

## ENHANCING VOCABULARY MASTERY IN GRADE X STUDENTS OF SMAN 1 NGAGLIK USING ENGLISH SONGS

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### **Abstract**

Classroom Action Research (CAR) was aimed at improving the tenth MIPA 1 graders' vocabulary mastery of SMAN 1 Ngaglik through English songs. Two cycles of classroom action research were conducted by integrating English songs into learning activities. Each cycle consisted of four stages: Planning, Acting, Observing, and Reflecting. In gathering the data, the researchers used two instruments; a pre-test and post-test, and a questionnaire. The pre-test and post-test scores were used to see the improvement in students' vocabulary mastery. Subsequently, the questionnaire was used to find out the students' perspectives on the use of songs in English class and the impact of English songs on the students' vocabulary enrichment. The criteria for success were the average of the students' post-test scores that should reach 80 and the existence of a positive impact on the students' vocabulary mastery. The findings demonstrated an increase in the students' post-test scores, whereby the average of those scores in the two cycles was beyond 80. The findings unveiled a positive perception of the English learning using songs and an increase in the students' learning motivation in learning vocabulary. In conclusion, the use of English songs in learning had boosted the students' vocabulary mastery.

**Keywords:** classroom action research, English song, vocabulary mastery

### **Introduction**

English is an essential language to master. English skill helps people to communicate and compete with other people around the world. According to Lengkoan (2017), language skills and language elements are two key aspects of learning English. Language skills are listening, reading, writing, and speaking, while language elements are vocabulary, structure, and pronunciation (Darmawan, Pelenkahu & Rorimpandey, 2022). Of these, vocabulary is the first thing that needs to be learned. Students who have rich vocabulary will find it easier to understand many things through writing or audio, communicate with others, and create good



writing. Having a rich vocabulary also enables students to develop their English skills much easier (Kurnia, 2017).

Despite the importance of vocabulary in language learning, the researchers still found some problems. For instance, at SMAN 1 Ngaglik, the students in grade X MIPA 1 were found to have low learning participation. They tended to keep silent when they were asked a question in English. They also relied on their gadgets to find the meaning of unfamiliar English words and used Google Translate to assist them in expressing their ideas. These situations made the learning process run ineffectively. Students depended too much on technology and were unable to learn a foreign language well.

Based on some observations and a mini-interview with the English teacher who tutored the class, it was discovered that the students' low learning participation and reliance on technology were caused by their low vocabulary mastery. The pandemic era which enacted online learning in which the students lacked English exposure was deemed to be responsible for the students' difficulties in understanding teachers' utterances. This problem was confirmed by Dilago, Liando, and Kukus (2022), who said that students find it difficult to differentiate vocabulary, nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs in their daily learning activities.

In an attempt to solve the problem, the researchers decided to use English songs as a strategy to foster vocabulary improvement. Previous studies unveiled that learning English through songs can enrich vocabulary since songs can motivate students to learn new English words (Gushendra, 2017; Isnaini & Aminatun, 2021). This strategy is also entertaining and may promote motivation to learn English because it puts less pressure on the students. Yet, to be more impactful, the songs used should be the ones that students usually listen to so that they would be more attracted to learning. As Bawawa (2020) asserts, listening to a song that is familiar and favorite to students will foster their understanding of the meaning of the song and help them gain more vocabulary. The songs can facilitate students remember the vocabulary easily and also train their pronunciation.

To guide the study, the researchers addressed one research question: How can the vocabulary mastery of X MIPA 1 students of SMAN 1 Ngaglik be enhanced through the use of English songs? This study was aimed to help the students enrich their vocabulary using English songs as the medium and simultaneously help teachers who have a similar problem, namely the lack of students' vocabulary mastery.

### ***Vocabulary mastery***

Vocabulary is a group of words people often hear and use to convey their ideas (Sari, Asahra, & Yana, 2019). Without sufficient vocabulary, communication will not run successfully. It means that vocabulary is the most essential matter to be learned when people want to be skillful or proficient in any language. Additionally, having a rich vocabulary will boost their confidence in using the language (Fridayanti, Tahrun & Mulyadi, 2021).

Vocabulary skills include pronunciation, spelling, grammar, and meaning (Cameron, 2001, p. 78). This entails that vocabulary mastery deals with form, meaning, and use (Rachmawati, Apollonia & Meila, 2020). In line with this, as Nation (1990) argued, vocabulary learning may also be of two types, receptive and productive. Receptive learning concerns the capability to grasp and remember the

meaning of words found; meanwhile, productive learning combines the needs of receptive learning and the ability to speak and write when the learner is ready (Nugroho, Nurkamto & Sulistyowati, 2012). Accordingly, learners need a lot of English exposure since they need to acquire plenty of words (Isnaini & Aminatun, 2021).

