

The Role of English Pop Songs in Listening Skills Learning among Maritime Students

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Abstract

Effective listening is important for seafarers, but often overlooked in English language teaching. Listening skills are often overshadowed by grammar and writing instruction. To address this problem, researchers and educators are exploring innovative approach in improving listening comprehension, including the use of pop songs as a potential tool to help the students. This study aims to investigate engineering students' perceptions towards the use of English pop songs in listening exercises and assessing the effectiveness of this approach in improving their listening comprehensions, especially in Maritime English subject. This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach and using two instruments to gather the data. The first one is a questionnaire to gather data on students' perceptions, attitudes, and experiences related to using English pop songs for listening improvement. Focus group discussion is conducted to dig deeper into students' perspective and gather qualitative data. The respondents of the study are twenty students from the fourth-semester in Marine Engineering Program at Akademi Maritim Nusantara Cilacap. The questionnaire revealed positive perceptions toward the use of pop songs for vocabulary enrichment, pronunciation practice, and overall listening comprehension. However, the respondents also identified challenges related to different English accents that they hear in the songs. Moreover, focus group discussion emphasized the enjoyment and the motivation the respondents experience in their lessons compare to traditional listening materials. To conclude this study, the finding suggests a positive perception from the students that the use of English pop songs help them improve their listening skills.

Key words: perceptions, listening skills, Maritime English, motivation.

Abstrak

Keterampilan mendengarkan sangat penting bagi pelaut, tapi seringkali diabaikan dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris. Keterampilan tata Bahasa dan menulis biasanya lebih diutamakan daripada keterampilan mendengarkan. Untuk mengatasi masalah ini, para peneliti dan pendidik mengeksplorasi pendekatan inovatif dalam meningkatkan keterampilan mendengarkan, termasuk penggunaan lagu pop Bahasa Inggris sebagai sarana dalam membantu siswa. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui persepsi Taruna Teknik terhadap penggunaan lagu pop Bahasa Inggris dalam latihan keterampilan mendengarkan dan mengetahui efektivitas pendekatan ini dalam meningkatkan keterampilan mendengarkan, terutama dalam mata kuliah Bahasa Inggris Maritim. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif serta menggunakan dua instrumen untuk mengumpulkan data. Instrumen pertama adalah kuesioner untuk mengumpulkan data mengenai persepsi, sikap, dan pengalaman responden terkait penggunaan lagu pop Bahasa Inggris untuk meningkatkan keterampilan mendengarkan. Focus group discussion untuk mengetahui lebih dalam persepsi responden serta menggali data kualitatif. Hasil dari kuesioner mengungkapkan persepsi positif terhadap penggunaan lagu pop untuk memperkaya kosakata, latihan pengucapan Bahasa Inggris, dan kemampuan mendengarkan secara keseluruhan. Namun, responden juga mengidentifikasi tantangan untuk mendengarkan berbagai aksen Bahasa Inggris di dalam lagu. Hasil dari focus group discussion mengungkapkan bahwa responden menikmati pembelajaran dan mereka termotivasi dalam belajar dibandingkan mendengarkan materi Bahasa Inggris pada umumnya. Sebagai kesimpulan, penelitian ini meunjukkan adanya persepsi positif dari para siswa mengenai penggunaan lagu pop Bahasa Inggris dalam membantu mereka meningkatkan kemampuan mendengarkan.

Kata kunci: persepsi, kemampuan mendengarkan, Bahasa Inggris Maritim, motivasi.

Introduction

Effective communication is really important in maritime industry, and strong listening skills are a crucial component to support that. Seafarers need to be able to understand spoken English instructions, technical information, safety briefings, and daily communication delivered in a variety of accents and over communication channels that sometimes disturbed by background noise.

Traditional classroom methods often focus on written and grammar comprehension, and sometimes listening skills are not given enough attention even though integrating engaging activities to develop listening skills is essential for Maritime English learners. Research suggests that listening skills are considered as passive skill that can be acquired through simple exposure without dedicated learning activities[1]. Whereas, a lack of practical listening exposure can hinder students' ability to develop accurate writing and speaking skills in English[2].

