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Student's Perceptions of Using Songs in Learning English Vocabulary of Eighth Grade Students at SMP Cinta Rakyat 3 Pematangsiantar

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate students' perceptions of using songs in learning English vocabulary among eighth-grade students at SMP Cinta Rakyat 3 Pematangsiantar. Vocabulary is a fundamental component in English language learning, yet many students still face difficulties in mastering it due to limited motivation and the use of conventional teaching methods. Therefore, this study explores the use of songs as an alternative learning medium to support vocabulary acquisition. This research employed a descriptive qualitative design. The participants were students of class VIII-B who had experienced learning English vocabulary through songs. The data were collected using a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire results were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while the interview data were analyzed thematically to support the quantitative findings. The results show that students generally have positive perceptions toward the use of songs in learning English vocabulary. Songs help students memorize vocabulary more easily through repetition and rhythm, increase learning motivation, and create an enjoyable classroom atmosphere. In addition, songs encourage students to be more active in class and develop independent learning habits such as listening to songs outside the classroom and practicing pronunciation. Although some students faced minor difficulties such as fast song tempo and unclear pronunciation, these challenges did not significantly reduce their positive perceptions. Overall, the study concludes that songs are an effective and engaging medium for teaching English vocabulary. The use of songs can improve students' vocabulary mastery while also increasing their motivation and participation in learning activities.

Keywords: **vocabulary learning, songs, students' perceptions, English learning, motivation**

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INTRODUCTION

English plays an important role as an international language used in communication, education, technology, and global interaction. In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language from junior high school level to help students develop their language competence. One of the most important components in learning English is vocabulary mastery because vocabulary supports students in understanding and expressing ideas through listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Without sufficient vocabulary, students may experience difficulties in understanding lessons and communicating effectively in English. Therefore, vocabulary learning becomes a fundamental aspect that should receive attention in English teaching and learning activities. However, many students still face problems in learning English vocabulary. Students often find it difficult to memorize words, understand meanings, and use vocabulary correctly in context. In addition, conventional teaching methods that focus mainly on memorization may cause students to feel bored and less motivated during the learning process. According to Nation (2022), vocabulary learning requires meaningful exposure and repeated practice to help learners retain new words effectively. This indicates that teachers need to apply creative and interesting teaching media to improve students' vocabulary learning experiences.

One of the teaching media that can support vocabulary learning is songs. Songs are considered effective because they provide enjoyable learning activities and help students learn language naturally. Through songs, students can learn pronunciation, spelling, meaning, and sentence patterns in a fun atmosphere. Songs also contain repetition of words and expressions that may help students remember vocabulary more easily. Research conducted by Sevik and colleagues (2021) showed that songs can increase students' engagement and motivation in English language learning.

In addition, songs may create a more relaxed classroom environment and reduce students' anxiety in learning English. Many students enjoy listening to music in their daily activities, making songs familiar and attractive learning media. The use of songs in the classroom can encourage students to participate actively and confidently during the learning process. According to Lestari (2023), integrating songs into English teaching helps students feel more motivated and improves their vocabulary understanding because the learning atmosphere becomes more interactive and enjoyable. Songs also provide authentic language input because students are exposed to real English expressions used by native speakers. Through song lyrics, students can learn new vocabulary in context rather than memorizing isolated words. This contextual learning can help students understand the meaning and usage of vocabulary more effectively. Furthermore, rhythm and melody in songs support memory retention and

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pronunciation practice. A study by Setiawan (2024) found that students who learned vocabulary through songs showed better vocabulary retention and classroom participation compared to students who learned through traditional methods.

