

THE IMPACT OF ENGLISH SONG TOWARD PRONUNCIATION OF EFL LEARNERS IN ENGLISH AND LITERATURE DEPARTMENT UIN ALAUDDIN MAKASSAR

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Abstract:

This study investigates the impact of English songs towards pronunciation skills among EFL learners in the English and Literature Department at UIN Alauddin Makassar. A descriptive quantitative design was used with an initial survey of 56 third semester students, from which 28 participants were purposively selected based on their consistent use of English songs as a learning tool. Drawing on theoretical frameworks by Kelly (2000) and Djiwandono (2008), the study hypothesized that musical repetition and natural intonation improve articulation and fluency. Two lines of discussion emerged: first, an evaluation of students' pronunciation levels revealed significant improvements from pretest to posttest; second, both statistical analysis and qualitative feedback underscored the substantial impact of English songs in promoting better pronunciation. These findings support the integration of song-based activities into traditional language instruction as a dynamic method to enhance language acquisition and pronunciation accuracy.

Keywords: *EFL learners; English songs; Language acquisition; Pronunciation*

INTRODUCTION

Pronunciation is a fundamental component of English language learning, particularly for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. It plays a crucial role in communication, as mispronunciation can significantly hinder both comprehension and intelligibility. According to Kobilova (2022), many communication failures arise from incorrect pronunciation or intonation. For instance, minimal pairs such as "big" and "pig" or "sea" and "she" can cause confusion if not properly articulated. This demonstrates that pronunciation is not merely about uttering words but involves the correct articulation of sounds to ensure clarity and understanding.

The English language poses specific challenges in pronunciation due to inconsistencies in its spelling system. The same letter can represent different sounds depending on the word, while the same sound may be represented by different letters. Ambalegin and Arianto (2019) highlighted the difficulties learners face due to silent letters and sounds without corresponding letters, making it challenging to predict pronunciation based solely on spelling. Unlike written language, pronunciation requires mastery of vocal cord coordination, mouth positioning, and tongue movement, all of which are essential for producing accurate and intelligible speech.

Shao, Saito, and Tierney (2023) emphasized that effective pronunciation is the result of a combination of motor skills and auditory training. They suggested that listening to English songs could offer a meaningful way to enhance both skills. Music, especially when learners sing along, provides repetitive and engaging exposure to natural pronunciation patterns, including intonation, rhythm, stress, and connected speech. Furthermore, the

emotional and mnemonic power of music makes it a valuable tool in language learning, creating an enjoyable and memorable experience for learners.

Interestingly, the idea of oral repetition as a method for mastering sound patterns has parallels in religious texts. In Surah Al-Qiyamah (75:16–18), the Prophet Muhammad is instructed to follow the recitation of the Qur'an by listening carefully rather than rushing through it. According to Quraish Shihab's interpretation, these verses stress the importance of accurate oral transmission, where the Prophet was guided to replicate the sounds as uttered by Gabriel. This practice underscores the significance of attentive listening and accurate pronunciation, much like the process EFL learners undergo when mimicking English songs.

Despite the promise of music in pronunciation learning, challenges persist. Saldiraner and Cinkara (2021) noted that learners often struggle with accurately reproducing sounds and rhythms due to differences in phonological systems and regional accents. Therefore, although the use of English songs in EFL classrooms has been widely advocated, there remains a need to evaluate its practical effectiveness, especially in contexts with limited exposure to native English environments.

In the context of UIN Alauddin Makassar, a preliminary observation conducted by the researcher on October 2nd revealed that 87.8% of third-semester students in the English and Literature Department reported using English songs as a medium to enhance their pronunciation. Most of these students have been doing so for over one year. This suggests a strong familiarity with song-based learning practices and makes them suitable participants for a study on pronunciation enhancement.

The selection of third-semester students was based on their academic background, as they had already completed foundational courses in speaking and phonology. Their prior knowledge positions them to benefit more effectively from music-based pronunciation training. The participants were selected through purposive sampling, with the criterion that they must have engaged with English songs consistently for at least nine months. This ensures that the study involves learners with relevant experience, increasing the validity of the findings.

Previous research has consistently supported the role of songs in enhancing pronunciation. For example, Khairunisa et al. (2020) found significant improvements in students' pronunciation scores after implementing song-based instruction. Similarly, Saldiraner and Cinkara (2021) demonstrated through ANCOVA analysis that students taught using songs outperformed those who learned through text-based methods. Additional support comes from Panggabean and Batubara (2022), who showed that karaoke apps like Smule helped learners improve aspects such as stress, rhythm, and phonetic accuracy.

