FROM LYRICS TO LEARNING: THE EFFECT OF SONGS ON STUDENTS' MOTIVATION TO LEARN ENGLISH

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Abstract: The research aims to investigate the impact of popular English songs on students' motivation to learn English at School X in Jombang using a quasi-experimental design. This study focuses on implementing English popular songs (EPS) popular in the last 15 years and remain popular today. A sample of 42 students from two different classes participated in the study. Data were gathered using a questionnaire and analyzed statistically with SPSS version 20. The findings indicate that students' motivation to learn English was moderate, based on their responses to the Likert scale questionnaire. Furthermore, Spearman's rank correlation test found a moderate correlation between students' motivation and the use of EPS. In light of these findings, using EPS does not significantly affect students' motivation. However, it was noted that students' learning experiences, a component of the L2 Motivational Self System, improved. Additionally, a Chi-square test of independence examined the relationship between the frequency of students listening to EPS and their motivation. The results suggest that students who frequently listen to English songs tend to have higher motivation. This study provides insights into the potential benefits of incorporating popular music into English language learning to enhance student engagement and motivation.

Keywords: motivation, English songs, L2 learning experiences

INTRODUCTION

Teaching involves imparting students' knowledge, skills, and behaviors as the curriculum prescribes (Rai et al. 2022). For successful learning activities, every teacher must influence students through instruction. Many teachers strive to teach English effectively in the classroom, but it is common for students to exhibit negative behaviors, such as making noise and disrupting learning activities. Teachers can minimize these behaviors by motivating students in the classroom. According to Jefiza (2017), motivation is the key to learning English successfully. There is a significant relationship between learning and motivation.

Students' motivation plays a crucial role in learning English. Strong learning motivation encourages students to begin their studies with a positive mindset, master

English with a clear purpose and desire, and eventually achieve higher grades. Teachers can explore creative ways to motivate students to learn language. For example, they can use English popular songs to boost students' motivation. Songs are flexible and effective instructional tools for various reasons and can be used to achieve multiple goals. Additionally, songs are regarded as an active learning approach that performs exceptionally well in teaching foreign languages.

Cheung (2001) states that using media is essential to effective teaching and learning because it provides students with meaningful and tangible experiences. Popular songs are often listened to by students and can uniquely connect language learning with students' everyday experiences. Students frequently encounter songs in shopping centers, on public transportation, and in their own homes. They often have extensive playlists of popular songs on their smartphones. Therefore, integrating popular songs into the classroom is feasible and familiar to them. In the global context of English language use, popular songs serve as both entertainment and a valuable tool for language learning in the classroom (Al-Smadi 2020). English songs can enhance students' language skills, linguistic knowledge, pronunciation, and cultural awareness.

According to Diakou (2013), songs can create positive emotions for students and reduce anxiety by fostering an enjoyable environment, boosting motivation, and reflecting cultural features. Music, particularly popular songs, plays an important role in many people's everyday lives. Music is beneficial to students' mental health. When teachers play songs in the classroom, students become more focused and less anxious. Using songs in the classroom helps students acquire new vocabulary and makes English lessons more engaging. Songs encourage students to feel more interested and engaged in the English classroom because their rhythm and music create a fun learning environment.

According to Chen and Chen (2009), motivating students to study has long been a critical challenge for language educators and practitioners. Among all the variables influencing learning motivation, teaching materials are considered the most important components in creating a successful teaching and learning experience. It is widely acknowledged that motivation is key to successfully learning a language. Increasing students' enthusiasm for learning and developing their interest in studies are the primary goals of English teaching. Chen and Chen (2009) demonstrated that using popular English songs as teaching materials significantly improved students' interest in learning English and willingness to study. The study concluded that most students enjoyed and appreciated learning English through popular songs. Since students were interested in the lyrics and enjoyed singing them, they were eager to discuss the songs or learn the vocabulary and sentence structures of the lyrics. English popular songs can be used to practice the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

On the other hand, Rai et al. (2022) found that using motivating strategies in the classroom increases students' enthusiasm and interest in learning, as well as the effectiveness and success of the teacher-student relationship. Motivating techniques make classroom activities more successful and productive, creating a positive environment that helps achieve learning goals. Listening to English music can be interesting and enjoyable, increasing students' stamina, reducing anxiety, and enhancing their involvement in learning. Parlakian (2010) stated that using songs allows students to develop themselves and their feelings, helping them make sense of and solve problems and discover the world around them.

