



The Role of Missing Lyrics Technique in Developing Listening Skills among Indonesian EFL Students

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Abstract

This study investigates the role of the Missing Lyrics technique in developing listening skills among Indonesian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. Listening remains one of the most challenging language skills for EFL learners, particularly in regional school contexts where exposure to authentic spoken English is limited. To address this issue, the study employed a quantitative pre-experimental design using a one-group pretest-posttest model. The participants were 19 eighth-grade students of SMP Negeri 2 Baranti, Sidenreng Rappang Regency, Indonesia, selected through purposive sampling. The treatment consisted of six instructional sessions using English songs with missing lyrics activities. Data were collected through listening tests administered before and after the treatment, as well as a questionnaire to examine students' perceptions. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and a paired-sample t-test with IBM SPSS Statistics. The findings revealed a significant improvement in students' listening performance, with the mean score increasing from 16.84 in the pretest to 73.95 in the posttest. The paired-sample t-test showed a significance value of 0.000, indicating that the improvement was statistically significant. Questionnaire responses also showed that students had positive perceptions of the technique, particularly in terms of motivation, focus, and classroom engagement. These findings suggest that the Missing Lyrics technique is an effective, enjoyable, and practical strategy for improving EFL students' listening skills. The technique can serve as an alternative instructional method for teachers seeking to integrate authentic and student-centered listening activities into English classrooms.

Keywords: Missing Lyrics technique, listening skills, English songs, EFL students, Indonesian learners.

INTRODUCTION

English has become an essential medium of international communication in education, technology, science, and global interaction. As a foreign language, English plays an important role in helping students access wider academic resources and participate in cross-cultural communication. Among the four major language skills, listening is considered one of the most fundamental because it provides learners with linguistic input before they are able to produce language through speaking or writing. Through listening, students are exposed to pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, intonation, and meaning in spoken discourse. Therefore, the development of listening skills is a crucial aspect of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning.

Despite its importance, listening remains one of the most challenging skills for EFL students, particularly in contexts where English is not used in daily communication. Many students experience difficulties in understanding spoken English because they are unfamiliar with natural pronunciation, connected speech, reduced forms, rhythm, and intonation. In classroom practice, listening activities are often limited to textbook-based exercises and teacher-centered instruction. As a result, students may have insufficient exposure to authentic spoken English and tend to show low motivation when participating in listening lessons.

In the Indonesian EFL context, listening instruction still faces several pedagogical challenges. Students in junior secondary schools often have limited opportunities to practice listening using authentic and engaging materials. English lessons are frequently dominated by reading, vocabulary memorization, grammar explanation, and written exercises, while listening activities receive less attention. This condition may affect students'

ability to recognize spoken vocabulary and functional words in real communication. Therefore, teachers need alternative strategies that can make listening activities more interactive, enjoyable, and meaningful for students.

One potential strategy to improve students' listening skills is the use of English songs. Songs are authentic materials that provide natural language input in an enjoyable and memorable form. Through songs, students can listen to vocabulary, pronunciation, stress, rhythm, and expressions in meaningful contexts. The repetitive and rhythmic nature of songs may also help students recognize words more easily and retain new vocabulary. In addition, songs can reduce students' anxiety and create a positive classroom atmosphere, making students more motivated to participate in listening activities.

Among various song-based activities, the Missing Lyrics technique is considered a practical and effective method for developing listening skills. This technique requires students to listen carefully to a song and complete the omitted words or phrases in the lyrics. By doing this activity, students are encouraged to focus on sounds, word boundaries, vocabulary, and functional words. The Missing Lyrics technique transforms listening from a passive activity into an active learning task because students must identify, predict, and confirm the missing parts of the lyrics based on what they hear.

Theoretically, the Missing Lyrics technique supports both bottom-up and top-down listening processes. In bottom-up processing, students decode sounds, syllables, words, and grammatical forms from the audio input. In top-down processing, students use context, prior knowledge, and meaning to predict the missing words. This combination allows students to develop more complete listening comprehension. Moreover, the



enjoyable nature of music can increase motivation and lower the affective filter, which is important in second language acquisition.

Previous studies have shown that song-based learning can improve listening comprehension, vocabulary recognition, pronunciation awareness, and student engagement in EFL classrooms. However, more classroom-based evidence is still needed, particularly in regional Indonesian junior high school contexts where students often have limited exposure to authentic English input. Therefore, this study focuses on the role of the Missing Lyrics technique in developing listening skills among Indonesian EFL students.

