



## Students' perceptions of adopting songs for English online learning in Indonesian tertiary education

Eka Wulandari<sup>✉1</sup>, Yuyun Putri Mandasari<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup> Poltekkes Kemenkes Malang, East Java, Indonesia

<sup>✉</sup>E-mail: [ekawulanog@gmail.com](mailto:ekawulanog@gmail.com) (corresponding author)

### ABSTRACT

The pandemic situation in the last two years has forced us to move almost all activities online, including our teaching and learning activities. This creates challenges for teachers to discover suitable techniques or media to motivate students to keep being active in online class interaction. One of the possible media that can be used is songs; a media which is already popular among the youths. This paper presented a data survey towards 107 female students aged 19-20 years old from one of the midwifery academies situated in Central Java, Indonesia. This study used an online questionnaire form. There were 18 items in the questionnaire and the data consisted of demographic data and students' perception towards the use of songs for improving their skills in English. The data were presented in the percentage data and analyzed using descriptive explanation. The result showed that the students' perception on songs as media for English online learning achieved positive perception on all items. Referring to this finding, teachers can consider using songs for English online learning in order to create an attractive and interactive online learning process.

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### Introduction

Currently, English teaching in all levels of study must be conducted online due to the pandemic situation empowering the world in the past two years. All parties involved in this line of activity must struggle very hard to cope with this situation, to make sure that all activities can still be conducted as normally as possible. Many adjustments and strategies are employed to make sure that the process can run smoothly and achieve the expected results as the target. Moving instruction online can enable the flexibility of teaching and learning anywhere, anytime, but the speed with which this move to online instruction is

expected to happen is unprecedented and staggering (Hodges, Moore, Lockee, Trust, & Bond, 2020).

One of the challenges faced by English teachers along these days is to find out the best strategies to teach English using online platform by considering its unique characters. Online learning is the educational usage of technological devices, tools and the internet (Means, Toyama, Murphy, Bakia, & Jones, 2009). According to Meylani, Bitter, and Legacy (2015), an ideal online learning should use computer tutorials and online learning activities as its basic features; an interactive way must be utilized along with the multimedia elements, simulations and virtual manipulative; the learners' positive attitudes must be maintained along the online learning process; provides varieties of learning practices; online quizzes and feedback must still be conducted; the instruction should be adaptable and customizable; learners' reflection must be facilitated; provides scaffolding for online learning; unlimited access; interactive; encourages cooperative learning; facilitating multiple intelligences; conforms to educational standards; gives some guidelines for its implementation in various types of settings; the online and offline professional development modules should be prepared; and has high flexibility to adopt new and useful instructional paradigms.

Not only taking those characteristics into account, Ramdhan, Nasihudin, Rohaniawati, and Pratiwi (2020) also state that there were five considerations should be taken by the teachers to select online learning platforms, they consist of: (1) instructions; (2) content; (3) motivation; (4) interpersonal relationship; and (5) mental health. Teachers should consider the possible responds from the students and the learning outcomes from employing a certain technique or media too. Both of the targets must show a balanced result to maintain students' motivation and involvement in teaching and learning activities.

According to Moreno (in Sanchez, 2017), some combination of activities which are commonly performed in daily activities can give aid to expand students' thoughts and imagination. It takes games, poems, songs, and other techniques for students' language development. By combining these activities, students will explore their creativity to express their own thoughts, ideas, and feelings about their surroundings in a form of a certain language formation. A feeling of satisfaction, relaxation, and engagement will be generated while conducting these activities due to the fact that what they are doing resembles the ones they develop in their free time.

One of the possible media that can be selected by teachers is songs. Lestary (2019) stated that songs have a broad potential for language enrichment. Through songs, teachers can introduce language features in a more attractive way and provide a more joyful atmosphere for the students to learn a language. Since most of young people nowadays love to listen to songs, then it will become a highly memorable medium for students to learn a language. Songs can also be used in any stage of a lesson and can be incorporated into many ways depending on the teachers' creativity.