While prior studies have established the importance of motivation in language learning and highlighted the potential benefits of using songs as a teaching tool, these studies often focus on general educational settings or contexts outside Indonesia. Additionally, the existing research tends to treat motivation and using songs as separate areas of study without exploring their interaction in depth. There remains a significant gap in understanding how English popular songs specifically influence students' motivation within Indonesian high schools' unique cultural, linguistic, and educational

contexts. This study addresses this gap by examining the interplay between popular English songs and student motivation, offering culturally and contextually relevant insights into Indonesian high school education.

Based on the background above, it is clear that using songs can help students learn English effectively. However, the effectiveness of using English popular songs to motivate students is still uncertain. Therefore, this research aims to investigate whether popular songs can improve students' motivation to learn English as a foreign language in the context of high school education in Indonesia. The research questions are: (1) How motivated are the students to learn English? and (2) Does the use of popular English songs affect students' motivation to learn English?

LITERATURE REVIEW
L2 Learning Motivation
Motivation is a crucial element in the learning process. It helps achieve the objectives of learning and ensures the process is effective. Without motivation, achieving learning goals becomes challenging. According to Alizadeh (2016), motivation can be defined as one's direction toward behavior or what causes a person to want to repeat a behavior and vice versa. A constellation of closely related ideas, perceptions, values, interests, and behavior forms motivation. Motivated students tend to be enthusiastic and inspired to excel in their English studies. Motivation is essential because learning activities would be impossible to carry out without it. It determines how much effort students put into learning. By understanding students' motivation, teachers can better tailor their instruction to meet students' interests and needs.

Hayikaleng et al. (2016) note that motivation can be intrinsic or extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation in language acquisition is the motivation to engage in an activity because it is interesting and enjoyable. Students driven by intrinsic motivation participate in learning activities for the satisfaction and pleasure of the activity. Adara and Farid (2022) noted that low intrinsic motivation can be considered among factors that demotivate students' learning. On the other hand, extrinsic motivation involves performing a behavior to avoid punishment or receive a reward, such as good grades or an increased salary. In this context, students learn English due to external factors like job opportunities or examination requirements.

For some language learners, the initial motivation to learn a language comes from engaging successfully with the language-learning process rather than from internal self-images. Dörnyei (2009) proposed the L2 Motivational Self System, which comprises: (1) Ideal L2 Self representing the person one wishes to become who speaks an L2. It is a powerful motivator because it drives individuals to bridge the gap between their current and ideal selves. Traditional integrative and internalized instrumental motives typically fall under this component; (2) Ought-to L2 Self, which relates to the qualities one believes one should possess to meet expectations and avoid negative outcomes; and (3) L2 Learning Experience, which focuses on contextualized motivations associated with the current learning environment, such as the influence of the instructor, curriculum, peer group, and achievement experiences.

The Role of Songs in English Language Teaching (ELT)
Using songs in English Language Teaching (ELT) has several benefits for students' learning. Songs have been widely incorporated into various courses and educational areas. Some songs are even believed to stimulate the brain while it processes information, making it easier for that knowledge to enter long-term memory (Satyan 2020). Although using songs in the classroom is not a new practice, they are considered an effective tool for teaching foreign languages. Music can inspire, calm, captivate, and adapt to students' perceptions more effectively than other instructional methods.

