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Enhancing Listening Skills with Popular Songs by Bruno Mars as The Teaching Media to English Foreign Learners

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the improvement of using songs by Bruno Mars as instructional media to enhance listening skills among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners at the senior high school level. The research employed a quantitative pre-experimental one-group pretest–posttest design involving 29 Grade X students selected through criterion-based purposive sampling. The instrument consisted of an objective listening comprehension test measuring word recognition, listening for specific information, and general comprehension. The data were analyzed using the Shapiro–Wilk normality test and a paired-sample t-test. The findings reveal a significant improvement in students' listening performance, with the mean score increasing from 60.07 in the pre-test to 80.52 in the post-test. The paired-sample t-test result ($t_{(28)} = 14.024$, $p < 0.05$) indicates a statistically significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores, confirming the effectiveness of song-based instruction. The improvement is theoretically supported by Krashen's Language Acquisition Theory, particularly the concepts of comprehensible input and affective filter, as well as bottom-up and top-down listening processes. The consistent exposure to the English in Bruno Mars songs contributed to enhanced phonological awareness and accent familiarity, which are essential components in EFL listening development. These findings suggest that accent-aligned popular songs, when integrated with structured listening activities, can serve as an effective pedagogical strategy to improve students' listening comprehension in secondary-level EFL classrooms.

Introduction

English language instruction in Indonesia at Phase E in Grade X of the senior high school level aims to equip students with the ability to communicate fluently, both orally and in writing, across various social and academic contexts (Paquette & Rieg, 2021; Rahmawati & Farida, 2020; Zhang, 2022). Ideally, the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) should be developed in a balanced manner. However, in practice, teaching and assessment activities are still predominantly focused on written skills, particularly reading

and writing. A study by (Utami & Prasetya, 2021) revealed that teachers tend to avoid listening and speaking based instruction due to limited resources and the prior curriculum's emphasis on textual content. Furthermore, the assessments used in schools remain heavily centered on multiple-choice questions, grammar structures, and reading comprehension, with little accommodation for measuring oral communication competence (Fonseca-Mora et al., 2021). (Li & Brand, 2022) also stated that students struggle to comprehend spoken English in listening tests due to a lack of intensive practice and limited exposure to authentic audio media. Furthermore, the lack of engaging listening materials contributes to low student participation in class (Sevik, 2023). Therefore, there is an urgent need to revitalize English language teaching to focus more on developing oral communication skills. One approach that has gained increasing attention is the use of authentic and engaging media, such as popular songs, as a contextual and enjoyable tool for teaching listening skills.

Oral communication in English learning consists of two primary skills: listening as a receptive skill and speaking as a productive skill. These skills are closely interconnected: listening serves as the foundational element that allows an individual to comprehend sounds, intonation, and language structures, which in turn enhances their speaking abilities. Meanwhile speaking is often considered the main skill in verbal communication, the ability to listen actively and purposefully is the crucial first step in developing oral fluency and contextual understanding (Riswandi, 2020; Siregar & Handayani, 2022). Futhermore, improving listening skills significantly aids in the accuracy and fluency of speaking, particularly for foreign language learners (Hidayati & Herlina, 2020). In the Indonesian context, where English is considered foreign language, listening instruction is of paramount importance due to the limited natural exposure to English. Students generally only receive English language input during school hours, without continued practice outside the classroom. Therefore, listening becomes an essential bridge to providing authentic exposure to English, including pronunciation, stress, and intonation, which cannot be gained through text-based learning alone (Maulina & Anugrah, 2020). For that reason, effective listening instruction not only improves comprehension but also fosters linguistic sensitivity in students towards speech patterns in the target language.

