

From Listening to Learning: Enhancing Vocabulary Through Song “A Little More” by Ed Sheeran

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ABSTRAK

Penguasaan kosakata merupakan aspek yang sangat mendasar dalam pembelajaran *English as a Foreign Language* (EFL), namun hal tersebut sering kali sulit dicapai tanpa media yang tepat. Penelitian ini dilakukan untuk mengetahui perspektif mahasiswa terhadap penggunaan lagu “A Little More” karya Ed Sheeran sebagai media pembelajaran dalam meningkatkan penguasaan kosakata di Institut Prima Bangsa Cirebon. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif, data dikumpulkan melalui observasi langsung terhadap mahasiswa saat melakukan pengisian lirik rumpang (*fill-in-the-blanks*) dan pelaksanaan wawancara. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan lagu tersebut dapat meningkatkan keterlibatan mahasiswa dalam proses pembelajaran dan memotivasi mereka karena suasana belajar yang menyenangkan. Lagu ini juga membantu mahasiswa dalam menguasai kata kerja secara kontekstual serta meningkatkan keterampilan menyimak dan pelafalan. Dengan demikian, lagu “A Little More” dapat dianggap sebagai media pembelajaran yang efektif untuk penguasaan kosakata.

Kata Kunci: Penguasaan kosakata, lagu bahasa Inggris, keterampilan menyimak, konteks EFL.

ABSTRACT

Vocabulary mastery is a fundamental aspect of learning EFL; however, achieving proficiency remains challenging without appropriate media. The primary objective of this study was to investigate students' perspectives on utilizing Ed Sheeran's “A Little More” as a tool for enhancing vocabulary mastery at Institut Prima Bangsa Cirebon. Employing a qualitative descriptive methodology, the researcher sourced data through direct observation of fill-in-the-blanks exercises and semi-structured interviews. The results indicate that utilizing the song increased students engagement and motivation in learning process due to the creation of an enjoyable learning atmosphere. Furthermore, the song helped students in mastering verbs in contextual usage and contributes to the improvement of listening and pronunciation skills. Thus, “A Little More” can be considered an effective learning medium for vocabulary mastery.

Keywords: Vocabulary development, English song, listening skill, EFL context.

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PENDAHULUAN

Mastery of vocabulary is a basic element for students mastering English in a foreign language context. Without it, students will have difficulty understanding academic texts, speaking, and expressing ideas accurately. Vocabulary functions as an important component for interpersonal interaction (Iswari, 2024). This implies that without mastering vocabulary effectively, the communication process cannot run properly. In line with this, having a broad vocabulary is essential for effective communication, good comprehension, and overall language mastery (Normurodovna, 2025). Therefore, to become proficient in English, students need to enrich and master as much vocabulary as possible. Thus, vocabulary becomes the main foundation in daily communication; without adequate vocabulary mastery, language skills cannot function optimally.

As suggested by (Rianti et al., 2023) students' personal limitations and health conditions serve as internal obstacles that hinder vocabulary acquisition. Beyond these personal factors, external

elements also substantially influence a student's success. These include restricted interactions between teachers and students, as well as a domestic environment that fails to provide the necessary support for the language learning process.

Listening skills serve as the foundation for other English language proficiencies. By engaging in the listening process, individuals can more efficiently master the fine details of phonological elements, words, and sentences in dialogue (Putri et al., 2022). Listening is one of the important aspects in English and the hardest one (Musdalifah et al., 2024). Students have many problems in listening skills. Many students experience difficulties in learning English listening skills due to several factors. These include the rapid speed of listening materials, which often makes them forget what they have heard, limited vocabulary that hinders their understanding of spoken English, and a lack of concentration during listening activities. Consequently, these difficulties lead students to feel less motivated and more anxious when participating in English lessons. Despite its importance as a core language skill, listening remains challenging to learn and is often overlooked by students (Yuliarini, 2022).

Songs as a medium in learning the English language are also very beneficial because songs include all language skills such as receptive skills and productive skills. Using songs with English lyrics, learners can develop their vocabulary, as songs help learners remember new words more easily and practice correct pronunciation (Simatupang et al., 2023). Song also have benefits for students, as they help learners feel more relax when we do activities. In addition, songs also open opportunities for students to actively participate, strengthen their sense of independence, and increase their connectedness to the material being taught (Emi, 2024). Furthermore, learning through songs can increase students' enthusiasm and motivation, since the learning experience becomes increasingly enjoyable and reduced in monotony (Simatupang et al., 2023). It is also an effective learning media that not only offer enjoyment but also function as a means of learning cultural aspects, enhancing cognitive engagement to the development of students' vocabulary mastery (Simatupang et al., 2023).