Traditional listening comprehension exercises often rely on ordinary audio, which can limit student engagement and hinder optimal learning. This condition combines with poor classroom conditions, uninspiring topics, and inappropriate learning media can also delay the development of strong English listening skills[3]. To address this challenge, educators need to incorporate engaging and appropriate learning media into their listening instruction. Music, particularly pop songs, presents a promising solution, offering a more stimulating and culturally relevant alternative to traditional listening materials. The use of pop songs can offer a unique opportunity to enhance listening skills in a way that it can be both enjoyable and motivating for them. Music often features clear pronunciation, catchy rhythms, and repetitive phrases, all of which aid in vocabulary acquisition and listening comprehension development.

While the potential benefits of using pop songs in the classroom look promising, understanding students' perceptions of this approach is important. Knowing students' perceptions allows educators to tailor approaches based on their students' preferences and learning style. Perceptions refers to the way individuals interpret and make sense of information from their surroundings[4]. As Gibson[5] suggests, it is an active process involving receiving,

organizing, and assigning meaning to stimuli. Student perceptions can be divided in a range of viewpoints. For example, some students might find pop songs can be fun and engaging to be learnt in class, while other might find them distracting or challenging. So, it is important to understand the categorization of perceptions as positive and negative[6].

Numerous research explores the effectiveness of using songs to improve listening skills. Teppa et al.[7] conducted a notable study at a high school in Melonguane, demonstrating that exposure to English songs in the classroom can enhance students' listening comprehensions. However, their research did not dive into students' perceptions of this method. To address this gap, Gavilánez & Sanchez[8] investigated student perceptions at a university level in Ecuador. Their findings indicated a positive student attitude towards using songs for listening practice. While these studies offer valuable insights, there is a need to explore student perceptions within the specific context of Maritime English education for Marine Engineering students.

This study aims to investigate two key questions to address a gap on using English pop songs to improve listening skills in Maritime English education for engineering students: i). How do the students perceive the use of English pop songs in improving their listening skills? ii). How effective are English pop songs in helping students learning listening skills? By exploring both students' perceptions and the effectiveness of this method, it will provide a comprehensive overview of using English pop songs as a listening learning tool in this specific context. The findings can empower educators to identify potential obstacles and optimize the use of pop songs to create an effective learning experience that may enhance students' listening skills.

This study aims to investigate the attitudes of maritime engineering students towards the use of English pop songs into their listening comprehension exercises. By exploring their opinions on the effectiveness and enjoyment of this method, we can gain valuable insights to inform the development of successful learning strategies.

Theory and Method

According to Rivers[9], listening is an active process involving the construction of meaning from auditory input. Listeners transform raw audio data, such as words, sentence structure,

and vocal intonation, into comprehensible messages. Effective listening requires attention, understanding, and appreciation of the spoken language. Moreover, listening is interconnected with other language skills, including pronunciation, vocabulary, writing, speaking, and reading. Listening comprehension is a fundamental language skill that significantly impacts overall language proficiency. Modern research suggests that effective listening requires active engagement with a speaker's accent, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and a broader sociocultural implication of their speech[10].

According to Dunkel[11], understanding spoken language depends on the listener's ability to efficiently process the information they hear. Native speakers often perform this processing automatically, without actively focusing on individual words. However, for second language (L2) learners, listening can be a more deliberate effort. Internal and external factors can contribute to this difficulty. Proficiency level, learner stress, and emotions towards the speaker are the internal factors, and in external factors, environmental distractions (noise), the message length, and repetition that can contribute to the difficulty in learning listening skills. Those combined factors often prevent English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students from fully understanding the intended message.

Underwood[12] identifies student-specific challenges in listening comprehension. A common issue arises from previous learning habits, where students expect to understand every word, reflecting classroom experiences with clear and slow teacher speech. This expectation leads to frustration when encountering authentic listening materials with unfamiliar vocabulary and faster speech rates. Consequently, students may abandon listening altogether when encountering difficulties. Additionally, student motivation significantly impacts listening success. As Brown[13] highlights, motivation is crucial in teaching listening skills. Given the challenges which the students faced in listening comprehension, teachers must carefully design engaging and stimulating activities. Incorporating English pop songs into lessons can be an effective strategy. By using pop songs, teachers can create enjoyable learning experiences that reduce anxiety and foster a positive attitude towards listening practice.