Despite being recognized as the fundamental skill in developing oral communication abilities, the implementation of listening instruction at the senior high school level in Indonesia still faces various challenges. One of the main obstacles is the limited availability of authentic and engaging audio materials, as well as the lack of teachers' competence in managing listening activities interactively (Saputra, 2021). A study by (Permana, 2020) revealed that most English teachers in secondary schools rely primarily on listening materials from standard textbooks or monotonous recordings that lack contextual relevance. Furthermore, research by (Irawati & Habibi, 2020)found that many students struggle to comprehend spoken English due to insufficient continuous practice, unfamiliar accents, and recording speeds that are not tailored to students' proficiency levels. Another common barrier is the limitation of infrastructure, such as the availability of speakers or language laboratories, which often relegates listening instruction to a supplementary activity rather than an integral part of the learning process (Ab Rashid et al., 2021). On the

other hand, students' motivation to engage in listening lessons is generally low, as the activities tend to be passive and emotionally unengaging (Nugraheni & Syafrizal, 2021).

This situation highlights that listening instruction requires special treatment that can bridge the limitations of resources, low motivation, and the lack of natural exposure to English. One approach that has proven effective and has gained considerable attention in research is the use of English-language songs as a learning medium. Popular songs not only enhance vocabulary and pronunciation exposure but also create an enjoyable and contextual learning atmosphere (Putri & Wijayanti, 2022). Songs incorporate elements of rhythm, repetition, and melody that strengthen memory retention and enable students to hear English in a more natural and expressive context (Maulina & Anugrah, 2020). Given these conditions, innovative listening teaching strategies are required, one of which is the use of popular songs, such as those by Bruno Mars, as a medium to significantly improve students' listening skills.

The use of English songs in listening instruction has proven to have a strong potential to enhance students' listening skills, particularly for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners such as senior high school students in Indonesia. Songs combine audio-linguistic and affective elements, which simultaneously stimulate both cognitive functions and emotions during the learning process. Cognitively, listening to English songs activates brain areas involved in language processing, short-term memory, and selective attention (Paquette & Rieg, 2021). Songs also reinforce vocabulary retention and sentence structures through repetition, rhythm, and melody, which are known to enhance students' phonological memory (Ludke, 2010; Marpaung & Hutagalung, 2023). Research by (Lane & Pullen, 2020)mentions the phenomenon of "song-stuck-in-the-head" or musical looping as a form of unconscious learning that accelerates the internalization of language patterns. In the context of listening instruction, this allows students to be more easily recognize sounds, intonation, and pronunciation of words in natural communicative situations.

In this context, songs by Bruno Mars exhibit phonetic characteristics that align with the target accent of English language learning. As an American singer, Bruno Mars utilizes the General American accent in almost all of his songs, with clear pronunciation and a rhythm that is easy to follow. Songs such as "Just the Way You Are," "Count on Me," or "Talking to the Moon" not only feature simple and thematic lyrics but also present an authentic accent that is representative of the English pronunciation taught in schools. Therefore, the use of Bruno Mars' songs in this study is highly appropriate for listening instruction in Indonesian high schools, as it aligns with accent standards, curricular goals, and expectations for English language learning assessments.

Although various previous studies have proven the effectiveness of using songs to improve EFL students' listening skills, there are still several research gaps that have not been extensively explored. One key gap that this study seeks to address is the lack of research that explicitly selects songs with accents that align with the target learning accent, namely the General American Accent, which is commonly used in English language instruction in high schools in Indonesia. Several prior studies have tended to use songs in a general sense, without considering the alignment of the accent in the songs with the accent targeted in the curriculum. This oversight could potentially cause confusion for students who are not yet

able to accurately distinguish variations in pronunciation. In this study, the researcher intentionally chose songs by Bruno Mars, which feature a neutral and consistent American accent, to help students recognize sound patterns, rhythm, and intonation that are aligned with the standards they are learning.

Another gap identified is the lack of research that links exposure to the American accent through songs with students' ease in understanding other language content, such as vocabulary and sentence structure. Most studies have primarily focused on motivation or affective aspects, without further exploring the connection between accent consistency and the improvement of students' linguistic absorption (Ab Rashid et al., 2021; Lestari & Rahmawati, 2022; Zhang, 2022). This study places emphasis on the accent as a phonological aid, which not only clarifies pronunciation but also helps students understand new words more naturally by becoming accustomed to hearing consistent pronunciation that aligns with curriculum expectations. The novelty of this research lies in its primary focus on repeated exposure to the General American Accent through songs, which indirectly strengthens students' phonological sensitivity and paves the way for enhanced vocabulary comprehension as well as overall listening skills. Therefore, to good this study, some research questions the us follow; 1) To what extent do students' listening skill improve before and after being taught using Bruno Mars's songs? And 2) Is there a significant difference between students' listening skill before and after being taught using Bruno Mars's songs?".