One English song that has gained attention among university students is "A Little More" by Ed Sheeran. The song is characterized by a moderate tempo and emotionally expressive lyrics that present vocabulary in meaningful and realistic contexts. The lyrical content reflects common human emotions and experiences, facilitating learners' comprehension of vocabulary use in English, particularly verbs that are naturally used to convey meaning. Such characteristics make the song pedagogically relevant, as emotionally engaging and context-rich materials are known to support vocabulary acquisition and learner engagement in EFL learning.

In language learning, knowledge of verb usage is essential, as verbs are commonly utilized to construct sentences. Verbs play a very significant role in constructing sentences because they help to create meanings (Rorimpandey, 2024). Verbs are a fundamental component of language because they function to convey actions, conditions, processes, and events (Habiba, 2025). Therefore, learning vocabulary through English songs, such as "A Little More" by Ed Sheeran, allows students to observe how verbs are naturally used to represent emotions and experiences in meaningful contexts, making vocabulary learning more authentic and relatable.

Although numerous studies have examined the use of songs as learning media in English language teaching, most have focused on general vocabulary acquisition without considering the specific phonetic and rhythmic advantages of particular musical genres. There remains a research gap in exploring how songs with a moderate-to-fast tempo (*Moderato-Allegro*) and clear pop-folk articulation, such as Ed Sheeran's "A Little More", facilitate vocabulary engagement in the EFL context. Previous studies have paid limited attention to how rhythmic flow and distinct lyrical delivery may support learners in mastering verbs and pronunciation. Based on this gap, it is essential to examine how students at Institut Prima Bangsa Cirebon perceive the use of this song in learning English vocabulary. Such an investigation is vital because each person has different perspectives and views (Zaharani, 2023). Therefore, this study aims to explore students' perceptions of the use of the song "A Little More" by Ed Sheeran in improving their mastery of English vocabulary.

RESEARCH METHODS

In this research, a descriptive qualitative design was implemented to explore student perceptions of Ed Sheeran's "A Little More" as a tool for enhancing English vocabulary development. The

descriptive qualitative method focuses on understanding participants' perceptions and experiences in a natural context and prioritizes meanings and processes rather than numerical data (Santoso, 2022; Sinaga, 2023). Therefore, this method aligns with research that uses interviews and observations to gain deeper insights into students' views on the implementation of songs as strategic instructional tools.

Research Participants

This study involved students from Institut Prima Bangsa Cirebon. They were selected because they had experience in learning English at the university level and were considered capable of providing substantive perspectives on the role of songs in fostering vocabulary acquisition.

Research Location

The research was conducted at the Institut Prima Bangsa Cirebon building. This location was chosen due to the availability of participants as well as the academic environment that supported the research process. Additionally, IPB Cirebon was chosen because it has a conducive campus environment, and support from the institution is also a supporting factor that makes it easier for researchers to collect data.

Data Analysis

Data collection activities were conducted in several stages. In qualitative research, data are gathered through observation, documentation, and interviewing to gain a thorough insight into a phenomenon of study (Grana et al., 2024). Therefore, the present research employed three main procedures. First, the learning activity uses the song "A Little More" by Ed Sheeran through a fill in the blank lyrics worksheet as a learning medium to help students enrich their vocabulary, this activity served as a learning tool, not as a test instrument. Second, observation and documentation during the activity, which includes recording student responses and collecting supporting evidence in the form of worksheets and activity photos. Third, semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain a deeper insight into students' perceptions of using songs as a vocabulary learning medium.

The technique of collecting information through semi-structured interviews involves a set of guiding questions while allowing participants to elaborate on their responses. This approach enables researchers to explore participants' views and experiences in depth through flexible, open-ended questions, while still maintaining the direction of the discussion and allowing new information to emerge. This technique allows the researcher to maintain the focus of the study while remaining adaptive to new insights that arise during the data collection process (Iba, 2024; Santoso, 2022).

The collected data were analyzed in three systematic stages: data condensation, structured data presentation, and conclusion verification (Waruwu, 2024). This analytical process emphasizes understanding the meaning and context of student's perceptions in a factual and organized manner.

FINDING

1. Students' Engagement and Learning Motivation

The result of the study indicated that the use of the song "A Little More" by Ed Sheeran provided a generally positive learning experience for most students. The fill-in-the-blank activity was considered engaging and helped students identify new vocabulary found in the song lyrics. One student mentioned that the learning process felt "really fun, like a game where everyone guesses together while listening to the song" (D), suggesting that this activity successfully created an enjoyable learning atmosphere. In addition, the activity encouraged active student participation, as students were required to listen carefully to the lyrics and match the missing words with what they heard.

2. Students' Perceptions of Vocabulary Learning

From the findings above, students perceive vocabulary mastery as a crucial component of English language proficiency. They usually learned vocabulary through various ways, such as using dictionaries, language learning applications, watching movies, reading English texts, and listening to music. In addition, most students stated that they have had previous experience learning English through songs, so the use of songs in learning is not something entirely new.