This study aims to investigate whether the Missing Lyrics technique using English songs can improve students' listening skills, particularly in vocabulary recognition and functional word recognition. It also seeks to explore students' perceptions of the technique in terms of motivation, focus, and classroom engagement. The findings of this study are expected to provide practical insights for English teachers in implementing low-cost, enjoyable, and student-centered listening activities in EFL classrooms.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Listening is one of the most essential receptive skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning because it provides learners with meaningful input before they are able to produce language accurately. Through listening, students

receive spoken language, recognize sounds, understand vocabulary, interpret grammatical structures, and construct meaning from oral communication. Rost (2011) emphasizes that listening is not merely the passive act of hearing sounds, but an active process that involves attention, interpretation, and comprehension. Similarly, Brown (2001) explains that listening requires learners to process linguistic and contextual information simultaneously in order to understand spoken messages.

In EFL contexts, listening is often considered difficult because students have limited exposure to authentic spoken English. Learners may struggle to identify words in connected speech, understand pronunciation variations, recognize reduced forms, and follow the rhythm and intonation of native or near-native speech. These challenges become more complex when classroom listening activities are limited to textbook recordings or teacher-centered explanations. Harmer (2007) argues that effective listening instruction should provide students with meaningful opportunities to listen to various types of spoken input. Therefore, teachers need to apply strategies that expose students to authentic, contextual, and engaging listening materials.

The development of listening skills is closely related to second language acquisition theory. Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1985) states that language acquisition occurs when learners receive comprehensible input that is slightly beyond their current level of competence. This means that students need listening materials that are understandable but still challenging enough to promote language development. In addition, the Affective Filter Hypothesis suggests that students learn more effectively when anxiety is low and motivation is high.

In this regard, enjoyable listening materials such as English songs can help create a positive learning environment and increase students' willingness to participate in listening activities.

English songs are widely recognized as authentic materials that can support listening development in EFL classrooms. Songs contain natural pronunciation, rhythm, stress, intonation, vocabulary, and expressions that reflect real language use. Murphey (1992) states that music and songs can make language learning more memorable because they combine linguistic input with rhythm and emotion. Vandergrift and Goh (2012) also highlight that engaging listening materials can increase learners' attention, motivation, and comprehension. Through songs, students are not only exposed to English sounds and words, but also encouraged to enjoy the learning process.

One important advantage of using English songs is their repetitive and rhythmic nature. Repetition in songs can help students recognize vocabulary and remember expressions more easily. Rhythm and melody can also support pronunciation awareness because students listen to stress patterns, connected speech, and word boundaries in a natural context. For junior high school students, songs may be particularly effective because they are familiar, enjoyable, and close to students' interests. As a result, songs can reduce boredom and transform listening activities into more meaningful classroom experiences.

The Missing Lyrics technique is a song-based listening activity in which students listen to a song and complete the omitted words or phrases in the lyrics. This technique encourages students to listen carefully and actively because they must identify specific words from the audio input. Richards (2008) explains that task-based listening activities can help learners focus on

both meaning and linguistic form. In the Missing Lyrics technique, students do not only listen for general understanding, but also pay attention to vocabulary, pronunciation, and functional words. Therefore, this technique is relevant for improving students' micro-listening skills.

From a cognitive perspective, the Missing Lyrics technique involves both bottom-up and top-down listening processes. Bottom-up processing occurs when students decode individual sounds, syllables, words, and grammatical forms from the spoken input. This process is important for recognizing vocabulary and functional words in connected speech. Meanwhile, top-down processing occurs when students use context, prior knowledge, and prediction to guess the missing lyrics. Anderson and Lynch (1988) explain that effective listening comprehension depends on the interaction between linguistic decoding and contextual interpretation. Thus, the Missing Lyrics technique allows students to develop listening comprehension through a combination of sound recognition and meaning prediction.

The Missing Lyrics technique is also related to Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis (1990), which argues that learners need to consciously notice language features before they can acquire them. When students are asked to fill in missing lyrics, they are required to pay attention to specific sounds, words, and language patterns that might otherwise be ignored. This activity helps students become more aware of how words are pronounced and used in authentic spoken contexts. In addition, the enjoyable nature of songs can lower students' anxiety and increase their motivation, which supports more effective language acquisition.

Empirical studies have shown that song-based listening activities can improve students' listening comprehension, vocabulary recognition, pronunciation awareness, and classroom engagement.



English songs provide authentic input while also creating a relaxed and motivating classroom atmosphere. Previous studies on the use of songs in EFL classrooms indicate that students tend to become more active and interested when listening activities are connected to music. The Missing Lyrics technique, in particular, strengthens students' focus because it gives them a clear listening task and encourages them to listen repeatedly to identify missing words.

In the Indonesian EFL context, the use of the Missing Lyrics technique is highly relevant because many students have limited exposure to authentic English outside the classroom. Regional schools may also face limited access to advanced learning technologies, making low-cost and practical teaching strategies necessary. English songs and printed lyric worksheets can be easily implemented without requiring expensive facilities. Therefore, the Missing Lyrics technique can serve as an accessible instructional strategy for improving listening skills, especially among junior high school students.

