



The Effectiveness of Using Songs in English Language Learning to Improve Elementary School Students' Learning Motivation

Tiarnita Maria Sarjani Br.Siregar^{1*}, Nur Maisaroh Harahap², Suhaila Haya Nasution³,
Tania Eviana Ginting⁴

¹⁻⁴ Universitas Negeri Medan, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: lian.nita2010@gmail.com

Abstract. This paper explores how effective songs are as a teaching tool for boosting elementary students' motivation to learn English. The study is designed as a literature review, examining and drawing together findings from earlier research on song-based English instruction. Sources consist of academic journal articles and conference proceedings from 2020 to 2025, particularly those involving young learners at the elementary level. Evidence from the reviewed literature suggests that songs serve as a powerful audio learning resource that improves students' focus, engagement, and participation during lessons. Incorporating songs into lessons makes the classroom atmosphere more enjoyable and interactive, helping to lessen learners' anxiety and strengthen their confidence in using English. Additionally, songs support vocabulary learning, pronunciation practice, and grasp of language structures by using rhythm, repetition, and meaningful contexts. The synthesis also indicates that song-based instruction positively influences both intrinsic and extrinsic student motivation. The beneficial effects are further explained through theories such as Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis and Ryan and Deci's Self-Determination Theory, which highlight how pleasant learning environments and meaningful experiences can drive motivation. Therefore, embedding songs in English teaching is recommended as an effective pedagogical approach for enhancing motivation and creating a more engaging learning setting for elementary students.

Keywords: Elementary School Students; English Learning; Learning Media; Learning Motivation; Songs.

1. INTRODUCTION

English is an international language that plays an important role in various fields of communication around the world. Therefore, English language learning has been introduced since elementary school so that students have a foundation in language skills from an early age. However, in the learning process, many students still consider English to be a difficult subject because they have to learn a lot of vocabulary and grammar rules. This often causes students to lose interest and motivation in learning English in class (Zulfa & Utami, 2021).

The lack of motivation to learn is one of the problems faced by teachers in teaching English. Therefore, teachers need to apply interesting and enjoyable learning strategies or media so that students are more active and motivated in the learning process. One medium that can be used is songs. The use of songs in learning can create a more enjoyable learning atmosphere, help students remember new vocabulary, and train their pronunciation skills through the rhythm and repetition found in song lyrics (Maisarah, 2023).

In addition, the use of songs can also increase students' attention, concentration, and participation during the learning process. Songs can provide auditory and emotional stimulation so that students become more focused and enjoy learning activities in the classroom. Through songs, students can also learn vocabulary and language structures more

naturally so that learning becomes more effective and less monotonous (Salsabila et al., 2025).

Several previous studies have shown that songs can be used as an effective learning medium to increase the learning motivation of elementary school students. Research conducted by Zulfa & Utami (2021) shows that the use of songs combined with educational games in English learning can increase students' enthusiasm, concentration, and activity in participating in learning activities. In addition, students also become more confident and find it easier to understand the material being taught.

Furthermore, the use of interesting learning media also plays an important role in increasing student motivation to learn. Appropriate learning media can help students understand the material more easily and create a more interactive and enjoyable learning process (Megawati, 2024). Thus, students do not only receive the material passively, but are also actively involved in learning activities.

Based on the above description, it can be concluded that the use of songs in English language learning has the potential to increase the learning motivation of elementary school students. Therefore, further research is needed on the effectiveness of using songs as a medium for English language learning in increasing the learning motivation of elementary school students.

2. THEORITICAL REVIEW

Learning Media

Understanding Learning Media

Learning media is anything that can be used to convey messages or information in the teaching and learning process, thereby stimulating students' attention and interest in learning. According to Sadiman et al. (2012), learning media is an intermediary or messenger that conveys messages from sender to recipient. In an educational context, media functions as a tool that facilitates teachers in delivering material and helps students understand the concepts being taught.