Several other studies also confirm this trend. Wulandari (2021) used classroom action research to demonstrate a steady increase in pronunciation scores across three cycles. Farhati (2011) focused on voiced plosive consonants and found notable gains in pronunciation accuracy among students who practiced with English songs. Moreover, Salisah, Suryadi, and Pahamzah (2024) reported a 42% improvement in pronunciation scores among fourth-grade students after using children's songs in their lessons. All these studies affirm the pedagogical value of music in pronunciation training.

However, the current research offers a distinctive contribution. While previous studies largely focused on school-aged learners or general ESL populations, this study targets EFL university students who have received structured phonological education. Furthermore, while many previous studies used experimental or classroom-based methodologies, the current study employs a quantitative pretest-posttest design complemented by participant interviews. This combination provides a broader and deeper understanding of the effects of English songs on pronunciation among EFL learners in a higher education context.

Thus, the objective of this research is twofold: first, to determine the pronunciation level of third-semester EFL learners in the English and Literature Department at UIN Alauddin Makassar who regularly use English songs as a learning medium; second, to assess the extent to which English songs have contributed to improvements in their pronunciation. By exploring this specific group of learners and their experiences, the study aims to contribute new insights into pronunciation pedagogy, particularly in contexts where traditional resources are limited and learners rely on alternative media such as music. This section must be written out briefly, concisely, clearly, but adequately so that it can be replicated. This section contains explanation of the research approach, subjects of the study, conducts of the research procedure, use of materials and instruments, data collection and analysis techniques. These are not theories. In the case of statistical uses, formulas that are generally known should **not** be written down. Any specific criteria used by the researcher in collecting and analyzing the research data should be completely described. This section should be written not more than 10% (for qualitative research) or 15% (for quantitative research) of the body.

METHODOLOGY

This study applied a descriptive quantitative approach to investigate the impact of English songs on the pronunciation of EFL learners. The participants were 3rd semester students from the English and Literature Department at UIN Alauddin Makassar, academic year 2024/2025. Out of 103 students, 56 completed an initial questionnaire, and from these, 28 were purposively selected based on their consistent use of English songs for at least nine months. Data collection was conducted through a questionnaire, a reading-aloud test (administered twice as pretest and posttest), and a follow-up interview. The reading tests were scored using a pronunciation rubric adapted from Djwandono (2008), which assessed intelligibility, fluency, accuracy, intonation, and stress on a scale of 1 to 4. Total scores were then categorized using Wu's (2021) scale into five levels: fail, poor, ordinary, good, and excellent. The research procedure included preliminary observation, selection of qualified participants, administration of a pretest on January 2nd, 2025, a 10-day treatment using a curated Spotify playlist, followed by a posttest on January 21st, 2025. Three raters, including the researcher, scored the tests independently using the rubric. The results were analyzed using SPSS with a paired sample t-test, guided by statistical thresholds from Field (2012), which included significance level ($p < 0.05$), mean difference, Cohen's d (≥ 0.8), confidence interval (not crossing 0), and correlation coefficient ($r > 0.3$). Interviews were conducted after the posttest to gain deeper insights into students' experiences and to support the quantitative findings. This combination of instruments and procedures ensured a comprehensive evaluation of the effect of English songs on learners' pronunciation.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

1. Level of Students Pronunciation

From the analysis that has been done, it can be seen that there is an increase in pronunciation skills from pretest that held on 2nd January 2025 to posttest in 21st January 2025. We can see from the following table.

Table 4.1 Mean of Pretest and Posttest

$\bar{X}$	Pretest	Posttest
	13,5357	16,1786

The tables clearly show an improvement in students' pronunciation after using English songs. Table 4.1 indicates a rise in the mean score from 13.53 to 16.17, still within the “good” range but showing progress.

Table 4.2 Scoring Level of Each Sample

Categories	Number of students	
	Pretest	Posttest
Excellent	1	9
Good	18	19
Ordinary	9	0
Poor	0	0
Fail	0	0
Total	28	28

Table 4.2 supports this, with more students reaching the “excellent” level and none remaining in the “ordinary” category.