From the learning experience aspect, all students felt more enjoyment and were more motivated when learning using the song "A Little More" by Ed Sheeran. The learning atmosphere was considered more relaxed and enjoyable, which helped students remember vocabulary. Some students even

described the fill-in-the-blank activity as a word-guessing game, because they had to match the missing lyrics with what they heard from the song.

3. Understanding Verbs in Context

Besides improving general vocabulary mastery, several students realized that the lyrics of the song “A Little More” by Ed Sheeran helped them understand the use of verbs in English sentences. For example, one student stated, “there are many verbs in the song, like love, hate, wish. It makes it easier to understand how to use them” (R), which shows that they were able to recognize verbs in the context of the lyrics. Another participant added, “the slow part is nice, so the verbs are easy to remember, like love, hate, ruin” (F), emphasizing that the tempo of the song influenced their ability to recognize and remember new verbs.

4. Listening and Pronunciation Skills

In addition to improving vocabulary, the song “A Little More” by Ed Sheeran was also considered to support the development of listening and pronunciation skills. Variations in tempo and pronunciation styles required students to be more focused while listening. Although there were difficulties in the fast-paced rap section, differences in accent, and unclear pronunciation, students felt that these challenges could still be overcome through repetition, which actually helped them understand the lyrics more fully and remember new vocabulary.

DISCUSSION

Results of this research reveal that the application of songs through fill in the blank activities is considered effective in helping students recognize and remember new vocabulary contained in song lyrics. This is in line with the view that the deployment of song lyrics within English language education could increase learning effectiveness because it helps students understand vocabulary through context and actively involve them in listening activities, such as fill in the blank (Meiske et al., 2024). Vocabulary learned through songs is considered easier to remember because it is presented in a meaningful context and accompanied by repetition. Vocabulary mastery itself is an important component of language skills which plays a major role in students' ability to express ideas and compose sentences appropriately in English (Iswari, 2024). This shows that the application of songs could be a relevant means to support vocabulary improvement.

In addition to improving vocabulary mastery, the use of the song “A Little More” by Ed Sheeran in English language learning has been proven to be able to create a fun and non-monotonous learning atmosphere. Fill in the blank activities encourage active student involvement because the learning process is not only centered on the presentation of the speaker, but also involves listening, concentration, and active participation. The game-like atmosphere created by this activity not only effectively reduces boredom but also significantly enhances student engagement and involvement during the learning process (Farhansyah et al., 2023; Simatupang et al., 2023).

Furthermore, employing the song “A Little More” by Ed Sheeran also helps students understand verbs contextually through song lyrics. Students not only recognize the verb form, but also understand its function in conveying meaning and emotion in a sentence. The fill in the blank activity strengthens students' understanding of the role of verbs in forming the right sentence structure. These findings support the view (Habiba, 2025; Rorimpandey, 2024) that verbs play an important role in shaping sentence structure, conveying meaning, and expressing emotions. Consequently, integrating musical compositions into the curriculum serves as a relevant and contextual strategy to improve students' verb mastery.

In addition, the use of the song “A Little More” also contributes to improving students' listening and pronunciation skills. The variations in tempo and pronunciation style in the song train students to get used to the natural pronunciation of English. Listening skills are fundamental skills that support the mastery of phonemes, vocabulary, phrases, and sentences through the listening process (Putri et al., 2022). Furthermore, the integration of songs as a learning instrument serves to enhance students' aural comprehension and pronunciation skills while enriching their vocabulary (Farhansyah et al., 2023).

However, some students experienced difficulties in understanding parts of the songs that have a fast tempo and unclear pronunciation, especially in the sections with fast-paced rhythmic delivery.

This difficulty shows that listening is still one of the challenging skills in learning English. Challenges in listening are common for English learners and are often considered the most difficult skill compared to other skills (Musdalifah et al., 2024). However, students consider that these difficulties are still within reasonable limits and could be overcome through repeated repetition of songs, considering that repetitive and rhythmic song structures could help strengthen memory so that vocabulary is easier to store in long-term memory (Helmi, 2024).

CONCLUSION

The finding of this research reveals that the application of the song “A Little More” by Ed Sheeran as a learning instrument positively shapes the development of English word mastery. The students demonstrated favorable perceptions towards the utilization of songs because it was able to create a more relaxed, enjoyable, and non-monotonous learning atmosphere. Fill in the blank activities help students recognize, understand, and remember new vocabulary more effectively because it was presented in a meaningful context.

In addition to improving vocabulary mastery in general, the use of songs also helps students understand verbs in sentences and supports the development of listening and pronunciation skills, although there are obstacles in parts of the song with fast tempo and unclear pronunciation, students consider that these difficulties are still within reasonable limits and can be overcome through repetition. Therefore, the use of English songs, especially “A Little More”, can be applied as a meaningful and effective alternative medium in enhancing vocabulary mastery for students in learning English.

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that using English songs is favorably accepted by students. Songs are considered enjoyable