The use of appropriate media in learning can improve the quality of the learning process and student outcomes. Arsyad (2013) suggests that good learning media is media that can stimulate student motivation and interest, and can improve understanding because the information presented is easier to digest. Therefore, media selection must consider student characteristics, learning objectives, and resource availability.

Types of Learning Media

Learning media can be classified into various types based on their form and presentation method. Budianto et al. (2024) classify learning media into three main categories: visual media, audio media, and audiovisual media. Visual media includes images, posters, and graphics; audio media includes sound recordings and music; while audiovisual media combines visual and audio elements simultaneously, such as videos and films.

In language learning, audio media plays a significant role because language is essentially sound. The use of audio media such as songs allows students to be exposed to correct pronunciation, natural intonation, and vocabulary in meaningful contexts. Sadiqzade (2025) emphasized that songs, as an audio-linguistic medium, provide authentic and enjoyable language input for second language learners.

Songs as a Medium for Learning English

The Nature of Songs in Language Learning

Songs are a form of audio media that has long been used in language learning. Linguistically, songs contain linguistic elements such as vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and intonation, presented in a meaningful and memorable context. Suwartono & Rahadiyanti (2012) state that songs can be an effective medium for improving various aspects of language skills, including listening, speaking, reading, and even writing.

The advantage of songs over conventional learning media lies in their melodic elements, which aid memorization. Research in educational neuroscience shows that information packaged in a musical format tends to be more easily retained in long-term memory. Budianto et al. (2024) support this view by stating that songs facilitate language learning in multilingual populations because music is universal and transcends cultural boundaries.

Benefits of Songs in Learning English

The use of songs in English learning offers a variety of empirically proven benefits. First, songs help students acquire new vocabulary naturally through enjoyable repetition of lyrics. Smadi (2020) demonstrated through experimental research in Jordan that students who learned using songs demonstrated better vocabulary mastery than a control group that did not use songs.

Second, songs provide authentic pronunciation models. When students listen to and sing English songs, they indirectly practice pronunciation in a way that doesn't feel like formal training. Ben Mustafa (2012) found in his research in Libya that both teachers and students viewed the use of songs favorably, as they helped students imitate the intonation and

pronunciation patterns of native speakers. Third, songs can be used as a means to introduce the cultural context of the target language, making learning more contextual and meaningful.

Learning Motivation

Understanding Learning Motivation

Learning motivation is an internal factor that drives individuals to engage in learning activities to achieve a goal. According to Ryan and Deci in Sholihah et al. (2024), motivation can be divided into two main types: intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation arises from within the individual due to interest and enjoyment in the learning activity itself, while extrinsic motivation is driven by factors external to the individual, such as rewards, grades, or praise.

In the context of English language learning, motivation plays a crucial role. Motivated students will participate more actively, persevere more in the face of difficulties, and master language skills more quickly. In her research, Emi (2024) showed that sixth-grade elementary school students' learning motivation increased significantly after implementing song-based learning, as measured by the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ).

Factors that Influence Learning Motivation

Learning motivation is influenced by various factors, both internal to the student and from their learning environment. Internal factors include students' interests, talents, psychological state, and self-perception of their abilities. External factors include the teacher's teaching methods, classroom atmosphere, learning media used, and social relationships between students. Rohmah & Wibowo (2025) emphasize that songs act as mood regulators, directly influencing students' psychological state and learning motivation.

Emi et al. (2024) found a moderate positive correlation between the use of English songs and sixth-grade elementary school students' learning motivation, with a Pearson correlation value of 0.477. This finding indicates that the more intensive the use of songs in learning, the higher the students' learning motivation. Thus, the learning media chosen by teachers plays a strategic role in shaping and maintaining students' learning motivation.

Theoretical Basis

Affective Filter Hypothesis (Krashen)

One of the most relevant theories explaining the effectiveness of songs on language learning motivation is the Affective Filter Hypothesis proposed by Stephen Krashen. This theory states that the process of second language acquisition is influenced by affective factors, namely students' levels of anxiety, motivation, and self-confidence. A high affective

filter characterized by anxiety and low motivation will hinder students from absorbing the language input provided by the teacher.