Ground Theory: Language Acquisition by Krashen

In the context of this research, Bruno Mars' songs were chosen as a medium because they feature pronunciation with the General American Accent, which aligns with the target accent for language learning in high schools, and also present everyday vocabulary that is easy to understand and repeat within a strong melody. Songs function as comprehensible input as well as a tool for lowering emotional barriers (affective filter), enabling students to absorb language structures without feeling stressed. Widyaningsih & Iswandi (2021) demonstrated that music is effective in reducing students' anxiety in listening classes, while Rahmawati & Fitriana (2020) found that songs improve concentration and acceptance of language input. Additionally, Fonseca-Mora et al. (2021) and Triana & Nurhayati (2023) confirmed that the use of songs can accelerate the acquisition of vocabulary and pronunciation in the context of foreign language learning. Therefore, the theory of language acquisition not only provides the theoretical foundation for using songs as a learning medium but also supports the urgency of selecting appropriately accented songs as an effective pedagogical intervention to improve students' listening skills in EFL classrooms.

Bottom-up and Top-down in Listening

In listening comprehension, the bottom-up and top-down processing theories explain two primary pathways the brain uses to process spoken input. The bottom-up approach focuses on processing the smallest units, such as sounds (phonemes) and words, eventually leading to the formation of complete meaning. In contrast, the top-down approach involves

background knowledge, situational context, and listener expectations in interpreting the meaning of speech (Field, 2021; Vandergrift & Goh, 2024). In practice, these processes occur simultaneously and complement each other, especially in complex listening situations like songs or spontaneous conversations. Zhang (2022) emphasizes that EFL students who rely solely on the bottom-up process without context tend to lose meaning easily, whereas those trained to use top-down processing are better able to "fill in the gaps" when faced with unfamiliar vocabulary or pronunciation. Recent research by Yusra & Kartini (2021) also shows that listening comprehension improves significantly when students are trained to recognize sounds while linking them to the situational context.

In the context of learning English as a foreign language in high schools, this theory is particularly important because students often face challenges in recognizing accents, intonation, and unfamiliar pronunciations, which are part of the bottom-up process. The use of English songs, such as those by Bruno Mars that employ the General American Accent, can be an effective medium to strengthen the bottom-up process through repetition of authentic sounds and pronunciations while simultaneously activating the top-down process through the relevant and emotional themes of the songs. (Lauder, 2021) demonstrated that songs can serve as a powerful cognitive bridge because rhythm and melody help students identify sentence structures and recognize meaning. This is reinforced by findings from Kusuma et al. (2021), who noted that students grasp lyrics more quickly when the song's cultural context is familiar, such as themes of friendship or teenage love. Furthermore, (Krashen, 1985; Kusuma et al., 2021) concluded that songs with accents matching the target learning accent help reduce cognitive load in the decoding process, allowing students to focus more on the overall meaning. Thus, the bottom-up and top-down theories provide a relevant framework in supporting the use of songs as a tool to enhance listening skills in a comprehensive and contextual manner.

Phonological Awareness & Accent Familiarity

Phonological awareness refers to an individual's ability to recognize and manipulate the sound structure of language, including phonemes, syllables, intonation, word stress, and connected speech. In the context of foreign language learning, phonological awareness is a crucial foundation for listening skills, as students must be able to differentiate and recognize sounds in fast, often unclear speech that is frequently influenced by the speaker's accent (Field, 2021; Fitria, 2023). Research by Lane & Pullen (2020) highlights that low phonological awareness leads to difficulties in understanding words spoken naturally, especially when sounds are reduced (reduced forms) or phonetically connected. On the other hand, accent familiarity refers to a person's level of exposure to a particular type of pronunciation in the target language, such as American, British, or other accents. The more frequently students are exposed to a specific accent, the higher their accuracy in processing spoken input consistent with that accent (Alqahtani, 2021; Eken, 2020).