Several recent studies have discussed the effectiveness of songs in English vocabulary learning. Research conducted by Rahmawati (2022) revealed that songs positively influenced junior high school students' vocabulary achievement and learning motivation. Similarly, Putri and Sari (2021) found that songs helped students improve their vocabulary mastery and pronunciation skills because students became more enthusiastic during classroom activities. These studies indicate that songs may become effective learning media for English vocabulary instruction. At SMP Cinta Rakyat 3 Pematangsiantar, English teachers attempt to use various learning media to improve students' interest in learning English vocabulary. One of the media used is songs. However, students may have different perceptions toward the use of songs in learning activities. Some students may feel that songs make vocabulary learning easier and more enjoyable, while others may experience difficulties in understanding song lyrics or pronunciation. Students' perceptions are important because they can influence students' motivation, participation, and learning outcomes. Therefore, investigating students' perceptions toward the use of songs in learning English vocabulary is necessary.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher is interested in conducting a study entitled *"Student's Perceptions of Using Songs in Learning English Vocabulary of Eighth Grade Students at SMP Cinta Rakyat 3 Pematangsiantar."* This study aims to identify students' perceptions regarding the use of songs in vocabulary learning and to explore how songs contribute to students' vocabulary learning experiences. It is expected that the findings of this research can provide useful information for teachers, students, and future researchers in developing more effective and enjoyable English vocabulary learning strategies.

RESEARCH METHODS

1. Research Design

This research applied a descriptive qualitative research design. Qualitative research is used to explore and understand participants' opinions, experiences, and perceptions toward a particular phenomenon. The researcher chose this design because the study focused on describing students' perceptions of using songs in learning English vocabulary. According to Creswell (2022), qualitative research is an approach used to investigate and understand the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to social or human problems. In this study, the researcher described and interpreted students' responses regarding the use of English songs during

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vocabulary learning activities. The qualitative approach allowed the researcher to obtain detailed information about students' feelings, attitudes, motivation, and experiences related to the use of songs in the classroom. The data were collected through questionnaires and interviews to support the research findings comprehensively.

2 Data Source

The subject of this research was the eighth-grade students of SMP Cinta Rakyat 3 Pematangsiantar in the academic year 2025/2026. The researcher selected class VIII-B as the participants of the study because the students had experience learning English vocabulary through songs during English lessons. The class was considered appropriate for this research since the students were familiar with the use of songs as learning media. The participants were selected purposively to obtain relevant information related to the research objectives. Through these participants, the researcher expected to gain detailed data about students' perceptions, experiences, and responses toward the implementation of songs in vocabulary learning activities.

The object of this research was students' perceptions of using songs in learning English vocabulary. This research focused on investigating how students interpret, respond to, and evaluate the use of songs as a learning medium. The study also explored students' motivation, interest, understanding, participation, and learning experiences when songs were applied during vocabulary learning activities.

3. Research Instrument

Research instruments are tools used by researchers to collect data needed in a study. In this research, the researcher used a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews as the instruments for collecting data.

1) Questionnaire

The questionnaire was used to collect general information about students' perceptions toward the use of songs in vocabulary learning. According to Sugiyono (2021), a questionnaire is a data collection technique conducted by giving participants a set of written questions or statements to answer. This research used a close-ended questionnaire with a five-point Likert Scale consisting of Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Neutral (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). The questionnaire statements were arranged based on several aspects, including students' motivation, interest, vocabulary understanding, participation, and the effectiveness of songs in

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learning English vocabulary.

2) Interview

The researcher also used semi-structured interviews to obtain deeper information about students' perceptions and experiences. Semi-structured interviews allow participants to explain their opinions freely while still following the prepared interview guidelines. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2021), interviews are useful for exploring participants' experiences and perspectives in detail. The interviews were conducted with several selected students from class VIII-B. The researcher prepared several questions related to students' experiences, opinions, benefits, and difficulties in learning vocabulary through songs. The interview data were used to support and strengthen the questionnaire results.

4. Data Collection Method

In collecting the data, the researcher conducted several procedures. First, the researcher asked permission from the school to conduct the research at SMP Cinta Rakyat 3 Pematangsiantar. After receiving permission, the researcher coordinated with the English teacher regarding the research schedule and participants.

Second, the researcher distributed questionnaires to the students of class VIII-B after the implementation of vocabulary learning activities using songs. The students were asked to answer all statements honestly based on their experiences and perceptions.

Third, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with selected students to obtain more detailed information related to their responses and experiences. During the interview process, the researcher recorded students' answers and took notes to ensure the accuracy of the collected data.