Table 4.3 Mean Score of each Pronunciation Aspect

Pronunciation Rubric	Mean score pretest	Mean Score posttest
Intelligibility	2.8 0.7	3.5
Accuracy	2.5 0.65	3.15
Fluency	2.8 0.5	3.3
Stress	2.7 0.4	3.1
Intonation	2.5 0.65	3.15

Table 4.3 highlights gain across all pronunciation aspects, such as fluency from 2.8 to 3.3 and intonation from 2.5 to 3.15. These results suggest that English songs effectively enhance EFL learners' pronunciation skills overall.

(Question 3) In what ways do songs help you comprehend English pronunciation? Can you give an example?

Extract 1:

“Songs expose me to how native speakers really pronounce words. I noticed how they

connect sounds, like saying ‘wanna’ instead of ‘want to.’ That helped me recognize real-life pronunciation patterns.”

— Participant 5

Extract 2:

“Songs helped me notice how syllables are stressed. I didn’t pay attention to that before, but now I use the correct stress more naturally.”

— Participant 10

(Question 8) Have you noticed any specific pronunciation features (such as intonation, intelligibility, accuracy, word stress, or fluency) that have improved after listening to English songs?

Extract 3:

“After listening to English songs frequently, my fluency and word stress got better. I can now speak more smoothly and naturally.”

— Participant 6

Extract 4:

“Songs help me follow the rhythm and intonation of English. I feel like I sound more natural when I speak now.”

— Participant 14

Extract 5:

“I used to struggle with intonation, but songs helped me improve that. Now I feel more confident when speaking.”

— Participant 4

2. Impact of English song towards pronunciation

The use of English song to learn a pronunciation, as we can see in the table below, is have a significant impact. It is show that there is an increase of number in the posttest.

Table 4.4 Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
	PRETEST	13.5357	28	1.83101	.34603
	POSTTEST	16.1786	28	1.17057	.22122

The Paired Samples Statistics table showed that the mean pre-test score was lower than the mean post-test score, indicating an improvement.

Table 4.5 Paired Samples Correlations

Significance

		N	Correlation	One-sided p	Two-sided p	The Paired Samples
	PRETEST & POSTTEST	28	.499	.003	.007	

Correlations table reported a significant correlation, suggesting that participants who performed well in the pre-test also tended to perform well in the post-test.

Table 4.6 Paired Samples Test

			Paired Difference						Significance	
			Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% CI of the Difference					
	Mean					Lower	Upper	t	df	One-sided p
	Pretest & posttest	2.64286	1.60741	.30377	-3.26615	-2.01957	-8.700	27	<.001	<.001

The Paired Samples Test table confirmed that the mean difference was statistically significant, with a standard deviation of the difference and a standard error, indicating a precise estimate of the mean difference. The 95% confidence interval ranged from (-3.26615) to (-2.01957), meaning the true difference in means is expected to fall within this range. The t-value (-8.700) was large, and the p-value (<.001) confirmed that the improvement was highly significant, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

Table 4.7 Paired Samples Effect Sizes

			Standardizer ^a	Point Estimate	95% CI	
					Lower	Upper
	Pretest & Posttest	Cohen's d	1.60741	-1.644	-2.210	-1.065
		Hedges' correction	1.65386	-1.598	-2.148	-1.035

The Paired Samples Effect Sizes table in SPSS reported a Cohen's d of 1.60741, indicating a large effect size. This suggests that the intervention had a strong impact on improving participants' performance. Since the p-value was extremely small, it is highly unlikely that this improvement was due to random variation.

(Question 1) How does using songs as a learning medium influence your interest in learning pronunciation?⁶⁸

Extract 6:

"Rhythm and melody make me excited to learn pronunciation. It feels more enjoyable and I want to keep practicing."

— Participant 3

Extract 7:

“Singing encourages me to pronounce words properly. I feel like I can express myself more clearly.”

— Participant 10

(Question 5) How do songs help you understand the importance of pronouncing words correctly?7910

Extract 8:

“When I listen to songs, I realize how much pronunciation affects meaning. Mispronouncing words could confuse people.”

— Participant 5

Extract 9:

“Songs help me see how important clear pronunciation is—especially when it comes to being understood by others.”

— Participant 1

Extract 10:

“Songs show me that if I pronounce words incorrectly, the message can be misunderstood. So, I try harder to say them right.”