In the context of this study, the use of Bruno Mars' songs, which employ the General American Accent, directly supports the enhancement of students' phonological awareness while increasing their familiarity with the accent targeted in English language learning in

high schools. Songs, as rhythmic auditory media, allow students to recognize pronunciation, word stress, intonation, and rhythm in an authentic context, while also providing an opportunity to hear consistent and standard pronunciation. Research by Utami & Prasetya (2021) shows that students who are frequently exposed to American accents through songs and films have a higher listening comprehension than those who are not accustomed to hearing input with a uniform accent. Furthermore, Maulina & Anugrah (2020) concluded that songs accelerate the mastery of specific sounds in English due to their repetitive lyric structures and easy-to-follow tempo. This is also supported by findings from Alqahtani (2021), who stated that familiarity with the target accent has a positive effect on listening performance in academic exams. Thus, the theories of phonological awareness and accent familiarity are highly relevant in explaining how songs with a matching accent can enhance students' phonological sensitivity and accelerate oral language acquisition, particularly in the EFL context such as in Indonesia.

Research Methods

This study employs a quantitative experimental approach with a pre-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design, aiming to determine the effect of song-based media on improving students' listening skills. The design involves one group that undergoes a pre-test, followed by treatment (intervention), and concludes with a post-test. This design is suitable for research contexts where a control group is not feasible but there is still a desire to measure the impact of the intervention quantitatively (Creswell, 2014).

The experimental process begins with a pre-test to measure students' initial ability to understand spoken English. The test includes aspects of listening for gist, listening for specific information, and vocabulary recognition. After the pre-test, students undergo treatment for three days of sessions per week. Each session lasts 40 minutes, during which students listen to two selected songs by Bruno Mars, chosen for their clear pronunciation and alignment with the General American Accent. The song materials include "Count on Me," "Just the Way You Are," "Talking to the Moon," and "Grenade." Each session consists of listening to the songs, identifying key words, discussing the meaning of the lyrics, completing gap-filling exercises, and responding to the song content both orally and in writing. This strategy is designed based on the principles of comprehensible input (Krashen, 1985) and dual-channel processing (Mayer, 2022), integrating phonological, semantic, and affective aspects of foreign language learning.

Research Participants

The population for this study consists of all Grade X students at Private Islamic High School for the 2024/2025 academic year, with a total of 146 students across 4 classes. Each class contains an average of 36–37 students. Sampling was conducted using criterion-based purposive sampling, where selection was made based on specific criteria established by the researcher. All students in the population initially took a diagnostic test to assess their listening skills. From these results, 29 of 146 students were chosen who scored within the range of 65 to 75 from pre-test. This range was set as the threshold for intermediate-level

proficiency, which is still amenable to improvement through intervention. The criterion was chosen to ensure that the observed changes during the experiment are genuinely the result of the treatment, rather than from extreme initial ability differences.

Instruments

The primary instrument used in this study was an audio-based listening comprehension test designed to measure students' listening skills objectively. The test focused on three aspects of listening: word recognition, listening for specific information, and general comprehension. It consisted of three sections: (1) keyword recognition tasks in which students identified the correct words they heard from pairs of similar-sounding options, (2) gap-filling exercises requiring students to complete missing words from selected song lyrics based on the audio input, and (3) multiple-choice comprehension questions assessing students' understanding of the main ideas and detailed information presented in the songs.

All items were objective and scored dichotomously (1 for correct and 0 for incorrect) to ensure scoring reliability and minimize subjectivity. Unlike traditional dictation or translation tasks, this instrument measured listening comprehension only without involving writing or translation skills that might interfere with the construct being assessed. The test was administered as both a pre-test and a post-test using different songs with comparable levels of difficulty. Furthermore, the instrument was validated by two experts, including an English teacher, to ensure content validity, clarity of instructions, and appropriateness of difficulty level. Through this design, the study aimed to quantitatively determine the effectiveness of song-based media in improving EFL students' listening comprehension at the senior high school level.