When incorporating songs into ELT, choosing those that match the learning theme or topic discussed in class is essential. The songs should be appropriate for the students'

ages and interests. Introducing the song's context, such as information about the singer or band, the song's background, or the message conveyed, can help students connect with the material. Visual media, such as music videos or related visuals, can further enhance students' understanding of the song's context. Khidirova and Nashirova (2021, 82) highlight several benefits of using popular songs in ELT, which are: (1) Songs introduce new vocabulary; (2) Songs help activate known vocabulary by presenting it in unfamiliar contextual settings; (3) Songs also can improve pronunciation skills, and (4) Songs provide a chance for students to unwind and take a break from regular learning tasks. Popular songs, especially those teenagers like, can engage students in language learning by enhancing vocabulary, listening comprehension, idiomatic expressions, and pronunciation. Examples of popular songs include "One Time" by Justin Bieber (2009), "Just the Way You Are" by Bruno Mars (2010), and "Ghost" by Justin Bieber (2021). These songs have fascinating rhythms and melodies that keep listeners engaged, making them effective tools for language learning.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research method used is quantitative, involving the collection of numerical data analyzed using statistical methods (Dörnyei 2007). The survey employed a questionnaire and analyzed data using SPSS (Statistical Program for Social Science). The study utilized a quasi-experimental design, an experiment where subjects were not randomly assigned. Specifically, a quasi-experimental two-group design was used to determine the cause and effect between the independent variable (the use of English popular songs) and the dependent variables (students' motivation and L2 learning experiences).

The research included two groups: an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group received the new treatment of motivating students with English popular songs, while the control group did not. Observations and analyses were conducted through tests. Additionally, the communicative language teaching (CLT) method was used in both groups. According to Ho (2020), CLT emphasizes large-scale input/output language learning and promotes learner-centered, dynamic, and active learning.

The population was all 11th-grade students at one school in Jombang East Java, Indonesia. The sample for this study included two classes chosen to represent a variety of backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. A purposive sampling strategy was employed to avoid the randomness of typical sampling methods and ensure the inclusion of specific types of cases or individuals relevant to the research study (Campbell et al. 2020). According to Etikan (2016), purposive sampling is "used to select respondents that are most likely to yield appropriate and useful information" (317), and it helps to identify and choose cases that will make the best use of limited research resources. Purposive sampling involves a deliberate selection process to ensure that the chosen respondents meet the criteria for inclusion. This non-random sampling method allows the researcher to identify individuals with specific characteristics that align with the study's objectives, thereby providing valuable and targeted insights.

A questionnaire was adopted to determine whether popular English songs can motivate students to learn English. Two types of questionnaires were used: one for the pre-test and another for the post-test. An open-ended questionnaire adapted from Farid and Lamb (2020) was used to collect data. The research utilized both open-ended and close-ended questionnaires to gather comprehensive data. The open-ended questionnaire aimed to collect detailed insights into students' attitudes and behaviors about learning English. Key items included: "Do you like English?", "Why are you learning English?", "What is your reason for studying English?", "Do you study English outside of class?", and "How often do you listen to English songs?". In addition, two types of close-ended questionnaires were administered: pre-test and post-test. These questionnaires assessed three main variables: motivation, the impact of popular English songs on motivation, and students' learning experiences. For the experimental group, the

questionnaire focused on motivation, L2 learning experiences, and the use of English popular songs. In contrast, the control group's questionnaire evaluated motivation, teaching methods, and L2 learning experiences.

The study collected two types of data: (1) Student motivation levels, measured through a pre-test questionnaire administered to both the experimental and control groups and (2) The effect of English popular songs on students' motivation, measured through a post-test in the experimental group. The experimental group consisted of 22 students from 42 total samples in both groups. The pre-test provided baseline data on students' initial motivation levels before treatment. At the same time, the post-test captured the changes in motivation after the experimental group was exposed to three selected English popular songs as part of the treatment.

