomes	English Songs	Correlation Coefficient	.132
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.466
		N	33

According to conventional interpretations of correlation strength, an r_s value of 0.132 indicates a very weak positive correlation between students' perceptions of English songs and their learning outcomes. The p -value of 0.466, substantially greater than the standard alpha level of 0.05, indicates that this correlation is not statistically significant.

These results suggest that while there appears to be a slight positive relationship between perceptions of English songs for language learning and English learning outcomes, this relationship is too weak to draw meaningful conclusions about the impact of English songs on academic performance in this vocational education context. The null hypothesis, which stated that no significant relationship exists between students' perceptions of English songs and their English learning outcomes, could not be rejected based on these findings.

DISCUSSION

The primary aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between students' perceptions of English songs and their English learning outcomes at SMK Negeri 1 Ambon. The findings revealed three key insights: (1) students hold highly positive perceptions of English songs as language learning

tools across multiple skill areas; (2) students generally demonstrate good academic performance in English; and (3) the Spearman rank correlation analysis revealed only a very weak, statistically insignificant relationship between these variables ($r_s = 0.132$, $p = 0.466$). These results warrant careful interpretation within vocational education contexts, where English proficiency directly affects students' future employment opportunities in tourism and hospitality.

This disconnect between positive perceptions and insignificant correlations can be meaningfully interpreted through established theoretical frameworks. From a situated learning perspective (Lave & Gomes, 2019), English songs may function as authentic cultural artifacts that facilitate legitimate peripheral participation in English-speaking discourse communities. However, formal assessments in vocational education typically measure decontextualized language knowledge rather than the authentic communication competencies that songs develop. This theoretical misalignment helps explain why students perceive benefits that do not translate to measurable academic outcomes. Robinson's (2011) Aptitude-Treatment Interaction framework further illuminates our findings, suggesting that instructional approaches like music-based learning may affect students differently based on their cognitive profiles. Tourism vocational students, who require specialized communicative competencies, may engage with songs differently than general education students, explaining divergence from previous research findings in non-vocational settings. Additionally, Prachanant's (2012) Tourism-Specific Language Competency Model identifies three key functions for tourism professionals: giving information, providing services, and offering help. Our findings suggest that English songs, while perceived as beneficial overall, may not sufficiently address these specific vocational language functions as measured in standardized assessments.

The notably positive perceptions of English songs (overall mean of 3.95) coupled with the very weak correlation with learning outcomes indicate that while students believe English songs benefit their language learning, this perception does not translate into measurable academic achievement. Our findings regarding positive student perceptions closely align with Faisal & Putri's (2023) results showing that 86% of higher-education students perceived benefits from English songs. However, our study extends beyond perceptions to examine their correlation with measurable learning outcomes, revealing a disconnect between what students believe is beneficial and what impacts their academic performance. A notable pattern across previous studies (Wardiansyah et al., 2019; Kamil, 2023; Ananda et al., 2023; Syafirna et al., 2023) is that positive findings were consistently observed when measuring specific language skills directly influenced by musical engagement, such as vocabulary acquisition or listening comprehension. While Wardiansyah et al. (2019) measured vocabulary mastery through a dedicated Vocabulary Learning Test (VLT) and found strong correlations ($r_{xy} = 0.838$), our study relied on semester English grades that assess a broader range of language competencies through standardized academic measures, potentially diluting the specific benefits that songs provide.

The most striking methodological contrast emerges between our correlational approach and the experimental designs employed in several previous studies. Ananda et al.'s (2023) significant findings at SMK Negeri 2 Gerung resulted from a controlled experimental intervention where English songs were systematically integrated into vocabulary lessons. In contrast, our study examined natural variations in students' perceptions without a structured intervention. Similarly, Nadiyya & Suryadi (2024) employed a quasi-experimental design with control groups and found significant improvements in listening skills. These methodological differences suggest that deliberate pedagogical integration may yield different results than informal engagement with music, which has important implications for curriculum design. As Cremona (2022) noted, music primarily influences attentional processes and emotional engagement, which may not immediately manifest in standardized assessments focused on formal language knowledge. The relatively uniform distribution of academic scores ($SD = 2.818$), with 87.9% of students falling within the "Good" category, suggests a possible range restriction effect that may attenuate observed correlations (Shao et al., 2022), further complicating the statistical relationship between perceptions and outcomes.

Several fundamental design limitations affect the interpretation of our findings. Our sample size ($n = 33$) drawn from a single tourism vocational class at one institution significantly limits generalizability to the broader Indonesian vocational education context. Unlike previous studies, our methodological approach featured two critical distinctions: first, we relied on semester English grades as the sole outcome measure rather than specific skill assessments. While Wardiansyah et al. (2019) and Kamil (2023) used dedicated vocabulary tests, and Syafirna et al. (2023) employed listening comprehension assessments, our standardized academic measures may inadequately capture the specific competencies that songs enhance, particularly those valuable in tourism contexts. Second, we measured students' perceptions of English songs rather than their actual engagement patterns. Previous studies like Wardiansyah et al. (2019) assessed concrete listening habits, while Syafirna et al. (2023) implemented specific song-based interventions, creating a more direct link between music and language outcomes.