There are some difficulties in learning English vocabulary. English has distinct written and spoken forms, which is different from Indonesian (Rohmatillah, 2014). Besides, the differences in sound, grammar, and word complexity between English and Indonesian contribute to more problems. Despite the difficulties, English teachers should push their students to enrich their vocabulary as a beginning step before teaching other English skills by creating a receivable learning process (Rachmawati, Apollonia, & Meila, 2020). Also, being a facilitator, teachers should offer many learning techniques that make the students enjoy and be motivated in vocabulary learning, such as integrating some tools into English learning (Nissa, Nurchurifiani, & Febriyanti, 2021). Inappropriate use of learning strategies and learning media will make the learning process a failure (Putri & Rustipa, 2023).

### ***English songs***

Song is one of the tools that can be integrated into foreign language learning. According to Parto (1996), a song is arranged of lyrics and musical components, such as rhythm, melodies, expressiveness, and heartbeat (Hasibuan, Wandira & Nasution, 2023). Learning strategy through songs makes language teaching effective (Al-Smadi, 2020). In addition, learning English using songs helps students ease their stress and discard the students' point of view of how difficult it is to use a new language (Malekian, 2016; McDonald, 1984). Music helps the mind become more relaxed because the process of listening to songs involves various parts of the brain and makes it relaxing (Al-efeshat & Baniabdelrahman, 2020; Saeki, 1994). Afterward, songs can decrease the tension of students in joining English classes. As stated by Sekeon, Rombepajung, and Kumayas (2022), listening to a song can relax body muscles, slow down blood pressure, and expedite the respiratory system. Hence, teaching using songs fosters the students' understanding of the learning materials and increases the students' learning motivation (Tursunovich, 2022).

English songs are helpful in vocabulary learning to enrich the vocabulary gained. Salcedo (2010) argued that music accelerates the students' ability to master vocabulary (in Phisutthangkoon & Panich, 2016). By listening to English songs, the students will explore new vocabulary that they have not met before (Andayani, 2022). Also, the students will enjoy the music and will repeat the songs which they are interested in. The repetition will increase the students' listening comprehension skills and; furthermore, the vocabulary found during the process of listening will be remembered in the long term (Hendrawaty & Nurhayati, 2019). This is in line with Afriyuninda and Oktaviani (2021), who claimed that listening and memorizing song lyrics will be ingrained in the student's long-term memory.

There are some benefits of using English songs in language learning. The students are motivated to learn English and obtain a lot of new vocabulary (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2020). Furthermore, listening to English songs assists the students in finding the meaning of new words through the lyrics. Not only that but songs also expose students to grammar and different accents (Nurhasanah & Suryaman, 2022).

Finally, songs create students' positive perception of language learning (Sari et al., 2019).

## **Method**

### ***Participants***

This research was conducted in the even semester of the 2022/2023 academic year in grade X MIPA 1 at SMAN 1 Ngaglik. The research participants were twenty of thirty-six students. All participants gave their informed consent for inclusion before participating in the study and to comply with the research ethics, their anonymity was ensured.

### ***Instruments***

The researcher used Classroom Action Research (CAR) as the method, which allows the researchers to investigate the learning process and take real action to refine the quality of both the learning process and the situation in the class. As stated by Kurnia (2017), action research will produce a good impact on the learning process. Through CAR, the researchers can enhance the quality of student learning outcomes, learning process, and teaching process in the class. In collecting the data, the researchers used two instruments; they were a pre-test and a post-test, and a questionnaire. The questionnaire was employed to find the students' perspectives on their vocabulary mastery and the strategy used. The pre-test and post-test were used to quantify the early ability before the implementation of the learning innovation and after the implementation of the innovation.

There were four stages planned in CAR which were used to solve the problem. According to Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), the four stages are (1) Planning the action, (2) Implementing the action, (3) Observation, and (4) Reflecting the action (Sari, Asahra & Yana, 2019). The four stages are compulsory in each cycle. The CAR would be considered successful when the success criteria had been met. First, there was an increase in the students' test scores before and after the implementation of the learning innovation, indicating that there was an improvement in the students' vocabulary mastery. Second, there was a change in the students' perspective on learning English, particularly in dealing with learning vocabulary using songs. The cycles would be stopped when the mean of the students' post-test scores reached 80. Below is a description of the four stages of the two cycles in the study.