— Participant 2

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal two significant aspects regarding the use of English songs in pronunciation learning: first, the overall level of students' pronunciation improved; second, there was a statistically significant impact of English songs on their pronunciation performance. These results not only support existing theories but also add new value by demonstrating how prolonged, self-directed exposure to English songs can shape learners' pronunciation proficiency.

The improvement in students' pronunciation level is evidenced by the increase in the average test score from 13.54 (pretest) to 16.18 (posttest), both within the “good” category based on Wu's scoring scale. Despite the category remaining the same, the change in student distribution was notable: from only one student classified as “excellent” in the pretest to nine after the intervention. Furthermore, all learners previously categorized as “ordinary” moved to higher levels. These findings demonstrate that the repeated exposure to English songs contributed meaningfully to students' progress in pronunciation. The consistent score increases across all five assessed aspects—intelligibility, accuracy, fluency, intonation, and stress—suggest that the intervention had a holistic effect, improving not just how clearly students pronounced words but also how naturally they spoke.

These improvements align with Kelly's (2000) theoretical framework, which underscores that rhythm, stress, and intonation are essential for natural pronunciation. English songs, with their structured melody and rhythmic repetition, inherently train learners in these areas. Participants in this study expressed that singing along with lyrics helped them internalize stress patterns and recognize natural speech flows. This experience supports Djiwandono's (2008) structured rubric, which views pronunciation not just as individual sound accuracy but as a combination of suprasegmental elements. By mirroring natural speech patterns embedded in

songs, learners seem to adopt more fluent and intelligible pronunciation.

The findings also affirm earlier studies. Research by Saldiraner and Cinkara (2021) found that learners exposed to song-based instruction improved their pronunciation significantly more than those using text-based methods. Similarly, Farhati (2011) emphasized that music makes learning more enjoyable and effective, particularly in helping students overcome difficulties with specific sounds. This study extends those findings by focusing on learners with prior knowledge of phonology and engaging them in long-term, self-driven use of English songs—an angle less explored in earlier research.

Statistical evidence from this study further reinforces the impact of English songs on pronunciation. The paired-sample t-test revealed a p-value below 0.001 and a large effect size (Cohen's $d \approx 1.61$), confirming a significant positive difference between pretest and posttest scores. Such a substantial effect size indicates that the change was not only statistically valid but also educationally meaningful. Learners themselves acknowledged this transformation; several participants reported increased confidence in speaking, better recognition of word stress, and improved clarity in articulation—all attributed to their interaction with English songs.

These responses reflect the cognitive and affective dimensions of pronunciation acquisition, as supported by Herawati et al. (2022), who highlight how articulation skills are shaped by exposure to meaningful input. The rhythm and melody of songs create a scaffold that helps learners memorize sound patterns and apply them in speech. This study's findings suggest that pronunciation learning can be more effective when instruction goes beyond repetition of isolated words and incorporates dynamic, engaging input such as music.

The broader implication of this research lies in its potential to redefine how pronunciation is taught. Traditional pronunciation exercises often fail to engage learners or address the suprasegmental aspects of speech. By contrast, English songs naturally combine sound, rhythm, and emotion, offering a richer learning context. This study shows that when learners are exposed to songs regularly—especially those that align with their interests—they can develop more fluent and intelligible speech. Teachers can leverage these findings by integrating lyrics into class activities or recommending playlists for autonomous learning. Additionally, curriculum developers may consider incorporating music-based modules to address common pronunciation difficulties.

On a theoretical level, the study reinforces and slightly extends Kelly's (2000) view by demonstrating that music can serve not only as a supplement but as a central strategy in internalizing rhythm and intonation. Similarly, it complements Djiwandono's (2008) practical scoring approach by validating how real-life, music-based input can help students reach higher levels in all five rubric categories.

In conclusion, the study confirms that English songs play a valuable role in pronunciation learning. The improvement in scores and learner reflections both support the argument that musical exposure fosters better pronunciation outcomes. While previous studies have focused mostly on short-term classroom interventions, this research adds a novel perspective by focusing on long-term, independent use of English songs among learners with foundational phonological knowledge. This opens new pathways for future research and instructional design, emphasizing music as a powerful pedagogical tool for pronunciation development in EFL contexts

CONCLUSION

This research examined the impact of English songs on the pronunciation of 3rd semester EFL learners at UIN Alauddin Makassar. The findings confirmed that English songs are an effective and engaging medium for improving pronunciation, as shown by significant gains in pretest and posttest scores supported by statistical evidence. Learners improved critical pronunciation features such as intonation, stress, fluency, and articulation through repeated exposure to rhythmic and authentic language in songs. This supports theoretical views by Kelly (2000) and Djiwandono (2008) on the role of rhythm and structured practice in pronunciation learning. Participants also reported that music made learning more enjoyable and less intimidating than traditional methods.