In regards to the nature of the young adults, who love to listen to songs most of the time, songs will provide more exposure to English authentic materials and also some entertainment for the students to make them enjoy more in learning the language. Orlova (2003) claims that there are some advantages of implementing songs in language learning class activities, they can be used as: (1) rhythm, stress, and the intonation pattern practice; (2) vocabulary reinforcement; (3) tenses discussion with students; (4) a stimulus for class

discussion; (5) listening practice; (6) writing practice. There is no doubt that songs can be a spring board to boost students' language learning and improve their language skills.

Kusnierek (2016) states that songs are appreciated for their linguistic, pedagogical, cultural, and entertaining features which make them as precious language learning materials. The repetition feature in songs also plays an important role in language learning. A powerful combination of those learning features owned by songs will provide students with a meaningful media for learning and mastering the language.

Songs have a similarity with language as both come from the processing of sounds. They both are also used to communicate a message and share some common characteristics such as: pitch, volume, stress, tone, rhythm, and pauses (Lake in Vinyets, 2013). Harmer (2009) also argues that music can be a powerful stimulus for language learning. When inspiring song lyrics are combined with appealing rhythm of music then a strong and powerful means for learning a language will be created, as it had been proven that songs can also increase students' interest to learn and involve more in language learning process (Caicedo & Lojano, 2013).

Other studies have already been conducted and showed the results that songs can improve the quality of English teaching and learning process. Songs made students enjoy learning English, feel relaxed and motivated during the lesson (Sanchez, 2017). There is also some improvement in their English skill after given treatment with English songs (Putri, 2018). In addition, Winasih (2018) also states that the use of English songs can make students more interested in studying English, the learning process can become more effective, English skill can be increased, and students' motivation had improved too. Hadian (2015) also concludes that songs are effective to teach English and creating students' enjoyment in learning the language. To get better understanding about the use of songs for English online learning, this paper is aimed to find out the students' perspective toward the use of songs especially when it is used in the online platform.

## Method

As it has been discussed above, we can see that songs have some qualities that can be utilized by teachers to enhance students' participation and involvement in English online learning process. This media offers authentic material and exposure to students which give them more opportunity to learn the target language more. Some facts related to the strengths of songs have been elaborated and this study is aimed to find out the students' perception on the use of songs specifically English pop songs, as one of the media to teach English online during this pandemic outbreak since there are still not many research conducted related to the use of songs for English online learning.

The participants of this survey research were 107 female students aged 19-20 years old from one of the midwifery academies situated in Central Java, Indonesia. There were 25 students from Bachelor Degree Program of Midwifery and 82 students from Diploma 3 Program of Midwifery. They were spread in some regions of East Java Province (Malang Raya, Nganjuk, Jombang, Situbondo, Pasuruan, Lumajang, Trenggalek, Blitar, etc) and only a small number of them coming from some other areas outside East Java province.

A survey research design was used in this study since its purpose was find out the perception and preferences of a large group of the midwifery students on the use of songs

for English online learning in this pandemic era. As it is explained by Latief (2011, p.124), survey research is normally used to describe point of "views, attitudes, preferences, and perceptions of large population of interest" to the researcher. By implementing this type of research, a representative data of a large population can be collected, tabulated and analyzed.

The data for this research were collected through an online questionnaire which consisted of 18 items of questions which were categorized into two types of questions, they were: questions about demographic data (item 1-4) and questions about the students' perception (item 5-18). All items were selected and adopted from previous related research. The items were constructed in Indonesian language and mostly were in the form of closed questions (multiple choice, tick box, and linear scale) to make it easier for the respondents to answer the questions. In responding to the questionnaire, the participants were anonymous and the author had checked that all respondents had responded to the questionnaire well. After collecting the data, then they were analyzed using percentage and description, showing the proportion of the group in the population (Latief, 2011). The proportion of the data was described in the form of a descriptive explanation and a conclusion was drawn based on them.