Conversely, when students' affective filters are low, they are relaxed, confident, and motivated, making them more open to language input and more able to process it optimally. Sadiqzade (2025) explains that the use of songs directly lowers students' affective filters because it creates a fun and stress-free learning environment. In the context of elementary school students who are prone to shyness and fear of making mistakes, songs are a very effective instrument for building their confidence in speaking English.

Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci)

Self-Determination Theory (SDT), developed by Ryan and Deci, is another relevant theoretical framework for understanding the relationship between song and learning motivation. SDT posits that intrinsic motivation the drive to learn that arises from within will thrive when three basic psychological needs are met: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Learning that is engaging and tailored to students' interests, such as that offered by singing activities, naturally fulfills these three needs.

Sholihah et al. (2024) applied the SDT perspective to analyze the effect of popular songs on high school students' motivation to learn English. Their research showed that students exposed to popular songs experienced a significant increase in their desire to learn because the songs provided a personal connection that made learning feel relevant to their lives. This aligns with the SDT principle that intrinsic motivation arises when learning activities are perceived as meaningful and enjoyable, rather than merely obligatory.

Characteristics of Elementary School Students as Young Learners

Elementary school students are categorized as young learners in second language learning, a group of students with unique characteristics that distinguish them from adult learners. These characteristics include: a strong sense of curiosity, a strong imagination, a tendency to learn through play and movement, and a shorter attention span than adults. Smadi (2020) emphasized that learning approaches for young learners must consider their developmental characteristics, so the methods used must be active, fun, and engage all the senses.

Given these characteristics, songs are a highly suitable medium for elementary school students. Singing naturally integrates movement, voice, and emotion, which aligns with the learning styles of elementary school-aged children. Ben Mustafa (2012) reported that teachers in Libya utilize songs not only as a language teaching medium but also as an effective classroom management strategy to maintain students' attention and enthusiasm. Therefore,

integrating songs into English learning in elementary schools is a pedagogically and psychologically sound approach.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a literature review. To obtain research data, the researcher collects, analyzes, and organizes the data. This research draws on articles, books, and previous research on the application of management strategies in education. Then, the researcher concludes and presents data management strategies to improve the quality of education. A literature review, also known as a literature review, is an activity to carefully review and review existing literature on topics that have been discussed by academics or other researchers. This method aims not only to investigate and review literature related to the research problem but also to systematically organize the research problem and synthesize the research findings, enabling the presentation of research and the development of models, methods, approaches, and strategies or future ideas in a more structured manner.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data Collection Process, Timeframe, and Research Location

This research employed a literature review method. The data collection process was conducted by reviewing scientific journal articles and proceedings that specifically examine the use of song media in English learning and its impact on learning motivation, particularly for elementary school students or young learners. The reviewed literature focused on publications between 2020 and 2025 to ensure relevance to modern educational contexts, with one older article included to strengthen the fundamental concepts.

Data Analysis Results

The locations of the various studies reviewed represent a diversity of geographical and cultural contexts, both in Indonesia (such as Pontianak, Pemangkat, Jombang, and Malang) and abroad (such as Misratah in Libya and Jerash in Jordan). This diversity provides a strong foundation demonstrating that the effectiveness of using songs is a cross-cultural phenomenon.

The data extraction results from various literatures show that English songs are media capable of consistently increasing the learning motivation of elementary-level students. A summary of the empirical findings related to the increase in motivation is neatly presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Synthesis of Literature Findings on the Effect of Songs on Student Motivation.