5. Data Analysis Method

The data collected from the questionnaire and interviews were analyzed descriptively. The questionnaire data were analyzed by calculating the percentage of students' responses for each statement on the Likert Scale. The results were then interpreted to identify students' overall perceptions toward the use of songs in learning English vocabulary.

Meanwhile, the interview data were analyzed through several steps, namely data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. According to Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2020), qualitative data analysis involves condensing the data, presenting the data systematically, and drawing conclusions based on the findings.

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First, the researcher selected and simplified important information obtained from the interviews. Second, the researcher organized and displayed the data in descriptive form to make the information easier to understand. Finally, the researcher drew conclusions based on the students' responses and interpretations related to the use of songs in learning English vocabulary.

RESULTS

Based on the results obtained from the questionnaire and interviews, this study found that students of SMP Cinta Rakyat 3 Pematangsiantar generally had positive perceptions toward the use of songs in learning English vocabulary. The findings showed that songs created a more enjoyable and interactive learning atmosphere, which encouraged students to participate actively during English lessons. Most students agreed that learning vocabulary through songs was more interesting than conventional learning methods because songs reduced boredom and helped them feel more relaxed in the classroom.

The questionnaire results also indicated that the research instrument used in this study was reliable. The reliability test showed a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.848, which means that the questionnaire items were consistent and suitable for measuring students' perceptions. This result demonstrated that the data collected from the questionnaire could be considered accurate and dependable for supporting the research findings.

Table 1. Reliability Statistics of Questionnaire Instrument

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Category
Students' Perceptions Toward Songs in Vocabulary Learning	0.848	Reliable

The findings further revealed that songs helped students improve their vocabulary mastery. Students stated that repeated lyrics and musical rhythms made vocabulary easier to remember. Many students admitted that they could memorize new words more effectively when they listened to songs repeatedly. In addition, students felt that songs helped them understand the meaning and pronunciation of unfamiliar vocabulary in a more natural and enjoyable way. These findings indicate that songs can support vocabulary retention and comprehension among junior high school students. Besides improving vocabulary mastery, songs also increased students' motivation and learning interest. The interview results showed that students became more enthusiastic when English lessons involved songs. Students were more willing to participate in classroom activities such as singing, discussing lyrics, answering

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questions, and practicing pronunciation. Songs created a positive emotional atmosphere that encouraged students to feel more confident and less anxious during English learning activities.

Another important finding was related to students' independent learning behaviors. Several students stated that they often listened to English songs outside the classroom to practice their vocabulary and pronunciation. Some students also mentioned that they wrote down unfamiliar words from song lyrics, searched for meanings using dictionaries or translation applications, and practiced pronunciation by imitating singers. These activities showed that songs not only supported classroom learning but also encouraged students to continue learning independently outside school hours.

Table 2. Students' Positive Responses Toward the Use of Songs

Indicators	Students' Responses
Songs make learning enjoyable	Positive
Songs help memorize vocabulary	Positive
Songs increase motivation	Positive
Songs improve pronunciation	Positive
Songs encourage participation	Positive
Songs support independent learning	Positive

Furthermore, the study found that songs contributed positively to students' pronunciation and listening abilities. Through listening to song lyrics, students became more familiar with English pronunciation, stress, and intonation patterns. Students explained that songs allowed them to hear how English words were pronounced by native speakers, helping them improve their speaking confidence and listening comprehension. Although the majority of findings were positive, some students still experienced minor difficulties in learning vocabulary through songs. A few students reported that certain songs had fast tempos, unclear pronunciation, or difficult vocabulary, which sometimes made the lyrics challenging to understand. However, these difficulties did not significantly influence students' overall positive perceptions toward the use of songs in vocabulary learning. Most students still considered songs as effective and enjoyable learning media.