Based on the theoretical and empirical perspectives discussed above, the Missing Lyrics technique has strong potential to develop students' listening skills. It provides authentic input, promotes active listening, supports vocabulary and functional word recognition, and increases students' motivation. By integrating English songs into listening instruction, teachers can create a more engaging and student-centered learning environment. Therefore, this study investigates the role of the Missing Lyrics technique in developing listening skills among Indonesian EFL students, particularly in terms of students' listening performance and their perceptions of the technique.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative research approach with a pre-experimental design. Specifically, the study used a one-group pretest-posttest design to examine the role of the Missing Lyrics technique in developing students' listening skills. This design was selected because it allowed the researcher to compare students' listening performance before and after the treatment. The pretest was administered before the implementation of the technique, while the posttest was given after the treatment to identify whether there was an improvement in students' listening achievement.

The research was conducted at SMP Negeri 2 Baranti, Sidenreng Rappang Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The participants of this study were 19 eighth-grade students from Class VIII A. The sample was selected using purposive sampling because the class represented Indonesian EFL students who had learned English through the regular school curriculum but still had limited exposure to authentic listening materials. The participants were considered suitable for this study because they experienced common listening difficulties, particularly in recognizing vocabulary and functional words in spoken English.

The independent variable of this study was the Missing Lyrics technique using English songs, while the dependent variable was students' listening skills. The listening skills focused on two main aspects: vocabulary recognition and functional word recognition. In addition, students' perceptions of the technique were also examined to understand their responses toward the use of English

songs and missing lyrics activities in the classroom.

The treatment was conducted through six instructional sessions. During the treatment, students were given selected English songs with several missing words or phrases in the lyrics. They listened to the songs carefully and completed the missing parts based on what they heard. The activity encouraged students to pay attention to pronunciation, word boundaries, vocabulary, and functional words in connected speech. After completing the missing lyrics task, the students and teacher discussed the correct answers together to reinforce comprehension and vocabulary recognition.

Data were collected using two instruments: a listening test and a questionnaire. The listening test was administered twice, as a pretest and a posttest. The pretest was used to measure students' listening ability before the treatment, while the posttest was used to measure their listening ability after the implementation of the Missing Lyrics technique. The questionnaire was distributed after the treatment to identify students' perceptions of the technique, particularly related to motivation, focus, engagement, and the usefulness of English songs in listening learning.

The data from the listening tests were analyzed quantitatively using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were used to calculate the mean score and standard deviation of the pretest and posttest results. To determine whether there was a significant difference between students' scores before and after the treatment, a paired-sample t-test was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics. The significance level was set at 0.05. Meanwhile, the questionnaire data were analyzed descriptively to describe students' responses toward the implementation of the Missing Lyrics technique.

Ethical considerations were also observed during the research process. The study was conducted with permission from the school, and the students participated in the activities as part of the English learning process. The data were used only for research purposes, and the identities of the participants were kept confidential.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The results of this study present the students' listening achievement before and after the implementation of the Missing Lyrics technique using English songs. The data were obtained from 19 eighth-grade students of SMP Negeri 2 Baranti who participated in six instructional sessions. The students were given a pretest before the treatment and a posttest after the treatment. The tests were designed to measure students' listening skills, particularly their ability to recognize vocabulary and functional words in spoken English.

The pretest results showed that the students' initial listening ability was very low. Most students experienced difficulty identifying missing words from the English song lyrics. Their scores ranged from 5 to 30, indicating that they had limited ability to recognize spoken vocabulary and functional words. This result reflected the students' lack of exposure to authentic listening materials and their unfamiliarity with natural pronunciation, rhythm, and connected speech in English.

Before the treatment, many students appeared less confident in completing the listening task. They tended to depend on guessing rather than accurately identifying the words they heard. This condition suggests that listening was still a challenging skill for the students. The low pretest scores also indicated that the students had not received sufficient practice in focused listening activities, especially activities that



required them to pay attention to specific words in spoken input.

After the implementation of the Missing Lyrics technique, the students' posttest scores showed a substantial improvement. The posttest scores ranged from 60 to 90, with most students achieving scores between 70 and 80. This improvement indicates that the students were more capable of recognizing vocabulary and functional words after participating in the song-based listening activities. The use of English songs helped students listen more carefully and actively during the learning process.

The descriptive statistical analysis showed a clear increase in the students' mean score. The mean score improved from 16.84 in the pretest to 73.95 in the posttest. This increase demonstrates that the Missing Lyrics technique contributed positively to students' listening development. The improvement also shows that students became more familiar with English sounds, word boundaries, pronunciation patterns, and functional words after repeated exposure to the songs.