Statistical and analytical limitations further constrain our findings. Our correlation analysis did not control for potential confounding variables such as students' prior English proficiency, socioeconomic background, exposure to English through other media, or individual learning strategies. These uncontrolled factors may have significantly influenced the observed relationship. Additionally, two statistical phenomena likely affected our results: the non-normal data distribution that necessitated non-parametric approaches (potentially affecting comparability with previous parametric studies) and the restricted range in learning outcomes (87.9% of students in the "Good" category), which likely attenuated the observed correlation. As Shao et al. (2022) note, range restriction is a recognized statistical phenomenon wherein limited variance in one variable can artificially reduce

correlation coefficients regardless of the actual relationship strength. These statistical considerations, combined with our design limitations, suggest caution in comparing our findings directly with studies using different methodological approaches.

Based on these findings and limitations, future research should develop assessment instruments that specifically measure the vocational language skills most directly influenced by music engagement, such as hospitality interactions or customer service language. The contrast between our correlational findings and positive results from intervention studies suggests the need for mixed-method longitudinal designs to distinguish between informal music engagement versus structured pedagogical integration within vocational curricula. Following Faisal & Putri's (2023) observation that students appreciated "cultural aspects embedded in English songs," future research should explore how cultural relevance, genre preferences, and content themes might mediate the relationship between songs and vocational learning outcomes. Research comparing the efficacy of English songs across different educational levels could reveal whether educational context moderates the relationship between music and language acquisition.

The disconnect between perceptions and outcomes presents important practical implications for language education in vocational contexts. Our findings suggest a need to position English songs within the vocational curriculum carefully. Unlike Ananda et al. (2023), whose controlled intervention showed significant benefits, our results indicate that informal engagement with songs may not automatically translate to academic achievement within vocational education. Songs should be strategically selected to reinforce industry-specific terminology and conversational patterns relevant to tourism contexts, bridging the gap between classroom learning and workplace communication requirements. For curriculum developers at vocational schools like SMK Negeri 1 Ambon, our findings underscore the need for balanced language instruction that strategically integrates music-based activities aligned with industry requirements. The curriculum should incorporate targeted song-based activities that explicitly connect to vocational learning objectives and workplace communication competencies. Drawing on Wardiansyah et al.'s (2019) finding that "students who listened to a variety of genres and styles were found to have a broader vocabulary range," curriculum developers might consider curating diverse song collections specifically aligned with tourism English requirements, such as songs containing travel-related vocabulary or service interactions relevant to popular tourism destinations.

CONCLUSIONS

This study investigated the relationship between students' perceptions of English songs and English learning outcomes among vocational tourism students at SMK Negeri 1 Ambon. Employing Spearman's rank correlation to address non-normal data distribution (Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, $p = 0.001$), the analysis revealed a striking incongruity: despite students' highly positive perceptions of

English songs as language learning tools ($M = 3.95$), particularly for listening ($M = 4.13$) and reading ($M = 4.10$), the correlation with academic performance was negligible and statistically insignificant ($r_s = 0.132$, $p = 0.466$). This finding diverges from previous research like Wardiansyah et al. (2019) conducted in general education contexts, suggesting that the relationship between perceptions of English songs and learning outcomes operates differently within specialized vocational frameworks, where assessment methods may not adequately capture the affective and motivational benefits that students perceive. Viewed through the lens of situated learning theory (Lave & Gomes, 2019) and Prachanant's (2012) Tourism-Specific Language Competency Model, our findings indicate that while songs may foster authentic language engagement, they may not align with the standardized competencies measured in vocational assessments.

The results underscore the necessity for vocational language education to move beyond informal musical engagement toward strategically structured integration of songs that explicitly reinforces industry-specific terminology and workplace communication competencies. Unlike experimental studies showing clear benefits from controlled interventions (Ananda et al., 2023), our findings suggest that students' positive perceptions and casual engagement with English songs do not automatically translate to improved academic performance. Curriculum developers at vocational institutions should carefully select songs that target specific tourism language functions—giving information, providing services, and offering help—while developing assessment approaches that better capture the unique benefits of musical engagement. Future research should employ mixed-method designs to distinguish between informal engagement and systematic integration effects, develop tourism-specific language assessment instruments, and investigate how cultural relevance and genre preferences might mediate the relationship between songs and vocational language acquisition. This study contributes valuable insights into the complex interplay between the perceived benefits of musical engagement and measurable language outcomes within the specialized context of tourism vocational education.

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