In the first cycle, the researchers did four stages. In the planning stage, the researchers decided on English songs as the strategy used to overcome the problems, prepared the research instruments, designed lesson plans, and set the criteria for success. After all of the instruments and the lesson plan were prepared, the researchers conducted a pre-test via *Google Forms* before the implementation of the action. In the enforcement of the action stage, the researchers did asynchronous learning that implemented the innovation to the students based on the lesson plan designed. There were some steps in implementing the action. They were: (1) The researchers asked the students to hear the *Sunday Best* song, (2) The students had to write unfamiliar vocabulary found in the song listen to, (3) The students had to listen to the song repeatedly to guess the meaning of the unfamiliar vocabulary found, (4) The students wrote the meaning of the unfamiliar vocabulary based on their guesses. Then, in the observation stage, the researchers conducted a

post-test to measure the success of the learning strategy used. Last, in the reflection stage, the researchers reflected on the data gained.

In the second cycle, the researchers did the same stages as the first cycle. This happened because the post-test scores had increased and the researchers would just need to conduct a confirmation cycle. In the planning stage, the researchers used exactly the same strategy as in Cycle 1. Then, the researchers selected a song that was familiar to the students and designed a lesson plan. After that, the researchers implemented the same stages as Cycle 1, which were (1) The researchers asked the students to hear the *Let It Go* song, (2) The students had to write unfamiliar vocabulary found in the song listened, (3) The students had to listen to the song repeatedly to guess the meaning of the unfamiliar vocabulary found, (4) The students wrote the meaning of the unfamiliar vocabulary based on their guesses. After that, the researchers did the observation stage by doing a post-test. The post-test was based on the vocabulary from the *Let It Go* song. The researchers also distributed a questionnaire to the students to find their perspectives on the integration of English songs in their learning and the improvement of their vocabulary mastery after experiencing the learning innovation. Finally, the researcher reflected on the data gained, to see whether the success of the strategy had been confirmed.

### Findings and Discussion

After collecting the data, the researchers analyzed the pre-test and post-test scores, as well as the questionnaire responses. The pre-test and post-test scores would show the improvement of students' vocabulary mastery and the questionnaire responses would demonstrate the students' perspectives on the strategy used in the teaching process. Table 1 presents the results of the pre-test scores.

Table 1. The pre-test scores

Name	Vocabulary Results	Pre-Test Scores	Name	Vocabulary Results	Pre-Test Scores
Pupil 1	13	65	Pupil 11	13	65
Pupil 2	11	55	Pupil 12	17	85
Pupil 3	12	60	Pupil 13	16	80
Pupil 4	16	80	Pupil 14	15	75
Pupil 5	4	20	Pupil 15	18	90
Pupil 6	17	85	Pupil 16	14	70
Pupil 7	14	70	Pupil 17	17	85
Pupil 8	18	90	Pupil 18	19	95
Pupil 9	9	45	Pupil 19	17	85
Pupil 10	8	40	Pupil 20	17	85
Average Score: 71.25					
Average of Vocabulary Results: 14.25					

Before implementing the learning innovation, the researchers did a pre-test to discover the students' insight into the vocabulary of the songs that would be used in Cycle 1 and Cycle 2. Based on the outcome of the pre-test in Table 1, the average score before the innovation was adopted was 71.25. There were nine out of twenty students who gained scores under the minimum completeness criteria or *Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimum*. Minimum completeness criteria or *Kriteria Ketuntasan*

*Minimum* refers to the minimum score that the students should obtain in a particular subject. The minimum score was 75 for English subjects. In addition, the average vocabulary result was 14.25. This indicated that the students only recognized fourteen out of twenty words in the English songs which they listened to in the learning activities, i.e. “Sunday Best”. Table 2 presents the post-test scores obtained in Cycle 1.

Table 2. The post-test scores in cycle 1

Name	Vocabulary Results	Post-Test Scores Cycle 1	Name	Vocabulary Results	Post-Test Scores Cycle 1
Pupil 1	18	90	Pupil 11	16	80
Pupil 2	17	85	Pupil 12	18	90
Pupil 3	18	90	Pupil 13	20	100
Pupil 4	18	90	Pupil 14	16	80
Pupil 5	16	80	Pupil 15	18	90
Pupil 6	20	100	Pupil 16	18	90
Pupil 7	18	90	Pupil 17	20	100
Pupil 8	20	100	Pupil 18	20	100
Pupil 9	14	70	Pupil 19	17	85
Pupil 10	14	70	Pupil 20	18	90
Average Score: 88.5					
Average of Vocabulary Results: 17.77					