## Findings and discussion

### *Demographic data*

Previous studies found that songs had positive impacts on language learning, not only for language components, but also improving the students' language skill (Caceido and Lojano, 2013; Sanchez, 2017). Referring to those studies, the purpose of this paper is to find out the students' perception in midwifery department towards the use of songs for English online learning especially in this pandemic time.

Based on the responses related to the demographic data from the questionnaire, it can be seen that most of the students came from Malang Raya region with the total number of 50 students out of 107 students. From Pasuruan area with 14 students, and the rest of them were spread in some other cities in East Java Province, such as Trenggalek, Ponorogo, Blitar, Jombang, Nganjuk, and other areas with the total number of students less than 10 as shown in Figure 1.

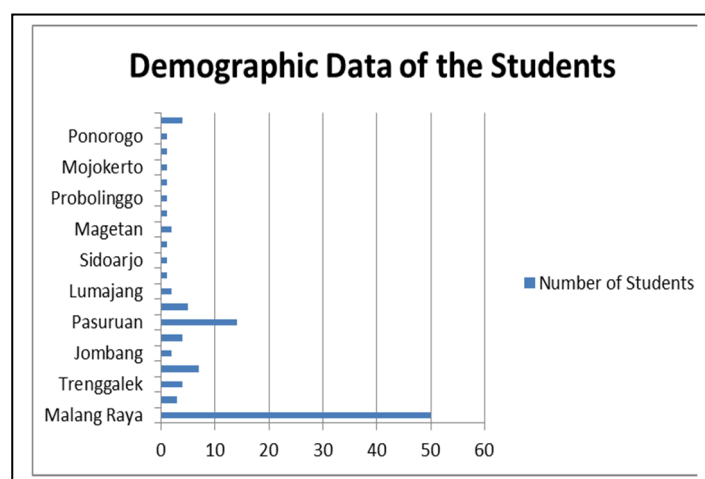


Figure 1. Demographic data

In an online mode of learning, one of the biggest challenges faced by students is the internet connection. The teaching and learning process cannot run well if it is not supported by good internet connection and we cannot deny that students' challenge such as internet access, motivation, and involvement are always associated with the success of online learning (Hodges et al, 2020). Some other challenges faced by both students and teachers for implementing online learning were explained by Adedoyin and Soykan (2020) are related to the dependency to technological equipment, students with no or low socio-economic power are most vulnerable to additional challenges to meet up with others in online learning, human and pet's intrusion as disruption, the lack of digital competence, more complicated assessment and supervision, heavy workload, and the lack of compatibility for online learning dealing with science subjects that need real setting practices.

Reviewing those arguments, teachers should find an attractive media to maintain students' involvement and motivation in joining the English online learning. The result of accessibility of internet connection of the students is presented in Figure 2.