The standard deviation also indicated a more consistent pattern of achievement after the treatment. In the pretest, students' listening performance was generally low, although there were slight differences among individuals. In the posttest, most students achieved higher scores, showing that the treatment benefited nearly all participants. This finding suggests that the Missing Lyrics technique was not only useful for students with better initial ability but also helpful for those who had lower listening proficiency.

The paired-sample t-test confirmed that the difference between the pretest and posttest scores was statistically significant. The significance value was 0.000, which was lower than 0.05. This means that the improvement in students' listening scores

was significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected, and the findings support the conclusion that the Missing Lyrics technique had a significant role in developing students' listening skills.

The questionnaire results also supported the test findings. Most students gave positive responses toward the use of the Missing Lyrics technique. They reported that English songs made the listening activity more enjoyable, increased their motivation, improved their focus, and encouraged them to participate actively in class. These results indicate that the technique was effective not only in improving listening achievement but also in creating a more engaging and positive learning atmosphere.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the Missing Lyrics technique played an important role in developing students' listening skills. The significant increase from the pretest mean score of 16.84 to the posttest mean score of 73.95 indicates that students made strong progress after receiving the treatment. This improvement shows that song-based listening activities can help EFL students recognize spoken words more accurately and develop better listening comprehension.

The low pretest scores suggest that students initially had limited listening competence. This condition may have been caused by insufficient exposure to authentic spoken English in the classroom. In many EFL learning contexts, students are more frequently exposed to written exercises, vocabulary memorization, and grammar explanation than to meaningful listening practice. As a result, students often struggle when they are required to identify words in natural spoken English.

The Missing Lyrics technique helped overcome this problem by providing

students with focused and repeated listening practice. Through this technique, students were required to listen carefully to English songs and complete the omitted lyrics. This activity encouraged students to concentrate on pronunciation, word sounds, rhythm, and contextual meaning. Therefore, listening became an active process rather than a passive classroom activity.

The improvement in students' vocabulary recognition shows that English songs can serve as useful authentic materials in EFL classrooms. Songs provide repeated exposure to words and expressions in meaningful contexts. When students listen to songs several times, they become more familiar with how English words are pronounced in connected speech. This repeated exposure supports vocabulary learning and helps students recognize words more easily during listening activities.

The technique also supported students' recognition of functional words. Functional words are often difficult for EFL learners because they are usually pronounced weakly, quickly, or in reduced forms. Through the Missing Lyrics activity, students were trained to pay attention not only to content words but also to smaller grammatical words that contribute to meaning. This helped students improve their bottom-up listening skills, especially in decoding sounds and identifying word boundaries.

The findings are consistent with the theoretical view that listening involves both bottom-up and top-down processing. In this study, students used bottom-up processing when they identified sounds, syllables, words, and phrases from the songs. At the same time, they used top-down processing when they predicted missing words based on the context of the lyrics. The combination of these two processes made the listening activity more meaningful and effective.

Students' positive perceptions also indicate that the Missing Lyrics technique increased their motivation and engagement. The use of

songs created a relaxed and enjoyable learning atmosphere, which helped reduce students' anxiety during listening lessons. When students felt more comfortable and interested, they became more willing to listen, participate, and complete the task. This supports the idea that affective factors such as motivation, confidence, and enjoyment are important in language learning.

Overall, the results suggest that the Missing Lyrics technique is an effective, practical, and engaging strategy for improving listening skills among Indonesian EFL students. The technique is especially suitable for junior high school contexts because it is simple, low-cost, and easy to implement. Although this study used a pre-experimental design with a limited number of participants, the significant improvement in test scores and the positive questionnaire responses provide strong evidence that the technique can be used as an alternative method for teaching listening in EFL classrooms.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the Missing Lyrics technique plays an important role in developing listening skills among Indonesian EFL students. The implementation of English songs with missing lyrics activities helped students improve their ability to recognize vocabulary and functional words in spoken English. The significant increase in students' listening scores from the pretest to the posttest indicates that this technique can effectively support students' listening development, particularly in junior high school contexts where exposure to authentic English input is still limited.

The findings also show that the Missing Lyrics technique creates a more enjoyable and engaging learning atmosphere. Students responded positively to the use of English songs because the activities increased their motivation, focus, and active participation during the learning process. By transforming



listening activities into interactive and meaningful tasks, the technique encouraged students to listen more carefully and confidently. This suggests that the use of authentic and familiar materials, such as songs, can reduce students' anxiety and make listening lessons more attractive.

In practical terms, the Missing Lyrics technique can be recommended as an alternative strategy for teaching listening in EFL classrooms. It is simple, low-cost, and easy to implement, making it suitable for schools with limited technological resources. However, since this study used a pre-experimental design with a small number of participants, future researchers are encouraged to conduct studies with larger samples, control groups, and longer treatment periods. Further research may also examine the effect of this technique on other language skills, such as pronunciation, speaking, and vocabulary acquisition.

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