Data was collected using a structured questionnaire administered in two phases: pre-test and post-test. The pre-test was designed to assess the baseline motivation levels of students in both the experimental and control groups. After the treatment, which involved using three popular English songs in the experimental group, a post-test questionnaire was administered to the same students to measure any changes in their motivation levels. To ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data, students were given clear instructions on how to complete the questionnaires, and efforts were made to eliminate any potential biases. The anonymity and confidentiality of student responses were also emphasized to encourage honest feedback.

The analysis of the collected data involved both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize and describe the data, providing insights into students' perceptions of using songs and their motivation levels before and after the treatment. These statistics helped to highlight trends and patterns within the data. For inferential statistics, paired sample T-tests were employed to compare the pre-test and post-test results within the experimental group. While, independent T-tests were used to compare the results between the experimental and control groups. The statistical analysis was performed using SPSS version 20, which allowed for rigorous testing of hypotheses and drawing conclusions that could be generalized to the broader population. These methods ensured that the study's findings were statistically significant and reliable.

FINDINGS
Students' Motivation before Treatment
Analysis of the pre-treatment data reveals that students' motivation levels were moderately high in both groups. The experimental group had a mean motivation score of 3.11, while the control group had a slightly higher mean of 3.32. This indicates a moderate level of motivation across both groups. Table 4.1 provides the descriptive statistics, including mean values and standard deviations (SD), for motivation to learn English in each group. The experimental group exhibited a higher standard deviation of 0.88, suggesting considerable response variation, with scores ranging from 1.0 to 5.0. This variation indicates that some students reported very low motivation while others reported very high motivation. Similarly, the control group had a standard deviation of 0.71, with scores ranging from 2.3 to 4.8, reflecting a similar range of motivation levels among its students.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Students' Motivation before Treatments

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Experimental	22	3.11	0.88
Control	20	3.32	0.71

Despite the observed differences in mean motivation scores between the two groups, an independent sample t-test revealed no significant difference. This finding suggests that the intervention, while potentially impactful for individual students, may not have led to a statistically significant shift in motivation at the group level. One possible explanation for this result could be the relatively small sample size, which may have limited the statistical power to detect subtle effects. Additionally, variations in external factors such as prior exposure to English songs, individual learning preferences, or differences in teaching methods across classrooms might have influenced the outcomes. These non-significant findings highlight the complexity of measuring motivational changes in educational settings and suggest that while popular English songs may have a role in language learning, their effect on motivation might require longer-term exposure or complementary teaching strategies to achieve a measurable impact. Future research could explore these possibilities by employing larger sample sizes, longitudinal designs, or examining additional contextual factors influencing motivation. The p-value of 0.47 indicates that the difference in motivation levels between the experimental and control groups was not statistically significant. Therefore, the initial motivation levels were comparable across both groups before the treatment was implemented (see Table 2 below).

Table 2: Independent Sample T-test

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig.
Experimental	22	3.11	0.88	0.47
Control	20	3.32	0.71	

The Impact of Popular English Songs on Students' Motivation and L2 Learning Experiences

To evaluate the impact of popular English songs on students' motivation, a Spearman rank correlation was conducted. The correlation coefficient between students' motivation and the use of English popular songs was 0.52, indicating a moderate positive correlation. This suggests that incorporating popular English songs in teaching tends to enhance students' motivation. The significant correlation ($p < 0.05$) underscores the positive relationship between the use of English popular songs and increased motivation.

Table 3: Spearman's Rank Correlation

		Motivation	Songs	Sig.
Spearman's rho	Motivation	1.00	0.52*	.01
	Use of Songs	0.52*	1.00	

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Although the t-test did not reveal a significant difference in motivation before and after the treatments, the Chi-Square test of independence indicated that students who frequently listen to popular English songs tend to have higher motivation than those who listen infrequently. This finding suggests frequent exposure to English songs outside the classroom may create a more immersive and enjoyable language-learning environment, fostering greater intrinsic motivation. Regular exposure to English lyrics could also

increase familiarity with the language, making it less intimidating and more engaging for students.