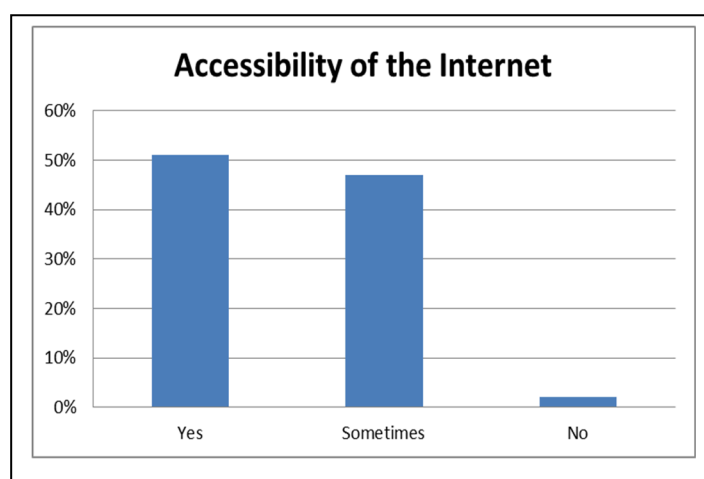


Figure 2. Accessibility of the internet

### ***Students' perception***

Since this fully online system of learning is quite new for the students and also the teachers, a lot of adjustments are needed to be introduced to all parties involving in the process. New techniques and media must be employed to maintain and even increase students' interest in joining the English online classroom. The writer also found that there were not many studies conducted about the use of songs for online teaching, so it is considered important to find out the students' perception regarding the use of song for English online learning to ensure that this media will be suitable for them. This is in line with the statement from Armstrong (2011) who stated that taking students' point of view affecting some approach of learning and raising some considerations to set up online learning instruction.

Based on the data from the questionnaire responses, 93% students had very high preferences toward the use of songs for the alternative media during English online learning. This preference was supported by the data focused on the items in figuring out

midwifery students' perceptions on the use of songs for English online learning. The data referring to that is portrayed in the table below:

Table 1. Students' perception

No.	Students' perception on the use of songs for English online learning	Scale			
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	Songs are fun and make the students enthusiastic to study English online	2%	7%	54%	37%
2.	The students are not bored to study English online using songs	0%	8%	42%	50%
3.	Songs can increase the students' motivation to study English online	0%	5%	45%	50%
4.	Songs can encourage students' to be more active in learning English online	0%	9%	55%	36%
5.	Online learning activities can be conducted easier, more effectively and efficiently by using songs	0%	4%	53%	43%
6.	Suitable song choice which is related to the topic of discussion helps students to understand subject material better	0%	5%	55%	40%
7.	Songs as learning media support students' language learning during this pandemic time	0%	51%	41%	8%
8.	The use of songs during online learning does not require too much internet data	3%	20%	48%	29%
9.	Song can help students to achieve their achievement in English learning	0%	8%	60%	32%
10.	Songs can help students to increase vocabulary mastery	0%	13%	49%	38%
11.	Songs can help students to increase listening skill	0%	6%	42%	52%
12.	Songs can help students to increase speaking skill	0%	7%	52%	41%
13.	Songs can help students to increase their grammar mastery	1%	13%	50%	36%

Table 1 demonstrates the use of songs for English online learning gained very positive responds from the students. Most of them voted for agree or strongly agree that this media was really helpful in assisting them to study English online. On the question about whether

songs are fun and make them enthusiastic to study English online, 54% of them answered that they agree and 37% of them answered strongly agree with the statement. It meant that the students feel excited and motivated to study English online by utilizing this media. This finding is supported by Hadian (2015) who found that the use of songs allowed the students enjoyed the learning process, became enthusiastic and engaged easily in the whole learning process.

Supporting the previous data regarding students' enthusiasm in learning English online with songs as media, the following items on questionnaire also gained positive results from the students. There were 42% of them agreed and 50% of strongly agreed that songs make them not getting bored to study English online. When the students' boredom can be minimized, then their level of motivation can be improved too as it can be seen from the next data about the level of students' motivation in learning English online. Most of them were strongly agreed that songs can increase their motivation in learning English online (50%) and 45% of them agreed on this statement also.

Related to the facts that songs can lessen the students' boredom and increase their motivation, the students' active participation in online classroom activities had improved too, as it shown on the result of the next data. There were 55% agreed and 36% students strongly agreed on the statement. This is in line with the previous research conducted by Sanchez (2017) who concluded that songs as a learning media can create enjoyable, relaxing, and motivating atmosphere of learning for the students.

Online learning activities can also be conducted easier, more effectively, and efficient by using songs. This is supported by the result of the questionnaire who gained 53% positive responds on the agree option and 43% on strongly agree option. Suitable song choice related to the subject material also helps the students to understand the subject material better. 55% students agreed and 40% students strongly agreed on this. Based on this result, teachers must be careful in selecting the songs used for this activity. Students who were taught using songs showed better outcomes and able to overcome their problems in learning the language (Lestary, 2019; Srirejeki, 2019). As a conclusion, songs as a learning media can support the students' language learning during this pandemic. The data showed that 51% students agreed and 41% strongly agreed on the statement.