Importantly, the study highlights the benefit of self-directed, long-term use of songs beyond the classroom, suggesting music can be a central tool in EFL pronunciation pedagogy rather than just a supplementary resource. This opens opportunities for curriculum development incorporating song-based modules and blended learning strategies. Future research could explore different song genres, long-term retention, or comparisons with other multimedia approaches. Overall, English songs show strong potential to transform pronunciation teaching and learning in EFL contexts.

AKNOWLEDGMENTS

Alhamdulillah Rabbil ‘Alamin. All praise and gratitude are due to Allah SWT, the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful, for the countless blessings and guidance that have enabled the researcher to complete this thesis. Shalawat and salam are always sent to our beloved Prophet Muhammad SAW, who brought light and knowledge to the world.

This thesis, entitled “*The Impact of English Song toward Pronunciation of EFL Learners in English and Literature Department UIN Alauddin Makassar*,” is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements to obtain the degree of *Sarjana Humaniora* at the English and Literature Department, Faculty of Adab and Humanities, UIN Alauddin Makassar.

With sincere gratitude, the researcher would like to express her deepest appreciation to those who have supported and accompanied her throughout this journey:

Of course! Here’s a paraphrased version of your enhanced Acknowledgement section that keeps the warm, humble, and sincere tone:

1. To myself, I want to express gratitude for the commitment, perseverance, and focus shown throughout this entire journey. Thank you for showing up every day, overcoming challenges, and holding on to your goals even when things felt tough. This achievement reflects your inner strength, dedication, and personal growth—not only as a student but as an individual.
2. To my beloved parents, Jufri and Harlina, along with my dear siblings, Fahri Ahza and Adzra Humairah Anum. Your unwavering love, heartfelt prayers, and constant support have been my greatest pillars of strength. Every success I achieve is a tribute to your

sacrifices and encouragement. Thank you for believing in me, especially during moments of doubt.

3. To my uncle and aunty, Hermawan and Nani Maryani, who kindly welcomed me into their home and hearts throughout these four years of study. Your care, warmth, and support made me feel at home far away from home. I deeply appreciate every meal, reminder, and act of kindness you shared.
4. To my supervisors, Ma'am Dr. Sardian Maharani Asnur, S.Pd., M.Pd. and Ma'am Waode Surya Darmadali, S.S., M.Hum., thank you for your patience, guidance, and dedication. Your insightful feedback and thoughtful corrections have been invaluable in shaping this thesis, and I am truly grateful for your trust in my abilities.
5. To my examiners, Ma'am Dr. Hj. Nuri Emmiyati, M.Pd. and Sir Dr. Muh Syukri, S.S., S.Pd., M.Pd., thank you for your time, careful review, and constructive feedback. Your valuable comments not only improved this work but also helped me grow academically.
6. To my academic advisor, Ma'am Sandra Dewi Dahlan, S.Pd., M.A., and all the lecturers of the English and Literature Department, thank you for your dedication to teaching and for inspiring us to think critically and creatively. I am grateful for every lesson and encouragement you have given.
7. To my dear friends, Mida, Aishh, Amel, Nuy, Dipa, and all my classmates in the English Literature program, thank you for your laughter, support, deep conversations, and motivation throughout this journey. Your friendship made this experience truly special.
8. To my KKN 75 Biringkassi team, thank you for the unforgettable experiences, teamwork, learning moments, and emotional support we shared. Those memories will always hold a special place in my heart.
9. To all the participants who generously gave their time and honest responses for this research, thank you for your trust and contribution. Your involvement made this study possible, and I sincerely appreciate it.
10. To my favorite playlists—whether it's BTS's energizing songs, soulful dangdut, or the entertaining Comica Podcast—you've been more than just background music. Thank you for providing comfort, focus, and relaxation during the most challenging and tiring times.

Lastly, the researcher acknowledges that this work is far from perfect. Therefore, constructive criticism and suggestions are sincerely welcomed for its improvement. May this humble work bring benefits to all who read it.

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