Moreover, students who listen to English songs more often may already have a personal interest in the language or a positive attitude toward learning it, which could enhance their baseline motivation. In contrast, infrequent listeners may lack this prior engagement, which might explain the observed difference in motivation levels. These results highlight the potential role of extracurricular exposure to English in enhancing student motivation and suggest that integrating such materials into formal instruction could be particularly beneficial for less frequent listeners. This result is evident from the Chi-Square test, with a Likelihood Ratio p-value of 0.05, suggesting a significant association between the frequency of listening to English songs and increased motivation.

The statistical analysis above revealed no significant difference in students' motivation between the pre-test and post-test after the treatment involving English popular songs. However, a Chi-Square test examining the frequency of students listening to popular English songs showed a significant relationship (x^2 (1, N = 42) = ?, p = 0.0). This suggests that students who listen to popular English songs more frequently tend to be more motivated than those who listen infrequently. In other words, students who rarely or never listen to popular English songs generally exhibit lower motivation compared to those who enjoy listening to them.

Additional findings from the research indicate that while English popular songs may not directly impact motivation, they positively influence students' learning experiences. The data suggest that exposure to English through popular music enhances language acquisition and overall engagement with the material. Integrating popular music into language learning creates a more enjoyable and relatable environment, which in turn can increase students' interest and participation in their studies.

Results from the Open-Ended Questionnaire

The open-ended questionnaire provided insights into students' motivations and frequency of listening to English songs. The responses are summarized in the figure below.
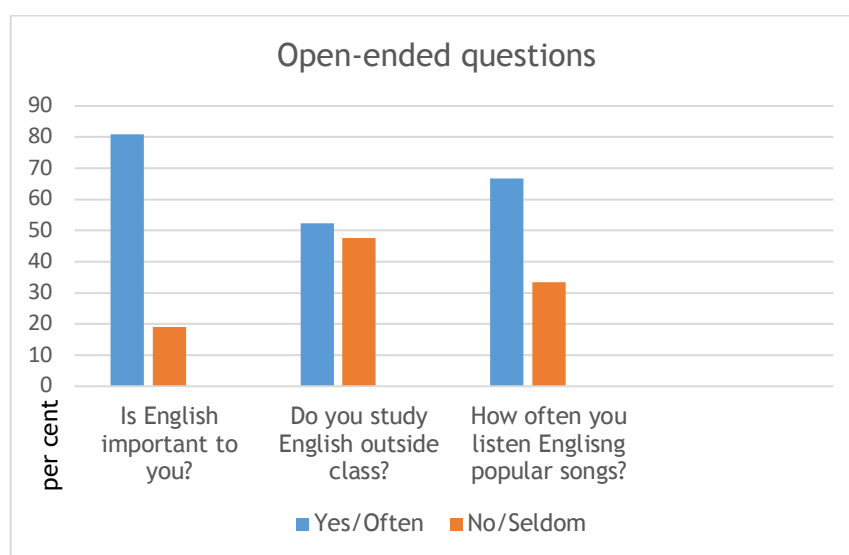

Figure 1: Results from the Open-Ended Questionnaire

Figure 1 reveals that 80.95% of students (34 out of 42) consider learning English important. This reflects their recognition of the value of English as an international language applicable in various fields, including business, education, and technology.

Learning English enhances communication, knowledge, creativity, and critical thinking skills. Additionally, acquiring a second language broadens students' perspectives, helping them better understand other languages and cultures.

The data also indicate that 22 students (52%) engage in learning English outside of class, often using resources such as dormitory study sessions and the Internet. Furthermore, 28 students (67%) frequently listen to English songs, which they find both enjoyable and beneficial for vocabulary development. Many of these students listen to English songs during free periods or breaks between classes, highlighting the role of music in making the learning process more engaging and effective.

DISCUSSIONS

This research found that students' motivation to learn English was generally moderate. This level of motivation aligns with previous studies, such as Kosterelioglu and Kosterelioglu (2015), who reported a moderate level of motivation among high school students in the Turkish context. However, it contrasts with Farid and Lamb's (2020) study, which found higher motivation levels among similar student demographics. The difference in findings may reflect differences in study context or participant characteristics, as outlined by Dörnyei (2009).