Related to the use of internet data package, the use of songs do not require too much internet data, thus the cost spent will be relatively low. The students were interested in this advantage (48% agreed and 29% strongly agreed). This helpful feature will help students to increase students' achievement in language learning (60% agreed and 32% strongly disagreed).

Aside from the students' perceptions mentioned above, this study also attempted to discover the students' point of view focusing on the impact of language learning process with the use of songs as learning media. The questionnaire provided some questions related to the students' perception toward the use of songs in improving students' listening and speaking skills. Both of the skills gained highly positive responses, they are 94% for listening skill and 93% for speaking. This data is in parallel with the previous studies that accounted positive improvement in listening and speaking skills of the students when employed songs for teaching English (Hadian, 2015; Lestary, 2019; Ningsih, 2019; Putri, 2018; Srirejeki, 2019).

When dealing with vocabulary enrichment and grammar mastery, the use of songs is also proven to be effective (Srirejeki, 2019). Lems (2018) also argues that songs offer special benefits for those learning a new language. It offers a natural and enjoyable way to practice new sounds, words, and phrases. The students gave positive feedbacks in regards to these items of questions. 87% and 86% agreed that their vocabulary and grammar mastery had improved in the process of English language learning by employing the songs as the media.

Overall, the result of the study had answered the question of how the students responded to the use of songs for English online learning. The data showed that songs had promoted positive interaction and active participation during English online learning and assisted students to gain better achievement in their English learning. Following these positive feedbacks, teachers may consider to utilize songs as one of the alternative media in English online learning activities.

## Conclusion

This study highlights that an online learning is completely or partially accomplished through internet. The teaching and learning process is assisted by the use of computer and technology. It is claimed that online learning has a high potential to improve knowledge retention by implementing innovative instructional models (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020). The online teaching and learning system have become the best choice during this pandemic time. This pandemic prohibits us to have a direct and face to face contact with groups of people, so there is no other option to provide students with a better learning system than this one. Providing a comfortable, attractive and interactive atmosphere of learning is very important to ensure students' participation in online class activities to be at maximum capacity. Not only that, the technique and media used must also not also create too much burdens for the students and teachers. A high level of creativity is needed to determine what media can be applied during the English online teaching and learning process. The utilization of songs for English online learning as one of the alternatives is expected to be able to increase students' participation and involvement in the learning process.

This study has a significant role in showing that songs as one of the alternative media for English online learning gained a high positive perception from university students. It is due to the nature of songs which can make the students study English online in a fun, relaxing, and enjoyable way. This study resulted in a very positive perception especially in regards to the fact that songs can improve the students' listening and speaking skills. The song choice also plays an important role to attract students' attention and enhance their language capacity. In addition, teachers should be selective in choosing the songs to make sure that the content, the word choice, or the sentences found in the songs are suitable with the content of lesson being discussed. The target of improving students' language skills by not putting too much burden on them will be acquired by putting this consideration in mind. The positive feedback from the students can be used as stepping stones to create a more meaningful online learning strategy for the students.

Based on the result of this study, some possible feedbacks can be taken into consideration, those are: encouraging the utilization of attractive and updated online strategy, maintaining "friendly" online learning activities with low cost data, supporting autonomous learning, and employing a wider variety of interactive online learning activities using available resources. Teachers should be able to adapt with the changing of trends and



characters among the youths. What we should bear in mind is that this research's finding was only based on the perceptions of a few numbers of students from one department, so it cannot be taken as a broad view. Further research should be conducted with a larger number of respondents to get more reliable results on the students' perception regarding the subject matter. Still, we can assume that this study represented a part of students' point of views on the use of songs for English online learning conducted in several universities around the world, particularly for teachers and students during COVID-19 outbreak. It is expected that the result of this study can inspire concerned parties when dealing with feasible alternatives for establishing meaningful and fruitful English online learning process.

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