Music engages multiple brain regions, particularly the right hemisphere, offering a stimulating and calming cognitive experience. By incorporating music and songs, English classroom become more enjoyable and engaging. This approach offers various benefits, including improved grammar, pronunciation, and speaking skills[14]. Several studies have generally recognized positive influence of music and songs in EFL learning. Some researchers found that music and songs are valuable tools for educators in creating dynamic and engaging language learning environments[15]. These resources offer teachers a various range of materials to inspire students and foster creativity. Additionally, the consistent use of music in language classrooms can enhance the development of various language skills while promoting cultural understanding[16].

Most importantly, music and songs align closely with diverse learning styles, accommodating both visual and auditory learners. This adaptability allows for flexible teaching method to cater to different students' preferences. Mismatches between teaching and learning styles can lead to demotivation and disengagement.

This study aimed to investigate maritime engineering students' perceptions of using English pop songs to enhance listening comprehension. This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach and using two instruments to gather the data. The first one is a questionnaire to gather data on students' perceptions, attitudes, and experiences related to using English pop songs for listening improvement. The second one is conducting focus group discussion to dig deeper into students' perspective and gather qualitative data. Random sampling has been applied in this study. Twenty students from the fourth-semester in Marine Engineering Program were randomly selected for this study.

There are two instruments used in the study, the first one is a questionnaire to gather data on students' perceptions, attitudes, and experiences related to using English pop songs for listening improvement. The second one is conducting focus group discussion to dig deeper into students' perspective and gather qualitative data.

The first instrument used in this study is a questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of 10 statements that represent the concept being measured, and is arranged in logical and flowing order to ensure the validity and reliability of the

questionnaire. The questionnaire is employed to collect data on students' perceptions regarding the use of English pop songs to enhance listening skills. A five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5), was used to measure responses. Questionnaire were administered online through Google Forms.

The second instruments, the focus group discussion, used to gain in-depth qualitative insights into students' perspectives, experiences, and opinions on this topic. The focus group discussion was conducted by determining the objectives of the information that the researcher wanted to gather and by doing a discussion with the participants, including open-ended questions and prompts to allow flexibility for spontaneous discussions and follow-up questions. The range of the discussion topics including exploring perceptions and experiences, comparing pop songs to other listening materials, exploring teaching and learning implications, and assessing motivation and engagement. Ultimately, the goal is to enrich the understanding how pop songs can be effectively utilized in language learning and to inform the development of teaching strategies and materials.

Result and Findings

In order to assess students' perceptions of using English pop songs to enhance listening skills, a questionnaire was given to twenty students from the fourth-semester in Marine Engineering Program at Akademi Maritim Nusantara Cilacap. A Likert scale from 1 to 5 (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree) was employed to measure 10 statements regarding the use of English pop songs for listening skills improvement. The data from the questionnaire and the Focus Group Discussion were analyzed to determine the students' overall perspectives on this approach. The statements from the questionnaire were as follows:

- Q1 Listening to English pop song is an enjoyable way to learn English.
- Q2 Following along with lyrics while listening to pop songs helps me understand the meaning of the words better.
- Q3 Pop songs help me become familiar with different English terms and expressions.
- Q4 Listening to English pop songs helps me understand the rhythm and pronunciation of English

words.

- Q5 I find it helpful to repeat sections of pop songs to improve my listening comprehension.
- Q6 The different accents used in English pop songs can be challenging to understand.
- Q7 I feel more confident in my listening skills after practicing with English pop songs.
- Q8 I find it easier to understand spoken English after listening to pop songs for a while.
- Q9 I would be more motivated to learn English if pop songs were used more often in class.
- Q10 I believe using English pop songs help me to improve my listening skills.