Data and analysis

After completing the treatment sessions, a post-test is administered with the same level of difficulty and question format as the pre-test. The data from the pre-test and post-test are analyzed using SPSS version 26 software. The first step involves conducting a Shapiro-Wilk normality test to assess the data distribution. If the data are normally distributed, a Paired Sample T-Test is performed to determine the difference in mean scores between the pre-test and post-test. If the data are not normally distributed, the alternative Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test is used as a non-parametric test. Additionally, a homogeneity test using Levene's Test is performed to ensure the consistency of variance across the data.

Findings

The Students' Listening Skill Before And After Taught by Bruno Mars's Songs

The results of the study indicate a difference in students' listening skills scores between the pre-test and post-test. This difference can be observed in Table 1

The descriptive statistics of the pre-test scores show that 29 students participated in the initial measurement. The minimum score obtained was 50, while the maximum score reached 75, resulting in a score range of 25 points. The mean score of the pre-test was 60.07

indicating that most students were clustered around the intermediate level of listening proficiency prior to the treatment. In addition, the standard deviation of 8.506 demonstrates relatively low score dispersion, suggesting that the students' abilities were fairly homogeneous with only slight variations among individuals. This narrow spread of scores reflects a relatively similar baseline competence across participants before the instructional intervention was implemented.

Table 1 Descriptive of Test Result

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-test	29	50	75	60.07	8.506
Post-test	29	60	100	80.52	11.752

According to table 1, the post-test results reveal noticeable changes in students' performance. With the same number of participants, the minimum score increased to 60 and the maximum score rose substantially to 100, producing a wider range of 40 points. The mean score improved to 80.52, which is considerably higher than the pre-test mean. Furthermore, the standard deviation increased to 11.752, indicating greater variability in students' outcomes after the treatment, as some students achieved moderate gains while others showed more substantial improvements. The upward shift in minimum, maximum, and mean scores, accompanied by the broader distribution, illustrates that students' listening performance developed to a higher level following the instructional process.

Significant Different Between Students' Listening Skill Before And After Taught By Bruno Mars's Songs As English Learning Media

Before proceeding with hypothesis testing, the researcher first determined the appropriate statistical test to analyze the difference between pre-test and post-test scores either a parametric test (Paired Sample t-test) or a non-parametric alternative (Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test). Since the use of a parametric test requires the assumption of normal distribution, a normality test was conducted on the data. The results of this test are displayed in Table 2 and serve as the basis for selecting the most suitable method for further statistical analysis.

Table 2 Result of Normality Test

	Pre-test for Normality	Post-test for Normality
N	29	29
Test Statistic	0.142	0.131
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.141[c]	0.200[c]

As presented in Table 2, the results of the normality test using the Shapiro–Wilk test to examine whether the pre-test and post-test scores were normally distributed. The results show that the pre-test scores obtained a significance value of 0.141, while the post-test scores yielded a significance value of 0.200. Since both significance values are higher than the alpha level of 0.05 ($p > 0.05$), the data distribution for both sets of scores can be considered normal. This indicates that the assumption of normality has been satisfied, meaning that the score differences are approximately normally distributed across

participants. Therefore, the data meet the requirements for parametric statistical analysis, allowing the hypothesis testing to be appropriately conducted using a paired-sample t-test.

Table 3 Result of Paired Sample T-Test

Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
			Lower	Upper			
18.448	7.084	1.315	15.754	21.143	14.024	28	0.000

Table 3 presents the results of the paired-sample t-test comparing the pre-test and post-test scores of 29 students. The descriptive statistics indicate that the mean score increased 18.448 points. The standard deviation of the difference scores was 7.084, reflecting moderate variability in the magnitude of students' improvement. The inferential analysis produced a t-value of 14.024 with 28 degrees of freedom (df = 28). Furthermore, the Sig. (2-tailed) value obtained was 0.000. These quantitative indicators demonstrate a considerable upward shift in students' listening performance after the instructional treatment.