Overall, the findings of this study demonstrated that songs can be used as an effective medium for teaching English vocabulary to eighth-grade students. Songs not only helped students improve vocabulary mastery, pronunciation, and listening skills, but also increased

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students' motivation, classroom participation, confidence, and independent learning habits. Therefore, the use of songs in English learning activities can provide positive contributions to students' vocabulary learning experiences.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study show that students of SMP Cinta Rakyat 3 Pematangsiantar generally have positive perceptions toward the use of songs in learning English vocabulary. This result indicates that songs are not only seen as entertaining media but also as meaningful learning tools that support vocabulary acquisition. The positive response from students suggests that integrating songs into English learning can create a more engaging and student-centered learning environment. One of the main findings of this study is that songs help students remember vocabulary more easily. This is consistent with the idea that repetition and rhythm in songs support memory retention. When students repeatedly hear and sing lyrics, they unconsciously store vocabulary in long-term memory. This supports the theory of meaningful learning, where information is better retained when it is connected to enjoyable and meaningful experiences. Therefore, songs function as an effective reinforcement tool in vocabulary learning.

The study also found that songs increase students' motivation and enjoyment in learning English. This finding is in line with motivational theories in language learning which emphasize that learners perform better when they are emotionally engaged. Songs create a relaxed classroom atmosphere that reduces anxiety and increases students' willingness to participate. As a result, students become more active and enthusiastic during English lessons compared to traditional teaching methods. In addition, students showed improved classroom participation when songs were used in learning activities. They were more willing to sing, repeat vocabulary, and respond to teacher instructions. This indicates that songs can encourage active learning and shift the classroom dynamic from teacher-centered to student-centered learning. Active participation is an important factor in language acquisition because it allows students to practice language in meaningful contexts.

Another important finding is that songs encouraged independent learning behaviors among students. Many students reported that they continued listening to English songs outside the classroom, wrote down new vocabulary, and practiced pronunciation independently. This behavior reflects self-directed learning, where students take responsibility for their own learning process. It also shows that songs can extend learning beyond classroom boundaries and create continuous exposure to English vocabulary. The findings also highlight that songs help students improve pronunciation and listening skills. By listening to native pronunciation in songs, students

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become more familiar with natural speech patterns, intonation, and word stress. This supports communicative language learning principles, where exposure to authentic language input is essential for developing listening and speaking competence. Therefore, songs serve as a useful medium for improving both receptive and productive language skills.

However, the study also identified some minor challenges experienced by students, such as fast song tempo and unclear pronunciation in certain songs. These difficulties sometimes made it harder for students to understand the lyrics. Despite these challenges, students' overall perceptions remained positive, indicating that the benefits of using songs outweigh the difficulties. This suggests that appropriate song selection is important in ensuring effective learning outcomes.

Overall, the results of this study confirm that songs are an effective and enjoyable medium for teaching English vocabulary. The use of songs not only improves vocabulary retention but also enhances motivation, participation, pronunciation, and independent learning. These findings imply that teachers should consider integrating songs more frequently in English vocabulary instruction to create a more engaging and effective learning environment.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion of this study, it can be concluded that students of SMP Cinta Rakyat 3 Pematangsiantar generally have positive perceptions toward the use of songs in learning English vocabulary. The students consider songs as an enjoyable and effective learning medium that helps them understand and remember new vocabulary more easily. Songs also create a more relaxed and interesting classroom atmosphere, which supports a better learning experience. In addition, the use of songs contributes positively to students' motivation, participation, and learning behavior. The findings show that students become more active and enthusiastic during English lessons when songs are used. They also develop independent learning habits such as listening to English songs repeatedly, noting new vocabulary, and practicing pronunciation outside the classroom. This indicates that songs do not only support classroom learning but also encourage continuous learning outside school.

Furthermore, songs help students improve important language skills, especially vocabulary mastery, listening comprehension, and pronunciation. The rhythm, repetition, and natural language used in songs make it easier for students to absorb and retain new words. Although some students experience minor difficulties such as fast tempo or unclear pronunciation, these challenges do not significantly affect their overall positive perception of using songs in vocabulary learning.

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Therefore, it can be concluded that songs are an effective and suitable teaching media for improving English vocabulary learning among eighth-grade students. The integration of songs in English teaching is recommended as it enhances students' learning interest, motivation, and language development in a more enjoyable and meaningful way.

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