Table 2 displays the test results after the implementation of the learning innovation using an English song entitled *Sunday Best*. The average vocabulary result was 17. The students recognized seventeen vocabularies in the song. There was a significant improvement in which the average post-test scores were greater than the average pre-test scores ( $88.5 > 71.25$ ). In Cycle 1, the results had reached the criterion of success, i.e. 80. However, to confirm the success of the learning innovation, the researchers conducted another cycle. The results of the post-test in Cycle 2 are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3. The post-test scores in cycle 2

Name	Vocabulary Results	Post-Test Scores Cycle 2	Name	Vocabulary Results	Post-Test Scores Cycle 2
Pupil 1	20	100	Pupil 11	20	100
Pupil 2	18	90	Pupil 12	20	100
Pupil 3	20	100	Pupil 13	20	100
Pupil 4	18	90	Pupil 14	18	90
Pupil 5	19	95	Pupil 15	19	95
Pupil 6	20	100	Pupil 16	20	100
Pupil 7	20	100	Pupil 17	20	100
Pupil 8	20	100	Pupil 18	20	100
Pupil 9	16	80	Pupil 19	19	95
Pupil 10	16	80	Pupil 20	20	100
Average: 95.75					
Average of Vocabulary Results: 19.15					

Table 3 shows the average score after implementing the second strategy using another English song entitled *Let It Go*. The mean score of the post-test in Cycle 2

had increased from Cycle 1 (95.75 > 88.5). Both of the average scores exceeded the specified criterion. Hence, the researchers stopped the research. The test scores indicated that the students' vocabulary had improved. The finding strengthened Isnaini and Aminatun (2021), who argued that English songs are one of the effective strategies used to enrich the students' vocabulary and one of the learning media that create effective learning.

Besides using pre-test and post-test scores, the researchers also used the questionnaire as the instrument in this research. The questionnaire was used to reveal the students' perspectives on learning innovation. The students were required to respond to seven statements provided. The responses were classified into four scales, namely Totally Disagree, Disagree, Agree, and Strongly Agree as presented in Table 4.

Table 4. The results of questionnaire responses

Indicators	Options (%)			
	1	2	3	4
Motivation Aspects				
The student likes English.	-	-	70	30
The student likes learning English using songs.	-	-	60	40
Listening to English songs makes the student excited to learn new vocabulary.	-	-	60	40
The student is motivated to find the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary from the songs heard.	-	5	70	25
Vocabulary Improvements Aspects				
Listening to English songs helps the students to learn new vocabulary.	-	-	75	25
The vocabulary increases when the student listens to English songs.	-	5	70	25
The student can guess the meaning of the unfamiliar vocabulary found by listening to English songs.	-	5	75	20

\*1 (Totally Disagree), 2 (Disagree), 3 (Agree), 4 (Strongly Agree)

Table 4 presents two aspects that the researchers wanted to find out from the students. The first aspect was motivation. Six students strongly agreed and thirteen students agreed with all statements which indicated that using English songs as the media in English learning could motivate them to learn new vocabulary. Thus, almost all the students were motivated to learn new vocabulary using English songs. As stated by Sari et al. (2019), using English songs in the class creates fun learning that reduces the students' anxiety. Also, the students are encouraged to learn a foreign language since they are interested in English songs.

The second questionnaire aspect was vocabulary improvement. Four students strongly agreed and fifteen students agreed with all statements which indicated that through English songs, the students' vocabulary mastery was enhanced. Moreover, almost all of the students regarded that their vocabulary mastery improved after participating in the learning process using English songs. Songs make memorizing

new words easier so the students will remember the vocabulary in the long term because the melody creates a fun learning environment (Isnaini & Aminatun, 2021).

### Conclusion

The study concluded that the vocabulary mastery of the grade X students of SMAN 1 Ngaglik could be enhanced through the use of English songs. First, it was evident in the scores of the post-test in both Cycle 1 and Cycle 2. The scores increased significantly and they exceeded the pre-determined score which was set as the success criterion. Second, the enhanced vocabulary mastery was also strengthened by the questionnaire responses which revealed students' evaluation of their vocabulary mastery and English learning in general. The students admitted that they acquired a lot of vocabulary by learning through English songs and they managed to remember them better. Also, the students' perspective on learning English became more positive. The students admitted that they became more motivated and could feel enjoyment in learning English, especially vocabulary.

The findings of the study are expected to help English teachers whose classes are similar to the subject of the research. Yet, some adjustments would be called for if the contexts, i.e. setting and age groups, are different. To contribute further to the body of knowledge, further research on the use of songs may be conducted for learning different language aspects, such as grammar and pronunciation, and for different levels of learners.

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