Discussion

The effectiveness of this intervention can be explained through the framework of Language Acquisition Theory proposed by Stephen Krashen, particularly the concepts of comprehensible input and the affective filter. Songs provide linguistic input that is slightly above learners' current proficiency level, yet remains understandable through contextual lyrics and repetition (Agustina & Cahyono, 2017). The melodic structure and recurring patterns enable students to process input naturally without the performance pressure commonly associated with direct oral testing. A more relaxed emotional state during music-based learning contributes to lowering the affective filter, thereby facilitating more optimal language internalization (Nguyen & Le, 2020). The significant score improvement reflects students' enhanced ability to absorb phonological and lexical patterns when input is delivered in an enjoyable format. Previous research has also demonstrated that music-based media reduce anxiety in listening classes and improve vocabulary retention (Chen & Chen, 2021; Dewi, 2021). The alignment between empirical findings and theoretical foundations strengthens the argument that the intervention operated through natural language acquisition mechanisms.

The effectiveness is also associated with the simultaneous activation of bottom-up and top-down processes in listening comprehension. Songs train students to recognize minimal sound units such as phonemes, word stress, and connected speech, which constitute the core of bottom-up processing. At the same time, contextual song themes enable learners to activate prior knowledge schemata in interpreting meaning through top-down processing. The integration of these two processes creates a more comprehensive cognitive engagement compared to monotonous listening recordings (Field, 2021). The substantial increase in mean scores indicates that students were not merely identifying isolated words but were also able to comprehend overall messages (Zhang, 2022). This finding is consistent with contemporary studies suggesting that listening success improves when learners combine

phonological decoding with contextual meaning prediction. Songs provide a rich training environment for both processing pathways. The consistent improvement pattern among most participants reflects the optimization of these dual mechanisms in instructional practice.

Another factor explaining the intervention's effectiveness is the enhancement of students' phonological awareness. Repeated exposure to sound patterns in songs assists learners in distinguishing phonemic contrasts that were previously difficult to recognize (Lane & Pullen, 2020). Stable rhythm and intonation facilitate the identification of word stress and sentence patterns. This competence is particularly crucial in EFL contexts where exposure to English outside the classroom is limited (Utami & Prasetya, 2021). The increased post-test scores in word recognition tasks indicate improvement in auditory decoding stages. Applied phonology literature emphasizes that strong phonological awareness correlates positively with academic listening performance. Songs with controlled tempo allow students to process sounds without excessive cognitive burden (Ab Rashid et al., 2021). The statistically significant improvement measured in this study reflects the development of students' phonological sensitivity in a tangible manner.

Accent suitability in the selected songs also contributed to instructional effectiveness. Songs by Bruno Mars employ a General American accent that aligns with pronunciation standards commonly taught in Indonesian secondary schools. Accent consistency reduces potential confusion arising from unfamiliar phonetic variations. Research on accent familiarity indicates that consistent exposure to a particular accent enhances speech processing accuracy. The increase in minimum scores from 50 to 60 suggests that even students with lower initial proficiency benefited from this uniformity. The use of curriculum-aligned pronunciation patterns accelerates students' adaptation to expected academic evaluation standards. Such phonological stability enables learners to allocate cognitive resources toward meaning construction rather than mere sound recognition. The significant hypothesis test results reflect the strategic contribution of selecting accent-appropriate materials.

The affective dimension also plays a substantial role in explaining why the intervention was effective. Music inherently elicits positive emotional responses that increase student motivation and engagement. Higher engagement leads to improved selective attention during listening activities. Dual-channel processing theory posits that information processed simultaneously through auditory and emotional channels has a greater likelihood of retention (Marpaung & Hutagalung, 2023). The considerable increase in mean scores indicates that students not only heard the input but processed and stored it more deeply. Previous pedagogical studies suggest that enjoyable learning environments enhance focus duration and comprehension quality (Paquette & Rieg, 2021). Activities such as gap-filling and lyric discussions reinforced active engagement with linguistic input. The empirical data from this research reflect the positive impact of integrating cognitive and affective components in listening instruction.