The result of the questionnaire can be seen on the table below:

Table 1. Students' Perception of the Use of English Pop Songs to Improve Listening Skills

Questions	Frequency				
	SD	D	N	A	SA
Q1	0%	0%	0%	40%	60%
Q2	0%	0%	0%	35%	65%
Q3	0%	0%	0%	50%	50%
Q4	0%	0%	0%	70%	30%
Q5	0%	0%	0%	10%	90%
Q6	0%	0%	0%	85%	15%
Q7	0%	0%	0%	20%	80%
Q8	0%	0%	0%	75%	35%
Q9	0%	0%	0%	15%	85%
Q10	0%	0%	0%	25%	75%

From the result of the questionnaire, it can be seen that 60% of the respondents strongly agree that listening to English pop songs is a fun way to learn English. In terms of improving students' vocabulary, 65% of the respondents strongly agree that when they following along with the lyrics on the songs, they can understand the meaning of words better. Moreover, 50% of the respondents strongly agree and 50% of the respondents agree that English pop songs help them in familiarizing different English terms and expressions. 70% of the respondents agree that by listening to English pop songs, they understand how to pronounce certain English words.

In terms of improving their listening skills, 90% of the respondents strongly agree that by listening English pop songs in class, it can help

them improve their listening comprehensions. However, 85% of the respondents agree that different accents used in various pop songs can be challenging for them to grasp the lyrics of the songs. Even though they have difficulties in understanding English accents, 80% of the respondents strongly agree that they feel more confident after practicing with English pop songs.

After listening English pop songs for a while, 75% of the respondents agree that it is easier for them to understand spoken English. Moreover, 85% of the respondents strongly agree that they are more motivated to learn English if pop songs were used more often in their class. Finally, 75% of the respondents strongly agree that listening to English pop songs are very helpful for improving their listening skills.

The second instrument used to dig deeper into students' perspective and gather qualitative data of the students' perception to the use of English pop songs to improve their listening skills is Focus Group Discussion. This instrument provided valuable insights of the students' enjoyment levels, the benefit they are achieving, and also motivational factors that can be difficult to capture only through questionnaire.

The discussion topics questions consist of: 1) How often do you listen to English pop songs; 2) How do you think listening to pop songs to other listening materials (podcasts, news broadcasts, conversations); 3) Do you find listening to English pop songs enjoyable? Why or why not? 4) What specific aspect of listening do you think pop songs help you with (e.g. pronunciation, vocabulary, etc); 5) What are the factors that contribute to your enjoyment or frustration when listening to English pop songs? 6) How do pop songs motivate you to learn English compare to other listening materials?

The result of the FGD can be divided into three major arguments. The first one is the students' listening preferences and habits. The majority of the participants express that they frequently listen to English pop songs. When compared to ordinary listening materials such as conversations, podcasts, or news broadcasts, pop songs are much preferred. They prefer to listen to pop songs because it aligns with the students' generational trends, and it makes pop songs more relatable to their everyday life.

The second discussion result is the benefit that are perceived by listening to English pop songs. The participants identified some benefit of listening to English pop songs, such as expanding their vocabulary and improving their

pronunciation. The repetitive words in the songs can also contribute to develop their word recognition and also familiarizing them with various English accents.

The last discussion result is the motivational impact and enjoyment factors of the English pop songs in their listening lessons. One of the key findings to this study is the positive correlation between listening to pop songs and students' motivation to learn English. The enjoyable and non-academic characteristic of the songs become the main factor that contribute to the increasing of the students' motivation. By providing a more relaxed and engaging learning experience, pop songs give a positive attitude towards the enhancement of English comprehensions.

Conclusion

The findings from the questionnaire and focus group discussion demonstrate a positive correlation between using English pop songs and among the respondents. The majority of the respondents showed enjoyment in using pop songs as a learning tool, and the respondents agree that their motivation in learning English increased compared to traditional listening materials. In terms of the effectiveness of English pop songs in helping the respondents learning listening skills, it can be showed from the discussion result that the participants identified some benefit of listening to English pop songs, such as expanding their vocabulary and improving their pronunciation, hence it can be concluded that English pop songs can be used as an effective tools in learning listening skills.

Based on those findings, it is recommended that teachers in Maritime English programs consider using English pop songs into the component of their listening materials. By combining the motivational and educational value of pop songs, teachers can create more dynamic and effective learning environments.

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