The current study highlights that students are primarily motivated by intrinsic factors, such as the desire to enhance their knowledge. This intrinsic motivation is consistent with Ulfa and Bania (2019), who identified personal goals as significant motivators for English language learners. Achmad et al. (2016) also support this, noting that students in Aceh were more intrinsically than extrinsically motivated. These findings suggest that personal academic goals and interests are pivotal in sustaining students' motivation to learn English.

The study observed a moderate impact on students' motivation regarding the use of English popular songs, although the change was not statistically significant. This contrasts with Al-Smadi (2020), who reported a significant increase in motivation among younger learners exposed to English songs. The age difference may account for this discrepancy; younger students often find songs more engaging, as noted by Nikolov (1999). The current study's older participants might not experience the same level of motivational boost from songs.

Despite the lack of a significant direct impact on motivation, the chi-square test revealed that students who frequently listen to English songs tend to have higher motivation. This finding suggests that regular exposure to English popular songs could potentially enhance motivation over time. While the songs were used only three times a week in this study, extending this practice could offer more substantial benefits. Additionally, popular English songs significantly enhanced students' L2 learning experiences, which aligns with Dörnyei's (2009) L2 Motivational Self System. Even though the songs did not directly affect motivation, they contributed positively to the learning environment, making it more engaging and enjoyable. The enhanced learning experience may indirectly support sustained motivation.

The comparison between the experimental group, which used popular English songs, and the control group, which engaged in conventional games, revealed that both methods produced similar motivation levels. However, students in both groups reported positive learning experiences, indicating that the instructional approaches effectively maintained their engagement. Specifically, the game-based learning approach was highly enjoyable, fostering interaction and participation. In contrast, using popular English songs provided a relatable and authentic context for language exposure, enriching students' understanding of idiomatic expressions, pronunciation, and real-world English usage.

These findings align with previous research emphasizing the importance of interactive and authentic materials in second language (L2) learning. Similar to these studies, the present research suggests that diverse instructional methods cater to

different aspects of the learning experience: games may drive short-term engagement, while songs contribute to language exposure and comprehension over time.

While popular English songs alone may not serve as a primary motivator, their integration into the curriculum can positively influence students' overall learning experience by providing meaningful and enjoyable content. This underscores the value of adopting varied instructional strategies to balance motivation and learning outcomes in English classrooms. Future research could investigate the long-term impact of these strategies and explore combinations of methods, such as integrating songs with interactive tasks, to optimize both motivation and language acquisition.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the impact of English popular songs on students' motivation and L2 learning experiences. While incorporating these songs did not significantly increase student motivation, it did enhance the overall learning experience. The moderate levels of motivation observed in this study align with some existing literature but contrast with findings from studies involving younger students, who typically find songs more engaging. The lack of a significant direct effect suggests that while popular English songs alone may not substantially boost motivation, they can contribute positively to the learning environment by making it more enjoyable and engaging.

The findings suggest that educators should integrate diverse instructional methods to foster student engagement and improve learning outcomes. Specifically, combining popular English songs with other interactive activities, such as games, could enhance motivation and learning experiences by addressing different aspects of student engagement. Furthermore, frequent use of songs tailored to students' cultural and developmental contexts could optimize their benefits by making learning more relatable and enjoyable.

However, this study has limitations, including a relatively short intervention period and a focus on a specific age group of Indonesian high school students. These constraints may limit the generalizability of the findings to other contexts or age groups. Future research should address these limitations by exploring the long-term effects of integrating songs and interactive activities on language acquisition and motivation across diverse student populations. Additionally, studies should investigate how cultural and individual factors influence the effectiveness of such methods in refining and improving language teaching practices. By connecting these findings to broader pedagogical frameworks, educators can better leverage the potential of varied instructional strategies in second-language classrooms.

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