Lyric repetition in songs contributes to strengthening short-term memory and facilitating transfer to long-term memory. Natural repetition patterns allow students to recognize phrases automatically without repeated explicit analysis. This phenomenon is often associated with the musical looping effect, which accelerates the internalization of language structures (Maulina & Anugrah, 2020). Significant improvement in general comprehension scores indicates increased familiarity with recurring sentence patterns and vocabulary. Language acquisition literature highlights frequency of exposure as a primary determinant in mastering linguistic forms. Songs provide such frequency in a non-monotonous format (Riswandi, 2020). The high t-value obtained in statistical testing illustrates that musical repetition contributed consistently to participant improvement. This mechanism explains why song-based interventions produce strongly measurable outcomes.

The identified effectiveness also reflects the alignment between instrument design and intervention objectives. The test components focusing on word recognition, specific information, and general comprehension corresponded directly with the skills trained during treatment sessions. This alignment ensured that improvements were measured accurately and objectively. Greater variability in post-test scores indicates that some students exceeded baseline expectations and achieved higher comprehension levels. Such a pattern is consistent with theoretical perspectives suggesting that authentic interventions facilitate differentiated achievement based on individual readiness. The statistical significance obtained demonstrates that the observed changes were not temporary fluctuations but the result of systematic instructional processes. The integration of language acquisition theory, cognitive processing models, and phonological awareness constructs positions song-based instruction as a robust pedagogical strategy in secondary-level EFL contexts.

This study is consistent with previous research affirming the effectiveness of songs in improving listening skills within EFL settings. Research conducted by (Fonseca-Mora et al., 2021) found that exposure to English songs significantly enhanced phonemic discrimination and vocabulary retention among adolescent learners. These findings parallel the 18.448-point mean increase observed in this study, particularly in word recognition and general comprehension components. (Ludke, 2010) also reported that learners exposed to song-based instruction demonstrated higher phrase reproduction accuracy compared to non-musical groups. The similarity in improvement patterns indicates that rhythmic repetition and auditory-melodic processing mechanisms operate consistently across foreign language contexts. Empirical investigations in Southeast Asian educational settings further confirm that song-based media increase both motivation and statistically significant listening performance. The coherence between this study's quantitative outcomes and prior empirical evidence reinforces the external validity of songs as effective pedagogical interventions for secondary-level EFL learners.

Conversely, some studies report more moderate findings regarding the effectiveness of songs in listening instruction. Research by (Zhang, 2022) indicates that listening improvement is not always statistically significant when songs are implemented without complementary strategies such as explicit phonological focus or predictive meaning

exercises. The study emphasizes that complex lyrics and rapid tempo may increase cognitive load, thereby hindering comprehension among lower-proficiency learners. These differing results may be attributed to variations in research design, particularly in material selection and accent control. Songs that do not align with curricular accent targets may generate phonological interference and perceptual confusion. This study mitigated such limitations by selecting songs with a consistent General American accent and incorporating structured activities such as gap-filling and meaning discussion. Methodological distinctions of this nature explain why the present research yielded strong statistical significance while other studies reported more limited effects in different contexts.

Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the use of popular songs by Bruno Mars as instructional media significantly improves students' listening skills in the EFL classroom. Statistical analysis revealed a substantial increase in mean scores from pre-test to post-test, supported by a highly significant paired-sample t-test result. These outcomes confirm that song-based instruction is not only engaging but also pedagogically effective in enhancing word recognition, specific information retrieval, and overall comprehension. This improvement is explained through Krashen's Language Acquisition Theory, particularly the principles of comprehensible input and affective filter reduction, as well as through bottom-up and top-down processing mechanisms. The consistent use of General American accent songs strengthened students' phonological awareness and accent familiarity both crucial components in EFL listening development.

This research provides empirical evidence that accent-aligned song selection combined with structured listening activities can yield statistically measurable improvements in secondary learners' listening proficiency. Unlike studies focused primarily on motivation, this study quantitatively confirms the instructional impact of songs on specific listening sub-skills. Teachers are encouraged to integrate carefully selected English songs into listening instruction to provide authentic and engaging language exposure. Nevertheless, findings should be interpreted with caution. The pre-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design without a control group limits causal generalization. The sample was relatively small and drawn from a single institution, restricting external validity. The short intervention period also makes it difficult to assess long-term retention. While results are promising, broader generalizations to different contexts should be approached carefully.

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