Researcher(s) & Year	Research Location / Subjects	Method & Analysis	Main Findings Related to Motivation
Smadi (2020)	Jordan / Young Learners	Experimental (T-test)	The use of songs was proven to significantly increase the motivation of young learners in learning English compared to the control group without songs.
Ben Mustafa	Misratah, Libya / Elementary Students	Questionnaire & Observation	Students showed highly positive attitudes. Songs facilitated motivation and participation, and helped teachers manage large class sizes.
Emi (2024)	SDS Amkur Pemandang, Indonesia / 6th Graders	<i>Pretest-posttest</i> (Wilcoxon Test)	Learning motivation increased significantly. The average MSLQ questionnaire score rose from 63.31 to 72.73.
Emi et al. (2024)	SD Marie Joseph Pontianak, Indonesia / 6th Graders	Quantitative (Pearson Correlation)	There is a moderate positive correlation (0.477) between the use of English songs and students' learning motivation.

Based on Table 1, the quantitative data analysis proves the effectiveness of songs as a learning medium. In Emi's (2024) study, the increase in motivation is evident from the statistical test results showing a probability value well below the 0.05 significance level, indicating that the song intervention brings a real change in students' emotional state. This is supported by observational findings from Ben Mustafa, which noted that musical elements help students enjoy the learning process while absorbing vocabulary without feeling burdened.

Relationship between Results and Basic Concepts

The increase in motivation identified in this data synthesis is directly related to several basic concepts of educational psychology and second language acquisition:

Affective Filter Hypothesis

Based on Krashen's concept, a relaxed learning environment lowers students' "affective filter". Songs create a pleasant, low-anxiety environment, so elementary school students, who are generally still prone to shyness or fear of making mistakes, become more courageous to participate and more motivated.

Self-Determination Theory

Ryan & Deci state that intrinsic motivation grows when learning is naturally relevant and enjoyable. Interactive songs integrate language content with contextual experiences, thereby arousing the natural interest of elementary students without external coercion.

Consistency with Previous Research and Its Interpretations

The results of this literature synthesis at the elementary school level are highly consistent with studies at the secondary and tertiary education levels, showing that the motivational nature of songs is not limited by age. Qualitative research by Rohmah & Wibowo (2025) at the university level found that English songs function effectively not only as linguistic tools but also as mood regulators and boosters of students' learning enthusiasm. Similarly, research by Sholihah et al. (2024) on high school students validated that popular songs increase students' desire to learn.

The interpretation of these cross-level findings is that music has a universal power to trigger positive psychological responses. For elementary students, the effect is more emphasized on creating a playful learning atmosphere, while at higher levels, the effect leans more towards personal connections with lyrics and pop culture.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, the results of this literature review reinforce the idea that the affective dimension (motivation and emotion) must go hand in hand with the cognitive dimension (language skills). Teachers cannot solely focus on delivering language structures without touching the students' emotional aspects.

Practically, the implications of this research are highly relevant for basic education practitioners. Teachers are advised to integrate songs as a routine part of instructional design, rather than just as a time-filling entertainment. Nevertheless, teachers must be selective in choosing songs that match the cognitive level and cultural norms of the students, and be equipped with good classroom management strategies so that singing activities remain focused on academic goals.

5. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that integrating songs into English instruction is an effective means of raising motivation among elementary school learners. The literature review indicates that songs play a significant role in producing an enjoyable, interactive, and low-anxiety classroom environment, which encourages students to participate more comfortably and, in turn, boosts their engagement and motivation.

Songs also advance language learning by easing the process of acquiring vocabulary, enhancing pronunciation skills, and supporting students' understanding of language structures through rhythmic repetition. Moreover, they help sustain students' attention and concentration, making learning feel more meaningful and less repetitive.

These outcomes are backed by theoretical foundations especially Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis and Ryan and Deci's Self-Determination Theory that show how favorable emotional conditions and pleasurable learning experiences nurture intrinsic motivation.

Hence, using songs regularly in English teaching is both pedagogically sound and practically beneficial for elementary education. Teachers are encouraged to select song materials that match students' cognitive levels and cultural context, and to incorporate them deliberately so that songs serve as more than entertainment they become a valuable instructional tool supporting both motivation and language learning success.

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